

MEMORANDUM FOR: D/PA

FROM: EA/DDCI

Executive Registry
84- 6028

George,

This is an example of something John would have liked to have had annotated. Hand scribbles saying on the order of "Yes, these reports exist and he has them," or "this is *!?!*" would be fine.

Thanks,



Date 10 August 1984

STAT

FORM 5-75 101 USE PREVIOUS EDITIONS

DCI
EXEC
REG
P-310

Cover-up hint on Southeast Asia prisoner issue meets skepticism

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

A congressional champion of Vietnam veterans charged before skeptical House colleagues yesterday that intelligence officials knowingly abandoned U.S. prisoners of war in Southeast Asia and said he is "fearful" that a cover-up is now under way.

"I am outraged to think that our government knew of these live Americans up to and past the end of the conflict and knowingly left them in captivity and did nothing about it," Rep. Douglas Applegate, D-Ohio, charged.

"I am fearful that our president may not fully know what his intelligence community knows about our POW MIAs and that government agencies are covering up past mistakes and withholding information for whatever reasons," he added.

Rep. Applegate, chairman of a House Veterans Affairs subcommittee, testified during a hearing by a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on the Reagan administration's renewed effort to account for the missing GIs.

There are 2,483 Americans unaccounted for in Southeast Asia — 1,826 in Vietnam and the remainder in Laos.

Chairman Stephen J. Solarz, D-N.Y., of the subcommittee on Pacific and Asian Affairs, announced U.S. officials on Aug. 15-18 will hold renewed technical-level meetings on the problem, which Hanoi discontinued in mid-1983.

Hanoi returned the remains of eight Americans last July 17 and has agreed to allow a U.S. team to excavate at a crash site near Paske to search for remains of American servicemen, Mr. Solarz said.

Rep. Benjamin Gilman, D-N.Y., head of the House Task Force on American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, said a review of an earlier cover-up charge from another source turned up no evidence of such concealment.

Lt. Gen. James Williams, head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, described intensive interviews that are being conducted in an effort to pin down information in Southeast Asia and in dozens of other countries that refugees reach.

"Since the communist takeover of Indochina in 1975, we have acquired a total of 2,627 reports from Indochinese refugees concerning alleged sightings of Americans," Gen. Williams testified. Many proved to be errors or deliberate falsehoods, but 86 cases are being actively investigated, he said.

"Despite our persistent efforts, we have not yet been able to prove or disprove that there are any Americans being detained against their will," Gen. Williams said.

"We are proceeding under the assumption that some Americans are still held and we will always predicate our actions on that basis; however, we cannot yet prove that any American is now being held captive," he said.

Questioned by the chairman, Gen. Williams denied he has been involved in a cover-up or knows of one, and insisted that his agency has turned over all of its information to Congress.

Mr. Applegate testified that he has a list of 97 CIA reports of American prisoners in Laos that U.S. officials knew about, and 300 CIA reports on tracking prisoners in Vietnam as late as 1979.

"All of these documents have been declassified and while they may be old news, it clearly shows that we knew of and left our boys over there," he said.

"As of July 15, 1984, the Defense Intelligence Agency had over 2,620 reports on Americans in Southeast Asia — 640 of those reports are eyewitnesses," Mr. Applegate said.

"A refugee report, never investigated by the DIA, cites 50 live American POWs in northern Laos," he added. "This live sighting of our boys was made on April 26, 1982."

Mr. Applegate said his efforts to check the reports have run into "roadblocks in the name of national security" and it is for this reason that he fears there may be a cover-up, he said.

"If this is true, I must confess it is news to me," Chairman Solarz said. "When did the agencies cover up?"

"I said I was fearful that they might," Mr. Applegate replied.

"Do you have any evidence that your fears are justified? We can't go on a fishing expedition."

"I hope to furnish you with a pole and fishing worms," Mr. Applegate said, pointing out that there has been past testimony about sightings of live POWs.

"That hardly constitutes evidence of a cover-up," Mr. Solarz said. "The question of a cover-up is extremely serious. You are not in position to provide any specific tangible evidence of a cover-up?"

"No, I'm not," Mr. Applegate said. "I have not charged a cover-up, either."

"I'm a Democrat," Mr. Solarz said. "I'm not a hustler for Ronald Reagan. My impression is that the people working on this are sincere, trying very hard. If any evidence is produced, by God we will pursue it."

"You really seem overly critical of the Reagan administration," Rep. Gerald B. Solomon, R-N.Y., a subcommittee member, told Mr. Applegate. Rep. Solomon is a member of the task force that has been investigating the issue.

"As a member of a task force that has touched base with all the agencies concerned, I came to the conclusion that there was no cover-up," Mr. Solomon said.

— Ed Rogers