

## M.I.A.'s: A Tradition 'Brutally Violated'

To the Editor:

Now, at the first anniversary of the Indochina "cease-fire," we who supported President Nixon through the long years of the war, who met and corresponded with him on numerous occasions to relay that confidence to him, find ourselves joining those who can no longer support him. Our reason is not Watergate but, rather, another kind of Watergate which we feel is reason enough even if the Watergate scandal had never existed. We speak of his total failure to seek energetically North Vietnamese compliance with the section of the treaty dealing with the M.I.A.'s (missing in action).

Never to leave our dead and wounded behind has always been the most sacrosanct principle of our military tradition. To those of us who fought in Vietnam, this Presidential failure is a brutal violation of that tradition. Any American who has followed this issue can feel nothing short of disgust. Our search teams have been shot at, some were murdered, relatives of the M.I.A.'s have been deprecated in face-to-face meetings with the North Vietnamese and Hanoi has refused to permit exhumation of the graves alleged to contain the bodies of P.O.W.'s who died while in captivity.

The Administration has papered over this issue with contradictory statements on the fate of the M.I.A.'s which are so confusing as to rival official statements on the status of our energy resources. Former P.O.W.'s have been officially rebuffed in their efforts to keep the M.I.A. issue alive. These are only some of the things which suggest that McGovern might have been right after all when he claimed that the P.O.W.'s were only a political issue and not a genuine concern. If so, it certainly applies to both parties.

Probably no one in Congress is in a position to condemn President Nixon for dereliction of duty toward the M.I.A.'s, for all are equally guilty. Our greatest shame may well prove to be the way we as a nation have abandoned the cause of our M.I.A.'s. It thus seems painfully clear that the President's betrayal of the M.I.A.'s is only a reflection of the entire nation's. This will not be forgotten. It will, no doubt, be considered a ready-made excuse for those who turn to exile in Canada instead of rallying to the flag if there be another war.

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New York, Jan. 31, 1974

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