

POW/MIA'S

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R E P O R T

OF THE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE



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This job, long frustrated by the intransigence of foreign governments, will take time to complete notwithstanding the recent improvements in cooperation, especially from Vietnam. The Committee takes considerable pride, however, in its contribution, through oversight, to improvements in the accountability process, and in the record of information and accomplishment it leaves behind.

That record includes the most rapid and extensive declassification of public files and documents on a single issue in American history. It includes a set of hearings and Committee files in which virtually every part of the POW/MIA controversy has been examined. It includes disclosure after disclosure about aspects of U.S. policy and actions that have never before been made public. It includes a rigorous, public examination of relevant U.S. intelligence information. It includes an exposure of the activities of some private groups who have sought inexcusably to exploit the anguish of POW/MIA families for their own gain. It includes a contribution to changed policies that is reflected on the ground in Vietnam in the form of unprecedented access to prisons, military bases, government buildings, documents, photographs, archives and material objects that bear on the fate of our missing servicemen. And it includes encouraging the Executive branch to establish a process of live-sighting response, investigation and evaluation that is more extensive and professional than ever before.

How then, one might ask, does this issue get brought to a close? There is no simple answer to that question. Clearly, the desire for closure cannot override the obligation to pursue promising leads. Just as clearly, our future expectations must be confined within the borders of what the chaotic circumstances of war, the passage of time, the evidence of survival and the logic of human motivation allow.

We want to make clear that this report is not intended to close the door on this issue. It is meant to open it. We knew at the outset that we could never answer all the questions that exist. In fact, some questions may never be answered or are more properly answered by other branches of government.

What we set out to accomplish, however, was to guarantee that the doors and windows of government were opened so that Americans would know where to go for information, so that the information would, to the greatest degree possible, be available, so that an unparalleled record would exist on which to base judgments, and so that a process of accountability would be in place to provide answers over time. We have accomplished our goal.

The Committee believes that a process is now in place that, over time, will provide additional answers. Americans can have confidence that our current efforts can ultimately resolve this painful issue. As this Committee's investigation of World War II and Korea shows, new information can come unexpectedly, years after the fact. That is why our goal must not be to put the issue to rest, but to press the search for answers and, in this case, to go to the source for those answers in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

We must build on recent progress to guarantee that we reach the limits of what is knowable through an accounting process that is professional, open, genuine and unrestricted. We must constantly measure whether the promises and commitments of foreign govern-

ments are being fulfilled. We have built at the high cost of the search for new information as there is good reason to believe that there is good reason to pursue the search and as a duty to all those whose lives are at risk in service.

THE CO

The POW/MIA issue is controversial as the Vietnam disagreements have betrayed; and other secure their reason. troubled atmosphere to join forces in an

Because the over to identify information one or more live U investigation of issues in Vietnam. Never seeking and review from World War II

To ensure credibility on a basis, with a reviewed between the

To ensure perspective family members, about how to consult and who group that has invited—and in Former U.S. POW asked to share the investigations on the

To ensure thorough access to the records including intelligence sources investigator grounds for den highest levels of withheld.<sup>2</sup> We at times to Sovietials and gain Russia, Vietnam testimonies of victims or former officers over the past 2

<sup>2</sup> There were a few specific intelligence sources that could have been provided for returned POWs.