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Headline: Foreign Ministry Sends Letter on MIA Photo

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FULL TEXT OF ARTICLE:

1. [Text] Hanoi, July 20 (AFP)-Vietnam sent Washington a letter Saturday disputing the authenticity of a recently published photograph of three U.S. servicemen missing since the Vietnam war (MIAs) and offering to help clear up the issue.
2. According to a copy of the official letter obtained by AFP, the Foreign Ministry said that in April 1990 Vietnam handed back the remains of Lieutenant John L. Robertson whose plane crashed on September 16, 1966, in the northern province of Hai Hung.
3. The other two pilots depicted, Albro Lynn Lundy and Larry James Stevens whose planes were downed in Laos in 1966 and 1969, are on the list of U.S. servicemen killed in combat included in the MIA file given to Vietnam by the United States, it said.
4. The ministry also said Vietnam was concerned by the recent publication of the photograph in the United States and was ready "to cooperate with the United States to clear up (this) problem."
5. The note reaffirmed that "all U.S. prisoners held during the Vietnam war were handed back to the U.S. Government following the Paris accords on Vietnam."
6. According to U.S. sources, the three men, shown holding up a white sign saying "25-5-90," have been identified by their families.
7. "The results of the ninth Vietnam-U.S. inquiry (February-March 1990) show that Robertson died when his plane crashed," the note said.
8. "Vietnamese experts have recovered some of his bones from the ditch where the plane landed and they were returned to the United States on April 10," it said, adding that the "so-called information that Robertson is still alive is without basis."
9. The U.S. Government has said its experts could not identify the remains handed over by Vietnam.

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10. Washington has for several years been conducting searches here with the cooperation of authorities to recover the remains of MIAs for identification.
11. "John Leightson Robertson and Hubert F. Buchanan were pilots of the F4C which crashed. Buchanan survived, (was) arrested (then) handed over to the United States after the Paris Accords" of 1973 allowing for the return of prisoners, the note said.
12. "J. Robertson was considered a priority case by the United States and Vietnam cooperated fully with the United States in looking for him," it said.
13. In the letter, Vietnam asked the United States to take steps to encourage those responsible for the photograph's appearance to cooperate with both governments in resolving the issue.
14. "If they refuse to cooperate and if inquiries show that the photograph was created for financial gain, those people ought to be punished and criticised for having prolonged the unhappiness of the MIAs' families," it concluded.
15. The U.S. Government has said it could not confirm the photograph's authenticity.
16. The United States has in the past offered large rewards for proof of MIAs in Indochina, but has had no response until now.

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