AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1971

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1971

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY AND SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENTS,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met at 10:10 a.m., in room 2172, Hon. Clement J. Zablocki (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. ZABLOCKI. The subcommittee will please come to order.


These continuing hearings are intended to keep Congress abreast of all current developments and the broad range of views on the issue. Through this effort of constant congressional attention it is hoped that we cannot only contribute to but inaugurate ways and means of securing the prompt and safe return of all POW/MIA's.

In keeping with that congressional responsibility of helping our POW/MIA's and their families, I am pleased to report that on next Monday the House of Representatives will be considering House Concurrent Resolution 374. This resolution expresses the sense of Congress in protesting the treatment of U.S. servicemen held prisoner and calls for their humane treatment in full compliance with the requirements of the Geneva Convention. As you know, it was scheduled yesterday but because of the death of Congressman Watts it was postponed until next Monday.

We sincerely hope, of course, that this resolution will help convince the other side of our deep concern over the welfare of our men. In that connection I have already been assured by the Department of State that the resolution will be transmitted immediately to our peace negotiating team in Paris and will be put to effective use at those negotiations.

It is estimated that more than 1,600 members of the U.S. Armed Forces are prisoners of war or missing in action in Southeast Asia. There are, however, many times that number here in the United States who are, in a real way, "prisoners" of their own loneliness, anxiety and growing frustration. I refer of course to the families and loved ones of our men.

With us today are three women who share the heavy burden of that fate—two wives and the mother of American servicemen held prisoner or listed as missing in action. Each has worked tirelessly and courage-
ously in a variety of ways to help their loved ones. We are honored by their presence here and look forward to having their views on this important problem.

Our first witness is Mrs. Iris Powers of Washington, D.C. Mrs. Powers' son, Lowell, served in Vietnam as an Army helicopter pilot and has been missing in action since April 2, 1968. Earlier this year she was appointed as a special consultant to the Army. In that capacity she recently completed a cross-country trip, during which she visited the families of Army men listed as missing or captured. On completion of that nationwide, 4-month tour, Mrs. Powers presented her observations and conclusions in a prepared statement to Army Chief of Staff Gen. William C. Westmoreland. She has graciously consented to share with the subcommittee some of the highlights of that report.

Mrs. Powers, I understand you have prepared a statement. If you will proceed, please.

STATEMENT OF MRS. IRIS POWERS, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO GENERAL WESTMORELAND ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS

Mrs. Powers, thank you, sir.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am Mrs. Iris R. Powers, consultant to the Army on matters affecting the families of soldiers who are prisoners of war or missing in action in Southeast Asia.

As some of you know, I served as the first national coordinator of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia when we formally incorporated and opened a headquarters in Washington, D.C. I was charged with responsibility for establishing the League's organization and administration of our national office. I have served as a member of the board of directors of the league for the past 16 months, and I am very honored that I have been elected to the board again.

I am a native of Arizona, and prior to coming to Washington, I was an admissions counselor for Chapman College, and its Division of International Education. World Campus. About my son, Army CWO, Lowell S. Powers, a helicopter pilot, has been missing in South Vietnam since April 2, 1968.

As I open my prepared statement, let me say that I have followed the hearings of this subcommittee with great interest. Please accept my heartfelt appreciation for keeping this issue before the Congress and the American people.

I am honored and pleased by your invitation to appear here today to discuss the work I have been doing for the Department of the Army.

During my tenure as head of the National League of Families I became increasingly aware of and concerned by the fact that almost all of the public attention being focused on the POW/MIA issue was directed at the plight of the prisoners held by North Vietnam. Little was said publicly about the number of Americans "missing" or imprisoned within South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. As you know, 339 prisoners have been identified as captives in North Vietnam, and 449 are missing there. But, 811 other Americans are missing or imprisoned in areas of Southeast Asia.
Yet, despite this almost 50-50 numerical division, the situation was
such that many of our citizens—and I must say even Members of
Congress and otherwise enlightened representatives of the press—
talked or wrote almost exclusively about the men held captive in and
around Hanoi.

"FORGOTTEN MEN OF THE VIETNAM WAR"

This situation—and I should point out that it has not greatly
improved—was, and is, particularly distressing to the families of men
held captive or missing outside of North Vietnam. As you may recall,
the prisoners of war often have been called "the forgotten men of the
Vietnam war," but the group missing and imprisoned in the South,
Laos and Cambodia have literally become, and still remain to some
extent, the "forgotten of the forgotten."

You are aware, of course, that each of the Armed Forces has, for a
long time, had ongoing programs to aid and assist POW/MIA families
and to keep them abreast of developments that might in any way
affect their husbands or sons. Each of these programs differ to the
extent that the service problems differ, and it was not long before I
discovered that the Army's problem was indeed unique.

I would like to show you some slides to illustrate what I mean.

May I introduce Sp4c. Don Corbett. He has been kind enough to
bring the viewgraph and assist in the presentation.

First off, this is a geographical listing of our Army families through-
out the United States. As you will see, we are scattered mostly in the
Southeast, the South and the west coast. The large black dot is Fort
Bragg. We have more military families in that one area than any other
and I think that comprises about 20.

(The map referred to appears on page 288.)

The next slide, please.

The figures on this table show that about 25 percent of all of the
missing and captured in all services are Army men, yet those that we
hear most about are the Air Force and the Navy pilots held in North
Vietnam.

(The table referred to follows:)

| TABLE 1—NUMBER OF CAPTURED AND MISSING PERSONNEL, BY SERVICE, IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (AS OF SEPT. 3, 1971) |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Captured                                         | Army | USMC | Navy | Air Force | Total |
| Missing                                          | 163  | 23   | 144  | 235       | 461   |
| Total                                            | 433  | 116  | 257  | 793       | 1,599 |
| Percentage of each service in a captured status  | 14   | 21   | 56   | 29        |

Source: OSD Comptroller.

