



Written by **William F. Jasper**

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Clinton Sells Out on POW/MIAs

President Clinton's announcement on February 3rd that he was lifting the U.S. trade embargo on Vietnam should have surprised no one. By now even the most naive must know that when President Clinton opens his mouth, it is probably to announce that he is reneging on yet another campaign promise. This, together with numerous signals over the past year — from the Administration and its friends in the Establishment media — plainly foretold that the betrayal was coming. Even so, the anticipation did not ameliorate the pain, bitterness, and frustration of those who believed (or hoped against hope) that the promise might be genuine, that the candidate might truly keep his word to account for the sons, fathers, and brothers left behind in Indochina.

"Everybody my age, whether they were in Vietnam or not, knew someone who died there, knew someone who was wounded there," the President stated in explaining his decision to lift the 19-year-old embargo. But he is "absolutely convinced," he said, that renewing economic relations with Vietnam is the best way to resolve the fates of the 2,238 U.S. servicemen still listed as missing in that war.

Sensational Show

Because of his draft-dodging and anti-war activism, which had plagued him in the 1992 campaign, Mr. Clinton knew that he would face especially fierce cannonades from veterans groups and POW/MIA families for breaking his pledge for the "fullest possible accounting" of their comrades and loved ones. The trick would be to make a convincing show that: 1) the Administration is making a full-fledged effort to uncover the truth and recover our men or their remains; 2) actual, concrete progress is being made; 3) the communist Vietnamese government is cooperating fully in the effort; 4) many or most Vietnam veterans and military personnel support lifting the embargo; and 5) that it is in our nation's economic interest to reestablish trade ties with Vietnam.

All of these points are patently false, but the Administration and its allies made a sensational show of it nonetheless, with a continuous stream of emissaries and "search teams" flocking to and from Vietnam this past year, making an endless parade of press conferences about "progress" and new discoveries of remains. The final coup for the Administration came with political cover provided by "liberal" Vietnam veterans in Congress who offered a resolution to lift the embargo so Mr. Clinton could look like it wasn't his initiative — he was merely responding to the "will of the people."

A column carried by the Scripps Howard News Service on January 2nd, "Home-front Problems for Clinton on Vietnam," by Jack R. Payton, foreign editor of the **St. Petersburg Times**, is typical of the coverage given to the shameful Senate measure, which passed 62-38:

[T]he two men pushing the resolution were John Kerry, D-Mass., and John McCain, R-Ariz. Both are Vietnam veterans. Kerry was wounded three times fighting the Vietnamese Communists and won



a Silver Star. McCain, a fighter pilot and also a Silver Star winner, was captured and held prisoner for almost six years. Bob Kerrey, D-Neb., another senator supporting the resolution, lost a leg and won a Medal of Honor in Vietnam. *Nobody can accuse any of these men of being unpatriotic or soft on communism* [emphasis added].

Obstructionist Senators

Nobody except those who are familiar with their careers, that is. Senators Kerry and McCain have been key obstructers of the investigations into POW/MIA matters and have been hell-bent, it seems, to sweep aside all delays to normalization of relations with Vietnam. As chairman of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, the suave Kerry, aided by the irascible McCain, did everything possible to debunk the evidence and witnesses brought forward to show that live POWs remained in Southeast Asia after Operation Homecoming, the official return of our POWs in 1973. As Al Santoli, journalist, author, Vietnam veteran, and noted POW-MIA investigator, reported in a January 24, 1994 column in the **Washington Times**, "Sen. John Kerry had 120 boxes of potentially explosive National Security Agency files reclassified before Senate [POW/MIA] investigators could study them."

Granted, we expect patriotism from our military men, but the uniform does not confer immunity from the weaknesses and vices to which all men are susceptible. From ancient times to the present, there have always been accomplished men at arms who have put self-interest above country and who have been willing even to betray their own people. Alcibiades, Athenian general and politician, aided the enemy Spartans in the conquest of Athens.

In our own nation's annals, it may be remembered that Benedict Arnold was one of George Washington's ablest generals, was wounded twice in battle, and was the daring hero of Ticonderoga, Lake Champlain, Saratoga, and other fierce campaigns. Yet his name is synonymous with treason. Fellow traitor Major General Charles Lee was second in command only to Washington, but, like Arnold, sold out to the British. Young Aaron Burr showed such extraordinary courage at the Battle of Quebec that he became a minor national hero overnight. But, like Arnold and Lee, his avarice, mendacity, and vainglorious ambition overshadowed his earlier valor. He became a U.S. senator, then Vice President (and nearly President), before plotting his treason at Blennerhassett's Island.

