

GETTING THE "BUSINESS" IN VIETNAM
the POW/MIA Roadblock.

Comment by L. Fletcher Prouty

Little things like "Japan's bulging \$50 billion trade surplus with the United States" were not allowed to cast a shadow on President Clinton's pleasant trip to Tokyo with Hillary last July. It concerned him not at all. What's a few billion?

While the President attended the G-7 Summit Conference, the Washington POST carried the following headline:

"Mitsubishi's Secret Plan for Vietnam."

The rest of the world has locked-up deals totalling not less than \$4.6 billion in Vietnam with much more to follow. The United States had barely reached the level of one-half billion dollars by the end of 1992. That's a ridiculously poor trade-off for nearly three decades of conflict that cost us not less than \$570 billion; or, could that \$570 billion itself be the motivator for future aspirations elsewhere in the world?

The same issue of the POST gave us part of the answer:

"While We Play POW Politics, Japan Inc. Is Tooling Up."

This game of "Prisoner Of War/Missing In Action Politics," (POW/MIA) has been exploited as a pawn in a Reagan-Bush imposed U.S. Trade Embargo against Vietnam, an embargo extended by Clinton. This short-sighted action is costing American companies billions of dollars in that fast growing Vietnamese consumer market.

What really lies at the root of this anti-business Trade Embargo? What is the real meaning of "POW/MIA Politics?" What are the stakes in the game? Who are the people playing the game?

For three decades, the POW/MIA issue has been a sinister scheme. We sympathize with its true victims; but it is high time that this contrived issue be defined. We need to understand that the real, never-stated, root causes of this POW/MIA impasse are based upon the following complex subjects:

a) Because the nature of "Warfare" in the future will be shaped on the Indochina conflict model, and upon the utilization of the CIA in its "make-war" role, it will be necessary to clarify the status of CIA clandestine operators in "Peacetime Operations" for future purposes. From the U.S point of view, this role should be neither the traditional

"spy" or the equally imperiled "illicit agent." Perhaps it can be made to be that of the "Peacekeeper" from "Special Forces."

Nevertheless, captured or missing Intelligence agents are not protected by the provisions of the Geneva Convention. Because of that, how shall be they be utilized in war-like operations around the world where sooner or later they will fall into enemy hands?

b) The dollar potential of the burden of insurance coverage for the POW who may be declared dead in captivity; and for the MIA who may be lawfully declared dead at some future date can be enormous. Quite naturally the insurance industry joins the family in desiring the return of the POW alive, or in the postponement of the decision on the MIA's death. Both cases defer payments to the beneficiary, and the family continues to receive the pay and allowances of the POW/MIA...until the release of the prisoner or a ruling of death of the MIA.

c) The Missing Persons Act directs the services to continue the serviceman's pay and allowances while he is a POW or MIA. Usually it is in the financial interest of the beneficiary to defer a finding of death until there has been a conclusive review as required by law. In 1976 it was estimated that the Government was paying \$9 million more annually in benefits to MIA families than would be the case if the men had been declared dead and payments ended. Of course, then...with the finding of death...the insurance company pays; so they are not declared dead. That's a part of the "politics."

d) In Southeast Asia, certain Americans, and their global mobster networks, amassed enormous fortunes in illicit drug transactions and through blackmarket money changing, gold and gem smuggling, and complex dealings in United States military materiel shipments to Vietnam. It has been reported to Congress that huge arms and supply diversions in Southeast Asia fueled currency frauds costing, at government minimum figures, \$51.8 billion in U.S. Treasury losses. Americans are generally unaware of the fact that many, so-called POW/MIA cases may be due to nothing more than the voluntary disappearance of a man who has made millions in drugs or other illicit gains while in Vietnam. He can't come back. He won't come back. He's trapped with his millions.

✓ NOTE: This latter subject is so little-known and so enormously important to the business world today that it will be discussed in some detail in a following issue of Criminal Politics. It underscores how significant this game of "POW/MIA" politics can be on an international scale; and clarifies why the U.S. government policy has

been to create and maintain this costly U.S. Trade Embargo against Americans doing business in Vietnam on this relatively superficial charge of POW/MIA non-accountability. This is not only a problem of the past. It looms as a growing problem for the future as the United States and its United Nations counterparts concentrate on Indochina-type conflicts for the future.