But what is truly startling about the Army figures is that 66 percent
of the Army POW/MIA are enlisted. This contrasts sharply with 3
percent enlisted among the Navy men and 8 percent enlisted among Air Force personnel. The Marine Corps comes closest to us, but as you can see, we have the vast majority of enlisted.

(The table referred to follows!)

**TABLE 2.—PERCENTAGE OF OFFICERS (INCLUDING WARRANT OFFICERS) AND ENLISTED MEN OF THE CAPTURED AND MISSING PERSONNEL IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, BY SERVICE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>USMC</th>
<th>Navy</th>
<th>Air Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Officers</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlisted</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Casualty files of all services, Sept. 5, 1971.

Now the next graph, please.

Again a difference. This graph shows the percentage of married and single men. As you can see, 62 percent of our Army POW/MIA are single, compared with 22 percent in the Air Force and 24 percent of those in the Navy. Again the Marine Corps comes closest to us.

(The table referred to follows!)

**TABLE 3.—PERCENTAGE OF MARRIED AND SINGLE MEN OF CAPTURED AND MISSING PERSONNEL IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, BY SERVICE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>USMC</th>
<th>Navy</th>
<th>Air Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Casualty files of all services, Sept. 5, 1971.

The next graph, please.

This graph shows the breakdown of captured and missing in all services. As the committee is aware, most of the known prisoners—those who have been identified as captive through various sources—are those held in the prisons of Hanoi—339. Only 63 of those Army men missing or captured in areas other than North Vietnam have even been identified as prisoners, and this identification coming to us only through propaganda and/or intelligence sources, or from our men who have been released or escaped. Never have we had an official list from the other side. And, so very important, is whether these men we have listed as “captured” have indeed survived.

(The table referred to follows!)

**TABLE 4.—PERCENTAGE OF CAPTURED AND MISSING PERSONNEL IN SOUTHEAST ASIA BY LAST KNOWN LOCATION, BY SERVICE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>USMC</th>
<th>Navy</th>
<th>Air Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Vietnam</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other than North Vietnam</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OSD Comptroller.

So you can readily see that the Army’s problem is somewhat different from those of the other services. Eighty-six percent of our men are in that ominous category; “missing.”
Army men constitute a substantial number of all POW/MIA: (a) the vast majority are enlisted; (b) they are not career men; (c) most are unmarried (which means that their next of kin are their parents—usually nondependent); (d) most of them are listed as "missing," and (e) by location of casualty, to our knowledge not one soldier became captured or missing in North Vietnam, the only area we hear much about. Not one, gentlemen.

SPECULATION ON POW CAMP LOCATIONS

There has been speculation, of course, that some or even all of the prisoners captured in the South, Laos, and Cambodia have since been transported to prison camps in North Vietnam. But this is, nevertheless, only speculation. There is, as it were, no evidence as far as Army families are concerned. The names of their loved ones have never appeared on lists emanating from Hanoi.

While at this point, I must digress for a moment to ask you, as I similarly posed the question to members of the news media throughout my travels: When Hanoi released its list of U.S. prisoners to Senators Fulbright and Kennedy in December 1970, did you even think to ask, "Is there an Army man on this list?" If you did not, gentlemen, join the club, for I have never received an affirmative answer.

The Army families—along with other families whose sons and husbands are missing or imprisoned in areas other than North Vietnam—do not receive mail. Only one letter has ever emerged from any of those held captive in areas other than North Vietnam.

The poignancy of this situation is that the Army families are less well equipped than families of career servicemen to deal realistically with this situation. Remember, Army primary next-of-kin are mostly parents; their sons are largely noncareerists; the mothers and fathers know little about military life, about their son's service, or about the channels through which they might hope to learn additional details about the circumstances of their son's disappearance. The majority of our Army wives are under age 26, and many were married just weeks or even months before their husbands left for Vietnam—they know little, if anything, about the Army.

As noted earlier, I became aware of this situation as I talked with more and more Army families who were bewildered and dazed by their misfortune, and who were terribly frustrated by the many unanswered questions they had concerning their son's fate. And I should digress here to explain that the answers were not forthcoming, essentially because the questions, in most instances, had not been communicated to the Army. Families, for the most part, just did not know they could even ask the questions, or that an answer possibly did exist somewhere in the Army files. In short, lack of meaningful communication between the Army and its families was the crux of the problem. The situation is understandable, viewed in the light that until quite recently the entire POW/MIA issue was kept hush-hush. But you, of course, know this aspect of the story.

At the end of my tenure as National Coordinator of the League of Families, the Army Vice 'Chief of Staff, Gen. Bruce Palmer, Jr., asked me if I thought the Army was doing all that it could for the POW/MIA families. I replied, "General, are you sure you really want to know?" He assured me that he did, and I then advised him that I thought there was much room for improvement.
ARMY WILLING TO CORRECT DEFICIENCIES

I can tell you with great pride in my son's service that General Palmer, this truly magnificent, sensitive man, immediately responded by asking me to come to the Pentagon and lay the problems on the table as I saw them. I found that he, General Westmoreland, the Secretary of the Army, and, indeed, the entire Army organization was not only willing, but truly eager, to tackle any deficiencies that existed.

I would like to point out that I am just a dumb "Jane Doe, civilian," and I think you may enjoy this sidelight: The afternoon before my appointment with General Palmer, an aide called and asked if I had copies of the statement I planned to make. Well, I had presumed I was just going over for coffee and a little chat. I almost had cardiac arrest when the aide said, "Well, Mrs. Powers. General Palmer feels what you have to say is so important that he has asked General Kean to be there; General Wickham will be there, General Sible, General Ramsey, General Bennett . . . I thought he was reading the entire roster of Army general officers, and when I eventually saw all of those stars assembled in one room, I was certain of it.

But to shorten the account of what happened, I hastily put together a nine-page report in which I detailed what I considered some of the Army's unsuspected deficiencies and how I thought they might be corrected.

