

13 August 1992

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Open Session of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs at which CIA Activities and Personnel Were Discussed

1. On 11 August, at 0930 hours, the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs held an open hearing at the Russell Office Building to hear testimony about the possibility of living POWs in Southeast Asia. Three panels gave testimony, the first of which was Ross Perot. The second panel consisted of Perot associates--Mr. Harry McKillop, Mr. Murphy Martin and Mr. Thomas Meuer. These men had traveled with Perot on numerous occasions to Southeast Asia, were involved with Perot in a POW/MIA activist group called *United We Stand* and claimed to have been with him in Laos during a POW-briefing, which Perot reports the COS Vientiane gave. The third panel included former Ambassador to Laos McMurtie Godley and former Political Officer James Murphy who had served under Godley in Laos. The central issue that connects all of these men together is the purported briefing by COS Vientiane Larry Devlin. Beyond the briefing, Perot made several references to CIA personnel and activities from war-period Laos and other persons and incidents with CIA connection from the years following the war.

2. Much of Perot's testimony centered on fighting in Laos, which he termed the "CIA's secret war." He criticized the involvement of the US military that fought under direction of the Agency. He also mentioned, but did not expand on, a CIA operation by the name of *White Star*.

3. In the Spring of 1970, Perot made a trip to Laos at which time a Laotian official told him the Pathet Lao held 40 US POWs. The official later refused to give Perot a list of POW names, which he said he had. In March 1973, DIA listed approximately 350 US Americans as missing or captured in Laos. Dr. Roger Shields, then Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense, verbally confirmed the same, according to Perot. The North Vietnamese--speaking for Laos at the Paris Peace talks--said "10s of 10s" of POWs were being

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held. According to Perot, this was a common way of saying prisoners were being held in numerous groups of 10. A complication on the POW numbers arose, though, when Shields made press statements that the 350 POWs had all been killed or were not considered to be still in Laos or any part of Southeast Asia. The Shields' memo acknowledged that over 300 US personnel remained unaccounted for in Laos. Additionally, a March 1973 memo from Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense Lawrence Eagleburger to the Secretary of Defense explicitly noted that 350 US personnel missing in action had not been accounted for in information released by the North Vietnamese. Perot pointed to these things as evidence of US personnel left behind and as evidence of CIA interest in covering up its activities in Laos.

4. A central issue in Perot's testimony and that of the other panels was the briefing supposedly given by COS Devlin in Vientiane to Perot, McKillop, Martin and Meuer, with Ambassador Godley and Political Officer Murphy present and taking part. There was no agreement among all the participants on whether the briefing took place and who might have been present. Perot and his associates claim the briefing was in April 1970. The associates claimed Devlin told them intelligence showed 25 or 27 POWs were being held by the Pathet Lao in caves in the Sam Neua area. The associates said the briefing took place downstairs at the embassy, late at night after a party thrown by the Ambassador. However, Godley and Murphy had little recollection of the meeting. Godley did not recall a meeting. Murphy does remember meeting with Perot and his associates, but does not recall any numbers of POWs being briefed. However, Murphy does remember reading a report at another time about POWs being held in caves in the Sam Neua area.

5. Perot was quite critical of CIA during the major part of his testimony, making clear his suspicions that the Agency may have covered up the existence of the 300 to 350 POWs in Laos as a way of denying its activities in Laos. He communicated his belief that POWs remain alive in Laos or elsewhere in Southeast Asia and a belief that they could be surfaced if the US mounted the right kind of negotiating strategy with the Vietnamese and Laotians. Later in the day, Perot mollified his testimony and praised what he called the courage of CIA officers in Laos during the war.

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Perot's associates, Godley and Murphy, were matter-of-fact in their testimony. The Senate Committee, though, made it clear that it doubted US personnel remain alive as captives anywhere in Southeast Asia. The Committee points to repeated denials from the Vietnamese about holding POWs as evidence that the issue should be finally resolved with that conclusion.

6. Perot mentioned a number of persons and incidents that may have some connection to the Agency:

- * US Army Col. Garrity who worked for or with the CIA and led a 1981 POW rescue attempt.
- * Photo intelligence from 1988: USA Walking K
B-52
(both written in grass)
- * Jerry Daniels, a CIA officer working in Bangkok and involved in attempting the release of POWs.
- * Perot identified Devlin as COS Vientiane during the Laos war period.

7. The Senate Committee expressed interest in suggesting to President Bush that Perot be appointed as special representative to Southeast Asia on POW matters. Perot demurred on the offer unless he were given extraordinary powers to call for information on the issue from all government agencies and unless he were to have similar powers overseas to act unilaterally for the US with other governments. In particular, Perot mentioned some plans for action that could affect the Agency.

- * A call for an exhaustive search of signals and other intelligence documents for evidence relating to POWs.
- * A call for full public explanation of CIA operations in Laos during the war.
- * A call for opening of files on a 1981 POW rescue attempt led by Col. Garrity.
- * A call for public explanation of a purportedly unsuccessful SEAL operation to rescue POWs (date and locale not given) that resulted in the death and capture of some SEAL participants.