These significant financial matters can not be over-looked as inevitable causes of the game of "POW/MIA Politics." But, that is not all. More is at stake and for bigger money. It may be that there will be no more major "declared" world wars involving millions of Americans and modern weaponry of all kinds. The United States is increasingly becoming involved in limited action...hardly wars. Such warfare against disorganized and irresponsible foes, such as the Viet Cong, in the Balkans, Middle East, or in Africa where the enemy may lack the ability and the organization to account for and take care of POW/MIA combatants, may totally eliminate the possibility of a "Geneva Convention"-type of civilized POW/MIA treatment. "POW/MIA Politics" may represent an emerging substitute for traditional POW practices. We'll see. Let's look at the big picture.

During November 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill, Chiang Kai Shek and Stalin met in Teheran for a conference that would forever shape the future of Europe, Asia and the United States. Roosevelt, Stalin, and Chiang agreed fully that France must not regain Indochina. Roosevelt added, "After 100 years of French rule in Indochina, the inhabitants were worse off than they had been before."

It may be noted that John Foster Dulles, as his biographer Leonard Moseley wrote, declared in a speech before the Korean Parliament on June 19, 1950:

"The American people welcome you as an equal partner in the great company of those who make up the free world, a world which commands vast moral and material power, and whose resolution is unswerving...I say to you: You are not alone. You will never be alone so long as you continue to play worthily your part in the great design of human freedom."

This speech took on even greater significance, when on the following Sunday the North Korean army invaded South Korea and the Korean war began...right on schedule. Moseley recalls that, George V. Allen, U.S. Ambassador to Korea had turned to another guest and said that Dulles spoke as if he had "his own line to God," and that "he was getting his instructions from a very high source." On that date, Dulles was not connected with the U.S. government in any capacity.

On a similar occasion, on September 2, 1953, precisely eight years after World War II ended, President Dwight Eisenhower's

Secretary of State, the same John Foster Dulles, delivered a major address at the American Legion convention in St. Louis. With reference to communism and to Indochina, Dulles said:

"In Indochina, a desperate struggle is in its eighth year...we are already contributing largely in materiel and money to the combined efforts of the French and of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia." [In 1953 he had to mean, "and to Ho Chi Minh." The nation of South Vietnam did not exist then.]

Such statements generate future wars. When the planned invasion of Japan, with 500,000 American troops, had proved to be unnecessary in August 1945, more than one-half of the stockpiled military materiel on Okinawa was immediately re-loaded and shipped to Haiphong in Vietnam and given to Ho Chi Minh. The other half was sent to Syngman Rhee in Korea. That's strategic planning at its best. That gets an enormous supply of new armaments out of the U.S. inventory and opens the door to early post-war procurement of replacement equipment.

These enormous gifts of weapons to Syngman Rhee in Korea and to Ho Chi Minh made it possible for them to declare the independence of their countries, and to provide the war-making locale for the forces of the United States during the following thirty years.

These weapons had made it possible, on September 2, 1945, for Ho Chi Minh to declare the independence of Vietnam from French colonial rule, while at his side stood a U.S. Army General and an American OSS man. At sea, U.S. Navy transport vessels were carrying the cache of arms that became the basis of power of the emergent North Vietnamese nation, and the arsenal for nearly three decades of brutal warfare.

It should be noted that no President of the United States ever defined and stated the "Military Objective" of the U.S. presence in Vietnam during those three decades. No war can be won without a military objective. This uncertain warfare won nothing.

For the next three or four years the United States supported Ho Chi Minh. On September 21, 1945, the first American casualty in Vietnam, Lt. Col Peter Dewey, was killed in Saigon. By the nineteen fifties, U.S. support had been shifted to the French as they fought to regain control of Vietnam. Despite that, they were defeated at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954 by Ho Chi Minh's forces using their American weapons. The French loss added some \$2 to \$3 billion more in advanced U.S. weaponry for Ho Chi Minh as he took over their arsenal of American supplied arms.

This accounts for those eight years in Indochina, 1945-1953, John Foster Dulles had mentioned in his rousing American Legion speech. As a good lawyer, Dulles spoke on behalf of his patrons as he moved this country along their "make-war" course in Indochina. For them "SOVIET" and "SO. VIET" had become the winning combination.

During the latter part of 1953, I had been appointed Commander of a Military Air Transport squadron based in Tokyo. Our scheduled flights included weekly schedules to Manila, Saigon and Bangkok. During this period, 1953-1954, I met Col Edward G. Lansdale. He and his undercover CIA agents had just succeeded in the overthrow of President Querino with the controlled election of Ramon Magsaysay. This political victory played a major part in Lansdale's transfer to Indochina, and to the acceleration of "make-war" activities: as we shall see.