I had expected the meeting might take at least half an hour. As it turned out, the Army leaders kept me for an hour and a half, and ended by establishing a task force to further explore the various points I had called to their attention.

One of the recommendations was that the Army appoint a special consultant to work with the families to explore their individual problems on a personal basis, to open up new lines of communication as to how the Army might improve its policies. I suggested that the position, if created, be filled by the next-of-kin of a prisoner or missing man, one with whom the family shared a common experience and with whom they could comfortably identify and talk about problems they might be reluctant to discuss with an official or a uniformed officer.

The upshot of this meeting, and the subsequent recommendations of the task force, was that the Army not only created the new post — they pinned it on me. I'm sure you must know how deeply honored I was and am.

On March 8, 1974, Gen. William C. Westmoreland, Army Chief of Staff, announced my appointment. I would be reporting to him "on ways the Army can best serve the families of soldiers captured and missing in Southeast Asia."

PRAISE FOR GENERAL BOWERS

At this time, the Army had a new adjutant general. Maj. Gen. Verne Bowers. This young, brilliant, dynamic man under whom the casualty section functions was the perfect person to guide this experimental study. My admiration for him knows no bounds.

I set out to visit as many as possible of the 700 Army part of kim, both here and in Europe—the European trip, I must add, was at my
own expense, for I wanted it this way—and to confer first with the four Army headquarters in the continental United States, plus 26 selected installations.

My agenda on post would be as follows: Entrance interview with the commander; a 2-hour briefing to military staff—comprising the Chief of Staff, DSPer, adjutant general, casualty section officer, chaplain, Army community service officer, comptroller, judge advocate, surgeon, chief of mental health clinic, billeting officer, information officer, Red Cross representative, and all family services and assistance officers in the immediate area—a press conference; meeting with families in a group and, afterwards, singly, if requested; visit the casualty section and discussion of individual cases; in the evenings, telephoning as many family members as possible who were unable to come to the meeting; an exit interview with the commander to give him my impressions and recommendations; then off to catch an airplane to the next post. In addition, family meetings were held in Detroit, Chicago, and Phoenix, where it was easier to get the groups together than at an Army installation.

In inviting me here today, you specifically requested that I discuss with you some of the recommendations I made as a result of my intensive 4-month trip; and what the Army has done to implement new policies.

If I have been a little wordy, as usual, in leading up to the principal area of discussion, it is because I felt you would be interested in the background information I have given you. But particularly I wanted to stress that although I may have been instrumental in some small way in touching off the Army's detailed exploration of ways in which it could improve its programs and practices, the real driving force behind the effort was the Army leadership. If the Secretary of the Army, the Chief of Staff, the Vice Chief of Staff, the Adjutant General, and others occupying key positions had not sincerely wanted to pinpoint areas for potential improvement, it is likely that very little would have been accomplished.

And may I also say that the Army field commanders and post commanders, as well as their staffs, embraced the idea with tremendous enthusiasm, welcoming me warmly and encouraging me to openly criticize their efforts, if I felt that criticism was warranted. But, more importantly, they moved quickly to bridge whatever gaps I found, if corrective action was possible at the post level. Where it was not, I made recommendations to the Department of the Army, which instituted swift followthrough to establish new policies.

This morning I will attempt to outline some of the major problem areas I found, the recommendations made and the actions the Army has taken to implement improvements.

FAMILY SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE OFFICER

First, the Army representative assigned to assist the POW/MIA family in the past was designated as the survivor assistance officer. The title served equally for those who assisted the family of deceased soldiers. As you might imagine, the connotation was a constant and unpleasant reminder to the family that the man might, in fact, be dead. I urged that the title be revised, and specifically that we should dichotomize the two functions, with new, specific guidelines for the
man assisting the POW/MIA families. This has been done. There are now separate booklets and guidelines for each category. The title of the officer who assists the POW/MIA family is now known as a family services and assistance officer, and we have, of course, shortened it to FSAO.

Second, a change in the method of delivery of the 7-day telegram informing the family that a board will be convened, that there may be a status change from "missing" to "presumed dead" and so forth, is now sent to the FSAO who, in turn, hand delivers it to the family and explains what it means.

Third, following the report of the investigating board the Adjutant General writes a personal letter to the family in which he details the specific circumstances of the man's capture or disappearance, together with the findings and recommendations of the board. This is usually about 60 days after the accident and is the first comprehensive report the family has seen, and it always raises a vast array of questions. Heretofore, this "letter of circumstance" was mailed to the next of kin, and although a copy went to the army headquarters, none was made available to the FSAO, or the post charged with the responsibility of maintaining liaison with the family. I urged that this procedure be overhauled and it has been. The letter is now hand-delivered by the FSAO and he is there to answer the many, many questions which evolve. If he does not have the answer, he is now authorized to telephone the Department of the Army Casualty Section immediately and obtain the answer.

Fourth, I found many families—including myself—could not understand the lengthy delay—from 2 to 3 months—in determining the facts of the accident—why did it take so long? FSAO's were unaware of the procedure's time-consuming proceedings. When we all knew the thoroughness of this exhaustive investigation, we could understand why it took so long; however, in this area I felt the procedure could be accelerated by trained reporting personnel assisting the board of inquiry. General Bowers personally discussed this recommendation with the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, Vietnam, and others on his recent inspection trip to the Orient and the process is being improved.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

In all, I made almost two dozen recommendations to the Department of the Army. I am happy to report that many, in addition to those I have discussed here, have been put into effect, and that others are still under study or in the process of being implemented. To name a few—and I think the most important now—is: the group therapy sessions for families; better ways to return personal effects to the next of kin; a comprehensive booklet for the next of kin—and I am pleased to announce the rough draft reached me yesterday.

