

we have any data on
this? What is the former
OS's position?

V/R

- The Washington Post _____
- The New York Times _____
- The Los Angeles Times _____
- The Wall Street Journal _____
- The Washington Times _____
- USA Today _____
- Associated Press _____
- LPI _____
- Reuter _____

Date 12 August

Perot, Officials at Odds Over Report of POWs in Laos

By LAWRENCE L. KNUTSON
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Ross Perot and former diplomatic and intelligence officials disagree over whether he was told in 1970 that some 27 Americans were being held captive in Laos.

The Texas billionaire told a Senate panel Tuesday that he believes the best chance of finding Americans alive is in Laos where as many as 324 U.S. servicemen disappeared, mostly after their planes were shot down on bombing runs.

But former U.S. officials who were present at a briefing say they did not tell Perot, a prominent crusader on the prisoner of war-missing in action issue, and his associates that they knew of large numbers of POWs in Laos.

The Senate Select Committee on POW-MIA Affairs was to continue its investigative hearings today, calling former White House chief of staff Howard Baker and other former high government officials to testify about efforts made during the Reagan administration to resolve the prisoner issue.

Only 10 prisoners were turned over by Laos to Vietnam for release in the spring of 1973, the period in which all Americans were said to have been liberated.

But U.S. government documents said at the time that it was possible hundreds of Americans were being held in the country who were not released.

Perot and two of his associates testified Tuesday they were told at the briefing that it was known that more than 20 Americans were being held in a cave at a Laotian prison camp. They recalled the number they were given as either 25 or 27.

At one point Perot, who is of short stature, stood on a chair in the Senate Caucus Room to point out the exact location on a large-scale map of the region.

But McMurtrie Godley, who was U.S. ambassador to Laos at the time Perot's briefing took place, said he had no recollection of the CIA station chief in Laos telling Perot and his associates that a large group of Americans was being held.

"I don't think it is accurate to say that 25 or 27 Americans were detained," he testified. "I was always under the impression Americans taken prisoner in Laos were transferred to the Vietnamese."

The Senate panel plans to question the CIA station chief in private.

The agent, who has not been identified, is expected to deny that he was present at the briefing and told Perot that a specific group of Americans being held.

"We had the meeting; whether he can remember it or not is up to him," Perot said.

Perot told the committee he could prove to any rational person that Americans were left in Southeast Asia when the

*Actual
to use
any
do
not
who
the
1-25
1:*

CONTINUED

2

am War ended.

But most of the evidence he offered consisted of second-hand accounts, news stories, circumstantial evidence and disputed material.

"I do not have any videotapes," Perot said after being pressed repeatedly by committee members on whether he had new information about specific prisoners at specific locations.

But he quickly added, "It's not some philosophical, moonbeam conjecture on my part."

Perot said his belief that Americans were left behind is strengthened by reports that the Reagan administration received an offer in 1991 from the Vietnamese government to give up 57 prisoners in exchange for \$4 billion.

He urged that the government open negotiations with Hanoi to get at the truth.