

*An Open Letter to the President, the Senate and the House  
from POW/MIA families*

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**are not acceptable**

**- We want results**

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## - We want results

Now that the pressure is high to end the war in Southeast Asia, we wish to focus national attention on your collective and individual responsibility to accomplish a complete accounting for all American Prisoners-Of-War and all of the "Missing in Action" prior to dismantling any of our facilities for influencing events there.

We view this as a matter of urgency at this time and, therefore, we will not mince words in this message.

This survey gathers the evidence with authoritative documentation, which shows a consistent pattern of prisoner abuse and of refusal to account for maltreated captives by Communist authorities. It includes significant and detailed attention to the past performance of Hanoi.

Most Americans believe there was a responsible accounting for Americans who became prisoners or missing-in-action during the Korean conflict. This, however,

that conflict under any conditions which do not include effective, enforceable provisions for the prompt release of all American POWs and a complete, authenticated accounting for all Americans missing in action. Such an accounting, to be meaningful, must be verified by, at the very least, representatives of truly impartial governments and it must be of a broad and thoroughly investigative nature which would include a grave search for those who are not otherwise accounted for.

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The basic facts are brutally clear. Over 1900 Americans are involved as prisoners and missing personnel. The North Vietnamese and their colleagues have refused to account in any way for the fate that has befallen some 1350 of them. Only after enormous pressures were brought to bear did they grudgingly furnish some details respecting fewer than 550, and that was rigidly tailored to their propaganda requirements. The overwhelming evidence has demonstrated the consistent maltreatment of all captured Americans, as a matter of official Communist policy. All objective evidence contradicts the claims of the captors that they have treated prisoners in a civilized way.

The proposals to date of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong amount to no more than a vague reference to the release by the other side of only those prisoners whose existence they have acknowledged. There never has been an accounting nor even a proposal to account for the remaining missing men, many of whom are known to have survived capture.

The North Vietnamese and their colleagues have demonstrated a disrespect for human life which is not open to argument. Their complete indisposition to honor their promises is equally well established. Is it reasonable to propose that, if they are permitted to extricate themselves from this war without a prior verified accounting for what they have done to their captives, they will refrain from burying their sins? Is it reasonable to propose that, when the pressure is removed, they will voluntarily permit the exposure of their inhumanity? Clearly not.

There is an abundance of evidence specifically made available to you which leaves no doubt about the likelihood that the other side will avoid an accounting if they can.

We suggest, for example, that you examine a document prepared by the Library of Congress and published in 1972 by the Government Printing Office, entitled "Communist Treatment of Prisoners of War—A Historical Statement Prepared for the Subcommittee on the

Accounting for American Prisoners and Missing Personnel in the Korean Conflict. This, however, is not the case.

We recommend that you read the testimony given by State Department representatives, Defense Department representatives, and other significant witnesses at a hearing before the Subcommittee on the Far East and the Pacific of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives in late May 1957.

The transcript of this hearing was published by the Government Printing Office. The testimony established that, despite a truce agreement which included provision for prisoner release and an accounting, there were wholesale violations by the other side. These violations were not limited to missing-in-action personnel but also involved men conclusively known to have been taken prisoners. To this day there are 389 American prisoners and a far larger number of missing men who were not released after the Korean conflict and with respect to whom the other side has refused to render any accounting. Their families have waited over 20 years for word of their fate and they are still waiting.

We ask you now—are you going to permit this to happen again to American servicemen and their families?

This nation owes an unlimited moral obligation to the captured Americans whom we sent into battle. It would be unpardonable to tolerate the abandonment of these Americans to discretionary disposal by a guilty enemy who has only hate and contempt for us. To do so by failure to act effectively on the available evidence is equally wrong.

American concern for the fate of these captured and missing men—all of them—is valid and substantial. However, the matter does not end with them. In view of world events during this century, our common sense tells us that there can be no guarantee against more war. The tragic fact is that there may well be other conflicts in the years to come. The children growing up among us today are the candidates for maltreatment as POW's in the not too distant future. The consequences of their capture will reflect the precedents which we insist upon, and achieve, now. Their suffering will be measured by our indifference.

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The issue of prisoners and missing men is one that is a cause of grave concern of all Americans. It is highly important also that the North Vietnamese and their affiliates be not misled into the belief that a desire for peace in this country will lead to an agreement which contemplates the abandonment of these men. There is no single obstacle to peace today more effective and disgraceful than the persistent abuse of captured Americans by the other side and the resulting torture of their families.

The way to peace must include the earliest possible abatement of this problem and it is high time that all Americans, regardless of their attitude towards the war, should make this crystal clear to Hanoi. You, as public figures, have no moral alternative.

Thus, there can be no excuse for a cavalier attitude on your part about the danger that some Americans will be left behind when everyone else comes home and proceeds to forget the war and the victims.

If, in the course of battling each other, you hurt the prospects of a total prisoner recovery and a total accounting, you will have reneged on a moral duty which is superior to any political consideration.

In short then, this is no time for selling out on those Americans who have done the suffering in this tragic episode.

You will fail them if you subordinate their cause.

You will fail them if you permit this war to end without first correcting the wrongs done to them.

You will fail them if you tolerate any risk that POW release and MIA accounting will be less than complete.

If the POW/MIA issue is bungled there will be no excuse available for you. The men who will be abandoned will have been left there by you. And thereafter, no amount of "patriotic" chest-thumping rhetoric will wash away your responsibility.

The final and historic evaluation of your performance will rest on a head-count. How many POW's and MIA's came home? How many were unaccounted for? How many more would have come home or been ac-

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American concern for the fate of these captured and missing men—all of them—is valid and substantial. However, the matter does not end with them. In view of world events during this century, our common sense tells us that there can be no guarantee against more war. The tragic fact is that there may well be other conflicts in the years to come. The children growing up among us today are the candidates for maltreatment as POW's in the not too distant future. The consequences of their capture will reflect the precedents which we insist upon, and achieve, now. Their suffering will be measured by our indifference.

Consequently, regardless of one's feeling with respect to the war in Indo-China, we do not have, as one of our available and acceptable options, the termination of

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The final and historic evaluation of your performance will rest on a head-count. How many POW's and MIA's came home? How many were unaccounted for? How many more would have come home or been accounted for if you had given them a higher priority?

No one will be watching you with more vital interest than we.

## Long Island League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia

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