I was particularly gratified by the Army's action in forming a special task force to further explore what I consider one of the most formidable problems all of the services still face: the ultimate necessity, to (1) prepare the next of kin for prisoner repatriation, and the return of a husband or son who is certain to be quite different from the man, the family remembers, and (2) to also prepare families for the very real eventuality that the man may not return. Under General Bowers' office, with representation from the offices of the Army
Surgeon General, the Chief of Chaplains, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, the Comptroller, and several other staff agencies, a task force is now preparing to formalize and expand the programs dealing with this most difficult assignment.

Again let me thank you for this opportunity to tell you of the Army’s efforts to assist the families of our captured and missing men.

I have been overwhelmed by the earnest efforts that have been, and are being made, to do everything humanly possible to alleviate the suffering, grief, frustration, and doubts of those parents and wives whose son or husband has been held captive for the long span of time stretching back almost 8 years, and for those whose son or husband is still listed only as “missing.”

(The table below denotes year personnel were reported missing or captured.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Captured</th>
<th>Missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (captured and missing, 433)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OSD Comptroller.

I know that my son and others like him, if they are still alive, would be immensely proud of all that their respective services have done to assist their loved ones at home. Certainly the Army will never have to be ashamed of its efforts for him, and their behalf.

Gentlemen, we are all immensely gratified by your continuing concern for this perplexing problem. Thank you so very much.

Mr. Zablocki. Thank you, Mrs. Powers. May I at the very outset congratulate you and commend you for the enormous task that you undertook and did so well.

Mrs. Powers. Thank you.

Mr. Zablocki. And to commend you for your services not only to the missing in action and prisoners of war but also to your country!

You were appointed March 8, 1971?

Mrs. Powers. Yes, sir.

Mr. Zablocki. How long was that after your impressive visit with the various generals—the vast staff of stars?

Mrs. Powers. I talked with General Palmer and the others in October, and at that time I undertook a very intensive study and made some changes. The first being the name change for the assistance officer, and that be field grade rank, if possible.

Mr. Zablocki. Certainly the report you have given to the subcommittee is one we want to thank you for, and on which we now have certain questions.

For example, why was the Army initially so deficient in establishing and maintaining meaningful communications with the POW/
MIA families, particularly in view of their frustrations and many unanswered questions?

Mrs. Powers. Well, I feel this is the same with other services, too, sir, not just the Army. I think there was the lack of guidelines. Never before in our history have we had so many men missing or captured for so long a period of time.

Another reason is the profile of the soldier's next of kin: nondependent parents and young wives who, for the most part, do not know how to make their needs known. I put myself in that category in the beginning. I would say also that the machinery of the services had just never been geared for this situation. It's a lack of knowledge on both sides.

For instance, I wanted to come to Washington 2 weeks after I was notified of my son being missing. I, in my ignorance, was sure the Army would not see me and that I would have to beat down doors.

I called Senator Goldwater, who was then my Senator, and he said: "Well, Mrs. Powers, all you have to do is come to Washington, they will be delighted to talk with you."

I was astounded, and I think I am a fairly sophisticated individual.

Mr. Zablocki. That is surprising. After all, the military are also parents.

Mrs. Powers. Yes, true. This is true, sir.

Mr. Zablocki. On page 10 you commend the Army for forming a special task force charged with handling what you describe as one of the most formidable problems all of the services still face, and you comment that problem is to prepare the next of kin for prisoner repatriation.

What exactly does that involve?

REPATRIATION TASK FORCE FORMED

Mrs. Powers. As you know, it is going to be a cultural shock for the prisoner when he comes back, also that the young, handsome man that went overseas will be coming back a far older man with traumatic experiences:

If I may, just as an example, the little lady in the yellow dress there, Brenda Ravenstreet, wife of Sgt. James A. Ravenstreet, is very typical of our young Army wives. Her husband has been missing for over 3 years. She is now just 22, and they were married only 10 days when he went overseas.

It is going to be traumatic for her when she comes into the first meeting. She will have to make adjustments to this man. She needs help now. She needs help to know what her feelings are going to be and more especially what we expect his feelings will be so that they may pick up and resume their married life together.

It is going to be a fantastic adjustment on both sides, sir.

Mr. Zablocki. During your visit to the families, particularly the wives, did you find that many of them have decided to assume that their husband was dead and have already remarried?

This would also be a problem.

Mrs. Powers. No, sir. I have found a few that have divorced where the circumstances were such that they felt that this was what they wanted. I have found by and large the young wives bewildered,
Mr. BROOMFIELD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I, too, want to join with our chairman in commending you for a very fine statement this morning.

I would like to turn to another aspect of this problem; however, Mrs. Powers.

Mrs. Powers, you mentioned that you did tour the United States quite extensively and had all of these personal visits. Let's talk for a few moments about their attitude toward the war. Has that changed? Do they feel that different steps should be taken now? Have they become so frustrated that they feel that we should withdraw immediately? What is their concern for the present government in Saigon?

Mrs. Powers. I am awfully glad you asked me this, sir, because—I shall not say surprisingly—but I found, as I made these trips—again we are dealing with the older parents that have been through the depression and World War II and so forth—they have great faith in our Government, the thought being, "They know what they’re doing and if we cannot trust them we cannot trust anybody.”

I have found this true throughout.

On withdrawal, because so many of our men are missing the feeling is, “Good God, don't withdraw until we have had an accounting of the missing.”

Mr. BROOMFIELD. Well, I can appreciate they probably think the administration is winding down the war but what I primarily had reference to was the shameful situation that prevails in Saigon today with one man running for election without opposition.

Did you run into any conversation on that aspect?

Mrs. Powers. No, sir, I did not. No, I did not. I did not. I found that the parents and wives were so eager to talk about their own situation and their loved ones that really honestly, politics, knowledgeability of the policies in Southeast Asia, and this sort of thing was seldom mentioned.

Mr. BROOMFIELD. Did you detect that any of them had strong feelings regarding setting a date for withdrawal?

LEAGUE REMAINS HUMANITARIAN

Mr. Powers. No, sir, I did not. Well, yes, I found a few, naturally. As you probably are well aware, yesterday our League of Families voted to retain our league as humanitarian, taking no steps or any policy guidelines about setting a withdrawal date.