During the January 8, 1954 National Security Council meeting, President Eisenhower made the following statement:

"(I)...can not imagine the United States putting ground forces anywhere in Southeast Asia...Indeed, the key to winning this war was to get the Vietnamese to fight. There was just no sense in even talking about United States forces replacing the French in Indochina. I can not tell you [he said with vehemence-] how bitterly opposed I am to such a course of action. This war in Indochina would absorb our troops by divisions!"

This was January 8th, the President and the National Security Council, our ultimate national security authority. Yet, by January 29, 1954, Allen Dulles, Director of Central Intelligence, had won the approval of the President's Special Committee on Indochina to greatly increase the role of the CIA in Indochina by creating a Saigon Military Mission. His first official move was to attach Col. Lansdale, a CIA agent under Air Force cover, to the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Saigon, MAAG. In Indochina, the MAAG was not a "military mission" but only an administrative group.

Dulles, in less than one month, had completely ignored the warnings of the President, and had circumvented them with the creation of the Saigon Military Mission. This organization marked the beginning of a clandestine, para-military force that would bring Ngo Dinh Diem into power as President of Vietnam by mid-1954. At almost the same time the Geneva Conference divided Vietnam into a "North" and a "South" sector. It became the responsibility of the CIA's Saigon Military Mission, with a "blank check-book" and plentiful military materiel support from the Pentagon, to raise the level of the conflict in Vietnam, year by year in preparation for a major conflagration in Indochina.

Once he had become established in Saigon, his first, and most effective campaign brought about the movement of one million, one hundred thousand native north Vietnamese to the south in U.S. Navy transport vessels and CIA's Civil Air Transport air fleet. This was done by "sophisticated" terrorism. In later years these homeless refugees became the "insurgents" and the fodder of the warfare that followed.

During the early 1960's, President John F. Kennedy did his best

to prevent the shipment of American military units to Indochina with his policy as stated in National Security Action Memorandum #263, Oct 11, 1963, to the effect that he would have all U. S. personnel out of Vietnam by the end of 1965. Note the President's use of the word "personnel." He did not limit that to "military personnel." By saying "all U.S. personnel" he meant the CIA. That decision, among others, cost him his life.

The first American was captured by the Viet Cong in the early sixties. (Note the use of the word "American" alone and not "American soldier" to differentiate a CIA combatant from a U.S. Army soldier. This has become a most important distinction in the game of POW/MIA politics: but is never mentioned.) By that time an Interdepartmental Committee on Prisoner Matters existed and was chaired by the Dept of State. (Again, this was not the traditionally correct Military committee.)

By 1960 the United States had been deeply involved in make-war efforts in Indochina for fifteen years: first with Ho Chi Minh, then the French and finally with Diem and the newly created nation of South Vietnam. This was a new kind of war. It was a "war" without a declaration and with its U.S. combatants covertly under the command control of the CIA...a war without the generals. [Those "Generals" who were there during those years were either CIA men under the cover of General officer rank, such as M/General Edward G. Lansdale, or military men who served in a limited capacity under the Ambassador with a CIA Station Chief at his side.]

In retrospect, the United States had armed the only adversary ever to beat us in a war. As a result the American military industrial complex and its allies grossed no less than \$570 billion from the investment. That lucrative 1943 decision, made at Teheran, had paid off.

The CIA had been created in 1947 and by 1954 was prepared for action. Before 1965, if military men were involved in Indochina, they served under the operational control of the CIA, and usually in support roles only, such as helicopter pilots and mechanics. They were "sheep-dipped." They had to be volunteers, and their records were fabricated to make it appear that they were civilian employees of the U.S. Government or of secret proprietary organizations such as CIA's airline, "Air America."

Clearly the CIA and personnel associated with the CIA do not qualify as "Prisoners of War" as contemplated by the Geneva Convention. They are spies, and our adversaries treat them as such. This places serious complications upon traditional POW procedures accorded to fighting men by all combatants, and endangers bona fide military combatants by association.

It was not until 1965, when U.S. Marines under U.S. Marine commanders invaded Vietnam, that a more normal condition of warfare began. Of the 2,600,000 million American military and

civilian personnel who were involved in the Indochinese conflict, 2,546 were not accounted for by the end of hostilities in 1973.

To face reality, how did our Government expect our disorganized foes during the conflict in Indochina to account for those missing men? 541 were lost in South Vietnam where the "enemy" for the most part were the local renegade, "black pajama" clad Viet Cong. They were never a viable government.

475 more were lost in North Vietnam, which during those hectic years was fighting to establish a government. On July 17, 1993 it was reported that "Vietnamese leaders have said that they won the war, and they would not allow Washington to dictate terms." They have had enough of this game of "POW/MIA Politics."