Are we unfairly sully the senators with these comparisons? Hardly. Those who have followed the POW/MIA exposés in this magazine and elsewhere over the years, know that the continuing lies and cover-ups concerning this matter constitute a string of diabolical and criminal acts running through several Administrations that, together, comprise one of our most shameful national sins.

Concerning Senator Kerry's role in this, the Center for Security Policy, a Washington DC-based conservative think tank, made this startling revelation on February 4th:

The Center has obtained a secret video of Sen. Kerry meeting in Hanoi in December 1992 with Vietnam's communist president and former minister of defense Le Duc Anh. In it, the Vietnam veteran and former anti-war activist told his host that "All we need to lift the trade embargo is to



show the American people that there is a *process*” for resolving the POW-MIA accounting — *not real results* as President-elect Clinton once promised. He [Kerry] promised that “I can assure you that we will not make public anything embarrassing to your government.”

Recent Revelations

At least in *this* it can be said that Kerry — and Mr. Clinton — have kept a promise. In the past couple years such a flood of new evidence has come forth — from high-ranking U.S. civilian and military personnel, defectors, aerial photos, U.S. files, Soviet archives, etc. — that Kerry, Bush, Clinton, and company have had to show great ingenuity in finding ways to cover it up. For instance, in order to divert his own committee’s time and resources away from its intended investigative duties, Kerry wasted valuable committee hearings and assets attacking and investigating alleged “fraud” by dedicated POW activists.

Here are just a few of the many recent revelations that have been smothered, ignored, or “debunked”:

- **“Cold Spot.”** From 1971-75, the U.S. Air Force and CIA carded out a program of monitoring North Vietnamese and Laotian communist radio traffic under the code name “Cold Spot.” Al Santoli, in the *Washington Times* column mentioned above, reported that Cold Spot intercepts were describing “the movement and detention of U.S. prisoners — long after Operation Homecoming.” The Santoli article records:

An October 8, 1973 communique from the governor of Nghia Lo to the Minister of Defense in Hanoi confirmed the transfer of “112 USA pilots” from Lai Chau [near the Laotian border]. The “USA prisoners” were taken to a prison that previously held “Thai [captured in Laos] and Vietnamese” prisoners. And, “their snapshots were finished and I will send them to Hanoi to register with the Ministry of Defense ... and names and ages of all will be attached.”

On November 11, 1973, the governor of Sontay Province reported to the Ministry of Defense in Hanoi: “112 USA prisoners in prison in Sontay Province.” He named a doctor who treated 10 prisoners with “pain in their hearts They are not in a good way. Therefore, I quickly send this cable for you to decide what to do.”

- **Soviet Confirmations.** Last September the Pentagon made public a document from a Soviet GRU (military intelligence) secret report to the Politburo in December 1970 quoting remarks made at a North Vietnamese Communist Party meeting to wit the Viets were holding some 735 U.S. POWs, but were only acknowledging possession of 368 at the time.

- **U.S. “Defections.”** Chief of the U.S. Joint Task Force/Full Accounting Garnett Bell, one of the most seasoned POW/MIA experts, was relieved of his position after he testified before the (Kerry) Senate Committee last year that POWs were alive after 1973. Renowned forensics scientist, Dr. Ellis Kerley, head of the Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii, was removed from his position for refusing falsely to identify bones and teeth as those of MIAs. Colonel Millard A. Peck resigned as chief of the Special Office for POW/MIA Affairs in the Defense Intelligence Agency in 1991 because of the “high-level knavery” and the “mindset to debunk” which he found rampant in the



agency.

Experts Not Wanted

The case of Garnett Bell, is particularly instructive. Bell, now 52, first went to Vietnam in 1965 in the Army infantry and was assigned to supervising Montagnards in the central highlands of Vietnam along the borders of Laos and Cambodia. Later he received special training in languages, intelligence, unconventional warfare, and prisoner/hostage rescue.

He was first assigned to POW/MIA investigations in 1968, debriefing communist defectors. He is fluent in the Vietnamese, Lao, and Thai languages and is probably as familiar with the geography, culture, politics, and history of Southeast Asia as any Westerner. These assets — together with his training, extensive POW/MIA investigative experience, and extraordinary recall ability — made Bell the ideal choice to head POW/ MIA field operations. POW activists were understandably hopeful when, in May 1991, he became the chief of the newly created U.S. Office for POW/MIA Affairs in Hanoi. Finally we would get somewhere.