I found this in all of my visits with the families and mainly, I think, because most of our men are missing.

Mr. BROOMFIELD. What is your personal feeling regarding setting a date for withdrawal? Do you think that would speed up the return of the prisoners of war?

Mrs. Powers. I would like to answer you as I answered the press when I went around the country. When I put myself in the hands of my dentist, my doctor, or my lawyer, I don't tell him how to fill my teeth, take out my appendix, or draw my will. I trust you gentlemen; I trust my government. I have to. I don't know how to run this country. I vote for you. You run it for me, you're experts and I trust you; if I didn't, I'd vote for someone else next time.

Mr. BROOMFIELD. I sometimes think the Congress needs help, too. I think sometimes we have got too many armchair generals as it is.
In conclusion, I want to personally congratulate Mr. Zablocki. He is one of the best subcommittee chairmen in Congress.

Mrs. Powers. Yes, I certainly agree.

Mr. Zablocki: Mr. Zablocki has been one who has been intensely interested in this subject. I appreciate these hearings and certainly, I think, it is so important that we hear from the different members who are directly involved with this. I can only assure you that as far as this subcommittee is concerned, all of us, both Republicans and Democrats, want to do what is best. We want to make sure that we have an early ending of the war and also the return of these prisoners and also the missing in action.

Thank you very much.

Mrs. Powers. Thank you.

Mr. Zablocki: I want to thank my good friend, the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Broomfield, for his kind remarks; I want to certainly emphasize however that the chairman is only as good as are the members of his committee and I have fine cooperation from all of the members of the subcommittee, particularly in this area of our deep concern.

Mr. Davis: Am I am sure. Our keenest home study is.

Mr. Davis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to associate myself with the remarks that you made in your opening statement. I agree with them 100 percent. I also want to thank Mrs. Powers for a most comprehensive and most enlightening statement.

I had one question or two concerning the delay that is inevitable of course in reporting that a person is missing.

Do you find any big difference in the timespan of the delay between an aircraft crash and a battle casualty, for instance?

Mrs. Powers. No, sir. If I may explain—and this is something I told the Army that I felt we should make a point to tell these families—you could not believe the exhaustive investigation that goes into the report of the board of inquiry.

I was amazed as I went through the files. Any person that has the slightest knowledge about the circumstances—there may be 10 helicopters hovering above the casualty—each person is interviewed and makes a sworn statement. He may be miles from where the board of inquiry is being held. He may have gone on leave the next day. He may have returned to the United States. The board does not make its findings and recommendation until each and every one of these are obtained and thoroughly reviewed. It is then sent down to headquarters in Vietnam where it is again reviewed. It may be sent back to the board with "I want you to ask Specialist 4 so-and-so what about this," and so forth so that by the time it gets to Washington every single thing known by everybody involved is in this file. This is the reason for the length of time. It may take years.

When I talked with families who had not received the letter of circumstances, as it is called, and were just crawling the walls, after explaining to them why the delay, they were understanding. They said: "Well, I had no idea this is what is going on."
Mr. Davis. I quite agree with you. I have had personal experience which has led me to the same conclusion that you have reached; namely, that the reports are truly comprehensive.

Mrs. Powers. Oh, yes.

Mr. Davis. You simply could not ask for more.

I just wondered, however, if it is possible to give an interim report when important facts are well known and the only thing delaying the report is running down all of the rest of the leads and finding more people who might know a little more about the incident, is that done?

Mrs. Powers. Yes, sir. They do get an interim report and it is explained to them, that “We don’t know all the facts yet,” you see.

Mr. Davis. Yes.

Mrs. Powers. So, yes, they do. The Army does everything it can to keep them informed, but who knows? One man might see one thing and yet three other men might see something else, so you cannot say at this point, “This is what happened.”

Mr. Davis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Zablocki. Governor Thomson.

Mr. Thompson. No questions, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Zablocki. Mr. Fulton?

Mr. Fulton. We are glad to have you here. I am glad to see that the U.S. Army is moving in these fields.

I would like to also compliment the chairman and the members of this subcommittee, because this subcommittee has held more hearings and has taken more action than any other subcommittee of any committee of the House or of the Senate.

Do you not agree?

Mrs. Powers. Yes, sir.

Mr. Fulton. We feel that the continued interest of you people, especially the relatives that are here, is one of the chief things in keeping this matter and this issue before the public and keeping the pressure on world opinion.

Would you agree with that?

Mrs. Powers. Yes, sir.

Mr. Fulton. It is necessary to make these appearances?

Mrs. Powers. Absolutely.

NEED TO HIGHLIGHT POW/MAI ISSUE

Mr. Fulton. And to have the discussions, to have the releases and to keep the position of the prisoners of war and missing in action in the forefront of our discussions in government and in the public. What do you say to that?

Mrs. Powers. You are absolutely right, sir. Absolutely. We are so grateful for your hearings.

Mr. Fulton. My position on the matter of prisoners of war and missing in action is that we should definitely back the administration position and the position, really, of everybody in Congress and that there should be no final pullout until we do get the return of those prisoners, either to our own country or to a neutral position overseen by a satisfactory neutral agency.

Would you agree with that?

Mrs. Powers. I would agree, sir.
Mr. Fulton. When you, on page 4, say "by location of casualty, not one single Army man is in North Vietnam, the only area we hear much about," do you mean by that the accident or casualty took place in South Vietnam or otherwise but not in North Vietnam, or do you mean that no single Army man that has been a casualty in South Vietnam or in other areas is now in North Vietnam? What do you mean by that?

Mrs. Powers. No, sir; I mean that for the location of the casualty. We say 100 percent of all of our missing captured are in areas other than North Vietnam. This is unique only to the Army.

Mr. Fulton. Would you kindly comment for us what cooperation the chaplain's corps of the various services have made with you and your organizations that you have contact with?