There were 344 unreported POW/MIA in Laos. Here we have a situation in which we never were at war with Laos, and most of the men lost there were airmen who had taken part in air-raids on other targets. They were technically not prisoners of "War" or even missing in "Action." In Laos there was a newly formed, non-combatant government with limited, if any, administrative capability. It was confronted, internally, by a Pathet Lao force that was simply a renegade factor, i.e. hardly able to be responsible for POW/MIA's. The same applies to Cambodia where 28 Americans were unreported.

These may sound like small numbers and a lost cause; but to the insurance companies and to the families they are a very real personal and financial matter. By now, 1993, these men have become the root of the matter...at least for the families. How did it happen that "U.S. prisoner and missing in action" activities become the responsibility of a self-appointed League of Families? This had never before happened in our history.

During the period from 1966 to 1970, an unusual Prisoner of War/Missing in Action movement began. Throughout our history the responsibility for captured servicemen during war, and the welfare of their families has rested in the hands of each of the military services.

According to "The Missing Man" a National Defense University Press publication:

"The local commander has the right and responsibility to declare an individual of his command dead should he believe the circumstances so warrant. A decision by the field commander to place a man in a KIA (killed in action) status is final and not subject to review or appeal. The local commander makes the appropriate reports to higher authority, the next of kin is notified, the man's records are closed out, and disbursements are made in accordance with service regulations and the recorded desires of the deceased."

Yet, despite this long tradition, the services appear to have

dodged this role during these decades of Indochina hostilities in favor of a group of family members who, we have been led to believe, organized themselves to protect their own interests. Why did they have to do this, "To protect their own interests?" This strange turn of events, bears analysis.

This scenario begins, in the fall of 1966, with the wife of a prisoner, Comdr. J. B. Stockdale. Mrs. Sybil Stockdale put together an informal group of 35 POW/MIA families in the San Diego area. In May 1970, she called for a meeting of others who were active in these efforts in Washington, D.C. By the end of May this organization had been formalized as "The National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia." (Note again the deliberate avoidance of the word "military.")

Its "Articles of Incorporation" were signed on May 28, 1970 by Maryanne K. Brockley, Ronald A. Jacks and Charles W. Havens III...all residents of Washington, D.C. An initial Board of Directors consisting of fifteen League family members was named. The National League was to be an independent "tax-free, non-profit, nonpartisan, humanitarian organization." Again, there was no mention of military.

An elaborate organizational ceremony was held on June 30, 1970 in the League's new offices in the Reserve Officers' Association building on Capitol Hill. I attended that meeting in response to an official request from a General in the Pentagon that I serve as an Advisor to this League of Families that was to be formed.

Subsequently, I received a letter dated August 18, 1970 signed jointly by Mrs James B. Stockdale, Chairman of the Board, and Mrs. Iris R. Powers, National Coordinator of the League of Families, saying quite simply, "We need your advice. You could help by acting as one of our advisors." I became a member of the League's first Advisory Board as its Financial Advisor. At the time, I was employed as Vice President of a bank in the city. Their letter gave me no evidence that they had gotten my name from the Pentagon, or that they had any connection with any government department or agency.

Although the League emphasized that it was "non-profit, non-partisan" and that it was "being financed by the families themselves and by contributions from concerned individuals and organizations," it became obvious that this precocious League was well connected and that its role had been carefully orchestrated. In my capacity as Financial Advisor I processed a League of Families budget projection in 1971 for \$1,065,400. That speaks for itself.

The first matter of official business referred to me was a "Report of Advisory Committee on League Expenses" forwarded by Charles W. Havens III. Havens, a lawyer, and an incorporator of the League, served as its Counsel. His report arrived with a note typed on stationary from the "Reinsurance Association of

America" that listed Havens as its "Vice President and General Counsel."

Another active supporter of the League of Families was William J. Baroody, President of the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. Loy Henderson, Paul McCracken and Milton Freidman served on that A.E.I. Advisory Board. At almost the same time the League was being formed, the A.E.I. asked Charles Havens to write a detailed legal analysis on the subject of "The Prisoner Of War Problem" as a public policy issue before the 91st Congress: Second Session. It is dated December 28, 1970.

It may be noted further that the Baroody Public Relations firm supplied another member of the League's Advisory Board. As a result of his experience he was able to get the League started with a most ambitious direct mail campaign and other major publicity activities.

In other words, not long after the League of Families was created it was immediately off and running with a fully prepared array of advisors and other government and corporate support in the wings.

