

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES

OF AMERICAN PRISONERS AND MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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I am the National Coordinator of the National League of Families of American Prisoners of War and Missing in Action. My name is Evelyn Grubb. My husband is Lt. Col. W. N. Grubb, MIA January 26, 1966. After extensive photos and publicity his status was changed to POW February, 1966. In 1970 he was unofficially listed by Hanoi as "dead". My husband symbolizes the full spectrum of the plight of our missing and captured men.

MIA does not mean dead.

POW does not mean the man will return home someday. We, who wait at home ponder the destiny of our loved ones. As the days pass into years, the agony of our men reflects from our eyes. 1300 of us know nothing about our men and suspect the worst - and the worst is not that they are dead. No, worse than that is that they are alive today and will die tomorrow; and the worst is that America will forget them.

As National Coordinator of the League I speak for the largest group of family members - wives, parents, children and close relatives of the more than 1800 Americans - military and civilian - captured and missing in Southeast Asia. That includes North Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, South Vietnam - yes, even China.

No cold statistical recitation about our prisoners and missing can do justice to their plight. Since 1963, when the first man was listed as missing, we have talked about their tragic situation. Now $9\frac{1}{2}$ years later 1800 more names have been added to that list, 500 of them during President Nixon's administration. It is time to quit talking!

I have come to you today as one voice - but speaking the words of 1800 men. Their request is that the platform states unequivocally that any resolution of our participation in the war must provide strong safeguards for the release and full accounting for all prisoners of war and missing men.

I cannot stress too strongly the need for a full accounting. MIA does not mean dead; it means that the enemy has not identified all of the men who are held captive. North Vietnam has provided a quasi-official list of 363 POWs held in North Vietnam. This number does not include the names of others who we know were captured by North Vietnam. The Viet Cong, the Pathet Lao, and Communist forces in Cambodia have provided no names at all of Americans captured in areas under their control. Unless these men are identified and accounted for we will never see them again.

Secondly, and of equal concern, is the rehabilitation and readjustment the men must make when they do return home. In former wars prisoners returned to their homeland and found that little had been done in preparation to ease the transition from captivity to freedom. This time assistance must be offered to help eradicate the physical and psychological problems stemming from their captivity. There is strong evidence that many men will need long-range care. Their families will need concurrent counseling, as will some of the families of the men who do not return.

Many of our men have been held captive longer than any Americans in any other war and under circumstances and conditions that warrant long-term attention to their adjustment.

I therefore suggest that the platform contain the following language:

1. We pledge that no resolution of U. S. participation in the Vietnam Conflict will be agreed to until we have solid assurance that all American prisoners will be released and all missing Americans fully accounted for.

2. We pledge that a thorough rehabilitation and readjustment program will be established for all repatriated prisoners and that the families of these men and of men who do not return will be given the best available family counseling.

These two pledges are the obligation I place on your shoulders. Our men survive because of their persistence, because of their dedication and mostly because of their faith - faith that you will have the persistence and the dedication to bring them home safely to their families - and soon.

Thank you for this opportunity to address your Committee. Members of both parties have been generous in their treatment of the families of our missing and captured men and for that I am grateful. But it isn't enough. Nothing will be enough until the men are home and accounted for.

Thank you.

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Statement by Mrs. Evelyn F. Grubb as presented to the Republican Resolutions (Platform) Committee, Fontainebleau Hotel, Miami Beach, August 14, 1972.