Mrs. Powers. Oh, the chaplains have been magnificent, sir. As an example, on post, of course, every week they remember the missing and the prisoners in the prayers.

Also I suggested to the chaplains at the posts I visited that a Sunday be set aside for the families of men in their area.

For instance, the families that are served by Fort Knox, that a special Sunday service be held in honor of their men. It is now being done.

Mr. Fulton. What is the cooperation of the local church and congregation of these men where they have lived before being in the service?

Mrs. Powers. Well, now, sir, I really don't have an answer on that. I really don't know.

Mr. Fulton. Should there not be lines of communication set up with the local congregations as well so that they are included with the men's families?

Mrs. Powers. We have found that most of the local congregations are very active in the prisoner and missing issue on collecting letters and petitions and signatures.

Mr. Fulton. On page 5 you say that "The situation is understandable viewed in the light that until this administration the entire POW/MIA issue was kept hush-hush."

You mean really that this situation was not made part of the U.S. Government policy in dealing with the Southeast Asia governments on foreign policy questions?

Mrs. Powers. I had my league hat on there, sir, and as I read it over, as a consultant for the Army I should not have said "the administration" so I changed it.

No; I think you have better witnesses right here about the policy. As you know, my son became missing in April of 1969. As I understood it before that time you just didn't talk about the issue, it was felt we didn't want to give the other side a two-edged sword.

Mr. Fulton. The officials didn't want to make our concern known—

Mrs. Powers. Right.

Mr. Fulton. (continuing). Because it might have an effect on negotiations?

Mrs. Powers. Yes, sir; and it didn't work.

Mr. Fulton. I am glad to advise you that this subcommittee took the opposite position and we not only had a motion to recommit from this subcommittee on the Nixon doctrine which was adopted ultima-
mously by the House but we also had the resolution of the chairman of this subcommittee, Mr. Zablocki, which was passed unanimously. Was it not, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. ZABLOCKI. That is correct.

Mrs. POWERS. Yes, sir.

LINK MIA QUESTION WITH HIGH POLICY

Mr. Fulton. So that we have taken the position that there should be affirmative emphasis on the missing in action and prisoner-of-war situation and that it should be linked with the highest policy of this Government in dealing in foreign policy in Southeast Asia, both in Vietnam and elsewhere.

The elsewhere is under the Nixon doctrine so that it is part of the Nixon doctrine to be applied wherever it applies all over the world. Would you agree with that?

Mrs. Powers. Yes, indeed, sir, I would agree.

Mr. Fulton. You are one of the best witnesses we have had here and we all sympathize with you on your loss. It takes courage to keep going and to keep making these representations and to make appearances when it brings back the memories, and I say that for each of the relatives who are present.

Can I go off the record, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. ZABLOCKI. Yes.

(Discussion off the record.)

Mr. ZABLOCKI. Any further questions?

Mr. Fulton. Thank you very much.

That was just a feeling of fellow sympathy and realizing what you people are going through.

Mrs. Powers. Thank you, sir.

Mr. ZABLOCKI. Thank you, Mrs. Powers.

We hope that you will remain and after we hear Mrs. Stockdale and Mrs. North answer any further questions that are asked—if your time permits, of course.

Mrs. Powers. Thank you.

I have a meeting with General Westmoreland at the Statler Hilton a little before noon. I would like to stay as long as I can.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. ZABLOCKI. Among the provisions of House Concurrent Resolution 374 is a plea to permit the free exchange of mail between prisoners and their families—the barest minimum lifeline of communication.

Recently, the flow of mail from the prisoners to their families has slowed to a virtual stop. Aside from the inhumane nature of that action on the part of the North Vietnamese, there are varied explanations of North Vietnam’s motives and objectives in withholding mail.

Our next witnesses have agreed to share with us some of their conclusions on this question of mail.

They are Mrs. Sybil Stockdale of Coronado, Calif. and Mrs. Carole North of Wellsfleet, Mass.

Mrs. Stockdale is the founder and first president of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia—now meeting in Washington. Her husband is a U.S. Navy captain and pilot who has been a prisoner since September of 1965.
Mrs. North’s husband, Air Force Maj. Kenneth North, has been a prisoner since August 1, 1966. She is presently chairman of the board of the National League of Families.

I should explain at this point that Mrs. Joan Vinson, who was also scheduled to testify this morning, has asked to be excused. As national coordinator of the National League of Families, Mrs. Vinson has many pressing duties in connection with the League’s current national meeting. But I am sure that the two witnesses before us will ably present the position of the League.

Mrs. Stockdale, if you will proceed first, please:

STATEMENT OF MRS. JAMES B. STOCKDALE, FOUNDER, NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES

Mrs. Stockdale. Mr. Chairman, I want to begin by thanking you and the members of your committee for your sustained interest in the welfare of our men who are prisoners of war and missing in action.

I must admit that when I testified before you in May of 1970, I did not expect that I would have to do so again. I hoped of course that by now the problem would have been resolved.

My husband has been a prisoner of war now for more than 6 years and I know I do not need to impress upon you the anguish so many of us feel about what seems like an endless separation.

I regret to say that events over the past year have not helped relieve the anguish for many of us, but on the contrary, have increased it considerably.

During 1970, mail from our men increased at an unprecedented rate, almost all of which was delivered through the Committee of Liaison. This increased mail flow was much publicized by the Committee of Liaison and the general impression today is that this increased flow of mail continues.

That impression, however, is completely incorrect and I feel that it is very important for you to know that the mail from our men has drastically decreased during 1971.

In the first 6 months of 1970, over 1,000 letters were delivered from our men but during the same period in 1971, approximately 305 letters were delivered. Even fewer letters are being received during this second half of 1971.

1971 MAIL DELIVERY REDUCED

I will digress from my printed text and say since March of this year less than 200 letters have been received from the men.

I personally received 12 letters from my husband during 1970—one written during each month of that year.