This note that Havens sent to me introduced the subject of "Insurance," and its quiet and considerable interest in the POW/MIA situation. This was a subject rarely, if ever, discussed in public in connection with the POW/MIA situation. Almost every serviceman is covered by insurance. The dollar "overhang" of the policies of the 2,600,000 men involved, at one time or other, in Vietnam was considerable. The incentive on the part of both the families and of the insurance companies to defer the finding of death, of POW's and MIA's, is considerable. Such a finding triggers the payment of that man's insurance coverage.

This explains, one reason, why it was decided that a League of Families be established separately rather than depending upon the military services to clear up POW/MIA affairs as had been traditional. It may also clarify why that League of Families was incorporated by a lawyer from the insurance business.

The book, "The Missing Man: Politics and the MIA" by Captain Douglas L. Clarke, USN of the National War College and published by the National Defense University Press, does not mention this insurance connection. He writes,

"From its inception, the League had been given sound advice by its original volunteer legal counsel, Charles Havens III - a former Department of Defense lawyer." This opens an interesting door.

This military author from the National War College placed Charles W. Havens III with the Department of Defense. Pentagon records reveal that, as early as 1967, Havens was the Assistant to Paul Warnke, who in turn was Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, OSD/ISA. At that time the

Secretary was Robert S. McNamara. Havens' Pentagon office was listed as Room 4E806, the same office as his boss, Mr. Warnke.

In those years that was an important and unusually active office. During the same years Havens was listed as being there, 1967-1973, it housed such other notables as Daniel Ellsberg, Gen R. V. Secord, Lawrence S. Eagleburger, Paul C. Warnke, Morton Halperin, Leslie Gelb, Roger E Shields, Townsend Hoopes, John McNaughton, Gen. John W. Vogt, Gen. Russell Dougherty, Paul Nitze, William P. Bundy and Adm Elmo R. Zumwalt.

At that time, Leslie H. Gelb (presently Chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations) was assigned to OSD/ISA offices as Director of the Study Task Force assigned to come up with the "History of United States Involvement in Vietnam from World War II to the Present," (1945-1968) better known as the "Pentagon Papers."

It is interesting to note that both Les Gelb and Dan Ellsberg, the man who "leaked" the "Pentagon Papers" to selected news media, were assigned to ISA during these same years.

Because of the significance of Charles Havens' role in the game of politics of the League of Families, it may be necessary to carry this review forward through its formative years. By early 1969, Havens was listed in the Pentagon with a telephone in room 4E810, but his office was listed as 4E825 with the same assignment, i.e. Assistant to Mr. Warnke in OSD/ISA.

Recall that Havens was using Reinsurance Association of America offices in Washington, D.C. during the seventies, at least he was using their stationary; but Pentagon records through 1973 show him as assigned to OSD/ISA with a telephone in room 4E810. Roger Shields, later head of the Defense Department's POW/MIA Task Force is listed as having the same telephone number. Strangely, Havens is omitted from the ISA staff listing at this time, even though he had a room number and telephone there.

Such anomalies generally signal a form of "sheep-dipping" and that the individual had a contrived assignment and that his telephone and office records were created for "cover" purposes. This might have "covered" a nominal assignment to the Reinsurance Association of America offices for part of that period for the express purpose of working with the League of Families on behalf of government interests.

What my assignment to the Advisory Board, and Havens' assignment, among others, say, is that the League of Families, if not actually created by the government, had a very close relationship with the Government; and that its affairs were carefully guided by a team of knowledgeable officials, such as Havens and his high-ranking Pentagon superiors. There can be no doubt but what this situation applies today and that "POW/MIA" politics is still big business.

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Before closing the book on the origin of the League of Families of Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, it may be well to look ahead at events that have already cast some shadows. What will be the role of the U.S. military forces in the years ahead? Will the CIA "Peacetime Operations" role in covert conflict remain the same? Will it be CIA's role to "make wars" until they burst into flame as happened in Vietnam in 1965? And, throughout all of this, what will become of the POW/MIA issue? Will there be any protection for the men involved and for their families? If so, will it be universally recognized by all countries, for all combatants...friend and foe?

If this subject of POW/MIA concerns, is considered so important that its resolution outweighs the multi-billion dollar losses being suffered by U.S. businesses and by the nation's economy, as a result of this ridiculous Trade Embargo on Vietnam, there must be a lot more to be said by someone, somewhere. The above represents an attempt to lift a corner of that tent.

Begin...Saigon an ideal location for a war...up the river...ships sunk in channel...Cam Ran Bay...Elec battlefield...p 149 Heacock