However, Bell told THE NEW AMERICAN, he and his small staff were not allowed to do much. The “live sighting” inspections were “done by an Air Force man who would come in from Colorado.” According to Bell, this man had no current experience in Vietnam, no language proficiency, and no background experience in POW/MIA affairs. We asked Bell why he and his staff were not allowed to do the investigations; after all, they were the experts in the field? “We asked the same thing,” he said, but were told simply, “We have people to do that.”

Bell was replaced by young soldiers half his age who do not know the language, have no in-country experience, and have no POW-MIA backgrounds. The Administration and the media have focused on the big buildup of search teams over there and the increased number of excavations of crash sites, but that is all just purposeless “activity for show,” says Bell.

Contrary to the Clinton Administration’s line about Vietnamese “cooperation,” this expert says the communists are “playing the same game they played with the French.” Which involved incessant lying about the number of POWs and remains they were holding and trickling out a few bones a year for over 30 years (1954-1986) for ransom. “In 1986, after insisting all those years that they had nothing, they returned some 24,000 remains — for an undisclosed sum.”

Is it possible that American POW’s could still be alive, after all these years, in Southeast Asia or in the Soviet Union? Readers of THE NEW AMERICAN may recall that in the September 24, 1991 issue we reported on the fate of Sung Kil Kim, a Korean, who along with 18 other men from his village were taken captive by Soviet forces in 1945. Believed dead by their families, many of them survived in Soviet captivity for over 40 years and several were allowed to return to Korea in 1990 and 1991.

Sung Kil Kim’s son, Ki Young Kim, a Seattle businessman, journeyed to the Soviet Ukraine to see his father but, tragically, arrived just months after his father had died. However, some of his father’s fellow captives, then in their 80s, were still living there and were able to relate to Ki Young Kim details of the ordeal and share photos and memories of his father. “My father survived 45



years,” Mr. Kim told THE NEW AMERICAN, “He was 85 years old when he died.” Yes, it is possible. Neither are the communists “mellowing” on human rights. “In 1986 at the Communist Party Congress when the Vietnamese decided to begin opening up [to foreign tourism and investment], they transferred a considerable number of personnel from the military to security,” Bell explains. He points out that it is as tightly controlled a police state as you will find anywhere. “You are under constant surveillance. You are not free to travel without monitoring. If you hire a car, an interpreter, or guide, I can guarantee you he or she is a security agent.” He cited many examples from his own experience.

Who Will We Believe?

But Mr. Clinton and Senator Kerry say the Viet Reds are “cooperating,” and the Council on Foreign Relations-run media chorus echoes the line. As we see, for instance, with the **Wall Street Journal** column on the editorial page on February 2nd, “Lift the Embargo Against Vietnam — Help Old Allies,” by James Webb (CFR), Assistant Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Navy in the Reagan Administration. “The present POW search inside Vietnam has been well executed by both sides, and the Vietnamese government has fully cooperated in this effort,” says Webb.

On the same day, Elaine Sciolino (CFR) reported in the *New York Times* that it was “no secret” that Mr. Clinton had been planning for weeks to lift the embargo, but that he had been worried about opposition from veteran’s groups. “But the mood changed sharply,” she said, “after Winston Lord, the assistant secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, returned from Vietnam in December with a favorable report on Hanoi’s increased cooperation.”

This is the same Winston Lord, of course, who sat at the elbow of Henry Kissinger (CFR) at the Paris “peace accords” 20 years ago and helped devise the betrayal they called “peace with honor.” And this is the same Winston Lord who served as CFR president from 1977-85, and who (when he was U.S. Ambassador to China) assured us that we could help China go “democratic” by pouring billions of dollars and megatons of technology into the communist regime.

You may recall that Lord left Beijing before Li Peng and friends turned loose the tanks on the throngs at Tiananmen Square. Now he is helping all his CFR corporate comrades sidle up to the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Export-Import Bank and other taxpayer-funded “trade” troughs in the name of promoting jobs and “free markets.”

It comes down to this: Who are we going to believe? Clinton, Kerry, Lord, the **New York Times**, et al. — the ones who were wrong 20 years ago and have been wrong ever since? Or Garnett Bell, Colonel Millard Peck, the National Alliance of Families for the Return of America’s Missing Servicemen, the Disabled American Veterans, the American Legion, and the many other groups and individuals who have proven their integrity and credibility on this issue over the years?