During 1971, I have received only one letter from my husband written in the month of January. The Committee of Liaison does not publicize the fact that so few letters are being delivered this year and in their communications to the families they emphasize the number of mail deliveries rather than the number of letters being delivered.

Typical deliveries in 1971 include only 44 letters or 28 letters, whereas in 1970, some deliveries carried several hundred letters.
The Committee of Liaison also states in its August 1971, letter to the families:

To answer many of your inquiries, we do not believe there is reason to be concerned about the men who have not written recently or frequently.

The committee does not explain, however, why they believe there is no reason to be concerned.

Are the North Vietnamese refusing to allow the men to write even the six lines they claim is the very evidence of their humane treatment for our men?

Surely it would be contrary to the basic concept of humanity to allow so many of the men to write in 1970 and deny them this privilege in 1971. Or do the North Vietnamese abide only by humanitarian standards when it serves their propagandist or political objective to do so.

Have the North Vietnamese decreased the flow of mail from the men to increase the anguish of the families so they will, in turn, exert greater pressure on President Nixon to capitulate to their demands?

How can the world believe that the North Vietnamese are treating our men humanely when they allow the men to communicate with their families and then almost completely cut off this communication plunging everyone into a state of agonized uncertainty. Why then have so few letters been received from our men in 1971?

It is possible that the men themselves are refusing to write any letters because somehow they have become aware that their mail was being used as evidence of humane treatment which they know does not exist.

The North Vietnamese are well aware that they have succeeded in creating in the minds of the public the impression that mail is now being received regularly and frequently from our men. Having created that impression, the North Vietnamese may have very well rescinded the men's mail privileges in order to create the greatest possible amount of anxiety among the families.

LETTER FROM COMMITTEE OF LIAISON

The August letter from the Committee of Liaison to the families goes on to say:

Of course, the longer they stay the longer the wear and tear caused by separation from family and culture. The solution to that is for the President to set the date for the total withdrawal of troops from Vietnam so that prisoners may begin to be released.

It has been a month and a half since that solution has been available and there is still no response from Washington. Many prisoners could have been home by now and the accounting of men missing in action so many seek would have been available. They can still all be home for Christmas.

But it is up to each of us to pressure the President to respond positively to what many Americans, including former Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford, have gone to recognize as the honorable solution to an end to the killing and destruction and to prevent the list of POW's and MIA's from growing.

I believe that this sort of pressure coupled with months of silence from our loved ones is succeeding in making many of the families extremely apprehensive about the future.

1 The letter referred to was bound with others of the appendix.
I must also say that what seems to many an apathetic attitude on the part of Congress and other Government agencies has not helped alleviate this apprehension.

For example, more than a year ago we asked that a congressional committee for prisoner of war affairs be established and I understood that we had been assured this committee would be established. No such committee is in existence.

In 1968, a bill was introduced to exempt our men from paying income tax on their military pay. * An exemption I feel certain would have the hearty approval of all the people in this country.

Hundreds and hundreds of letters were sent to Congressman Wilbur Mills, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, asking that action be taken on the bill. To date, no action has been taken.

In 1969, we asked President Nixon to establish a task force at the White House level to try to find ways to help our men. We were told that the Prisoner of War Policy Committee in the Pentagon could adequately handle the problem.

Now, 2 years later, a task group at the Pentagon level has been established. Next year or the year after will the White House conclude that a task force at the highest level is needed to work toward a solution of the problem?

This record of events has not succeeded in giving us the confidence we need to believe that the welfare of our men is being given high priority consideration.

U.S. troops are coming home from Vietnam and we rejoice with these families being reunited but, needless to say I am sure, it does not inspire confidence in us that our men are going to come home too.

"MISSION IMPOSSIBLE"

On the contrary, as the U.S. fighting forces leave the areas where our men are being held, we cannot help but wonder when our men signed up for "Mission Impossible," I could give you other examples but I feel certain that you can understand that the record of our own Government, as the families see it, is bound to make the families feel frantic about the future.

I know that the Members of Congress and all of our Government leaders are tired of seeing us and hearing us. It would be pleasanter for everyone if we would go home and stay there.

Believe me, Mr. Chairman, we would prefer it that way, too. However, I honestly doubt that is going to happen until our problem has been resolved. Patience is turning into impatience. There is a feeling of desperation among many and desperate people will often indulge in activities they would otherwise spurn.

I thank you and your committee for hearing me, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank you again for your continuing interest in our men. I hope with all my heart, as I am sure you do, too, that there will be no need for me to come back again next year.

Thank you.

Mr. Zablocki: Thank you, Mrs. Stockdale.

Let me assure you, although we are not tired of seeing you and hearing from you, we indeed hope that the problem can be resolved and if you do come to Washington you will come and see us on a different matter.
Mrs. Stockdale. Thank you.
Mr. Zablocki. We will hear now from Mrs. Carol North and then we will question the two ladies as a team.
Mrs. North, if you will proceed, please.

STATEMENT OF MRS. CAROL NORTH, CHAIRWOMAN OF THE BOARD OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES

Mrs. North, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you again concerning the lives and fate of American men who are prisoners and missing in Southeast Asia. Maj. Kenneth W. North, my husband and the father of our four daughters, has been held prisoner in North Vietnam for more than 5 years.

This is the fourth session of hearings your committee has held relating to the prisoners of war and missing in action in Southeast Asia. You are our best listeners and for this I thank you.

The National League of Families is in the midst of its second annual meeting, which we had most fervently hoped last year would never take place.

In reading through the records of the previous hearings, I find that there is little more to say, it has all been said over and over again in many different ways. Our men have been held in captivity for unconscionably long periods of time. The families of the men missing know no more now than they did 1 year ago, or 5 years ago.

The resolution to the problem appears to be no nearer to solution than it did when the first hearings took place in 1969, and no nearer to solution than when this country joined in formal negotiations with the other side in Paris.

In the spring those of us whose men are known prisoners in North Vietnam could tell you that mail in the previous 12 months had increased tremendously.

At this point in time we can report that the receipt of mail from these men has decreased to the point of being negligible. Only 469 letters had been received from January through August of this year. Last year 2,646 pieces of mail were delivered.

I might interject here that the last letter I received from my husband was written in February and was delivered to me in March through the Committee on Liaison. We heard from my husband for the first time last April after his being held in captivity for 3½ years and we received 8 letters through the end of last year.

MAIL SITUATION DETERIORATED

A situation that had seemed to be much improved has deteriorated to a low point once again. I can't help but wonder why, and continue to agonize over the isolation of these men from all aspects of normal living and communication.

A new cause for concern for the men held in North Vietnam is the recent flooding and reports of famine in that country. It occurs to me, as it must to you, that American men are not going to be the first, in line for consideration when North Vietnamese themselves are hungry.
Further, that in the event of any sicknesses caused by conditions of flooding, the American men are not going to be first for consideration when North Vietnamese people are ill.

A continued cause of great concern is the complete lack of any information concerning those men missing in action in other areas of Southeast Asia, South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and the men held in China—the anguish felt by these families is cumulative as the years go by.

—Gentlemen, the frustrations of all of us are great. We have requested, urged, pleaded, and begged the Congress to make renewed efforts to resolve this incomprehensible epic in the annals of American history. These men should not spend another day in the prisons of Southeast Asia. It goes on and on and on... it seems that need and caring.

All I have left to do is to now demand that the elected representatives of this great United States of America do whatever is in their power to obtain the release of all American prisoners, and an accounting of the missing in Southeast Asia.

Thank you very much...

Mr. Zablocki. Thank you, Mrs. North.

On behalf of the subcommittee I want to thank both of you ladies for your fine statements.

Mr. Stockdale, on page 4 of your statement, if I understand you correctly, you imply the idea that you have reservations regarding President Nixon's Vietnamization policy. You say, and I quote:

As the United States' fighting forces leave the areas where our men are being held, we cannot help but wonder when our men signed up for "Mission Impossible".

Would you clarify your position, please?

Mrs. Stockdale. As the men come home, the fighting forces come home, and the war has not been settled and nothing about the prisoner problem, there is no resolution of the prisoner problem. There are some who have the feeling that our men have been betrayed. There are many who have the feeling our men have been betrayed by having been left there so long. In my husband's first letters there was no question in his mind but that he would be back here by the next summer. He went down in September of 1965 and in his letters to the children he said, "Don't count your old man out for long, I'll be back with you by next summer." And why would he not think? Representing the Government he did, why would he think that he would be back by next summer? Now he is in his seventh year.

There is just no way that you can be a citizen of the United States, the strongest country in the world, and not feel that you somehow have been betrayed by having been left over there, having your husband left over there for 7 years.

POW's on "MISSION IMPOSSIBLE"

What I meant by the "Mission Impossible," you probably are familiar with the program and the idea is if you are caught, don't depend on your Government for any help because we will not help you in any way. We cannot help but feel that somehow our men seem to be in that sort of a situation, and yet I don't think they were given the option of signing up for that. I don't think that is the understanding that they had when they joined the military.
Mr. Zabriskie: I agree.

Mr. Fulton: Would the chairman yield?

Mrs. Zabriskie: I would be glad to yield, Mr. Fulton.

Mr. Fulton: You want something done: What do you want Congress to do specifically that we have not done?

Mrs. Stockdale: I want you to set up that congressional committee.

Mr. Fulton: Is this subcommittee not doing a good job, because we have had more meetings and seem to be more interested than anybody else either in the Senate or the House. Do you want to take it away from us?

Mrs. Stockdale: No, I think you are doing a wonderful job.

Mr. Fulton. Then why another committee?

Mrs. Stockdale: Because we want a committee that will work on the problem all the time. You have other things to do, too; you cannot work on it all the time.

Mr. Fulton: Well, there is nobody in the House of Representatives that is notion either one or two other committees, and we are a subcommittee of one of the major committees of the House, the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and I would say that we are giving more time to it proportionately than any other subcommittee of the House in relation to the other policies that are before the House.

Mrs. Stockdale: I would not disagree with you there at all. However, when you examine the proportions, they are not very good.

Mr. Fulton: Well, at a certain point we come to the question: What do you think Congress can and should do?

Now, in the statement of Mrs. North, she says, "We have requested, urged, pleaded, and begged the Congress to make renewed efforts to resolve this incomprehensible epic," and then she says:

"All I have left to do is to now demand that the elected Representatives of this great United States of America do whatever it is in their power to obtain the release of all American prisoners and an accounting of the missing in Southeast Asia."

"Of course, join with you in your urgent feelings, but the question is: What does Congress do? Do we send in a task force to get them, or do we just have hearings and show the American people we are interested? Do we try to do it in Paris at the negotiating table through our U.S. representatives there—and they have been both Republican and Democratic—or what do we do?"

"You see, it is all very well to come in and demand, but what do you want us to do? Tell us what you want, and I am sure that everyone on this subcommittee will be interested in helping you. But those general demands, you see, to do something are very well intentioned."

SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR POW/RIA AFFAIRS

"Mrs. Stockdale. Mr. Fulton, there is nothing general. I disagree if you think there is anything general about the demand of a special committee for POW affairs. They would have their own staff, they could work on it full time. I think that is a very specific request. You asked us what we want you to do. That is what we want you to do of a specific nature, and we feel that it would be very worth while."

Mrs. North. May I, Mr. Fulton, respond to the fact that if you refer back in my paragraph, this is the fourth time we have testified, and we appreciate the opportunity to do so. In each of the times..."
that we testified, we asked for certain things. We were asked by you, "What do you want us to do?" and we told you. These things have not been done. There was no reason to go into them again. If you look in the congressional hearings, you will see that they have already been asked for and nothing happens, and we are frustrated, and we are angry, and we are afraid, and I think you can appreciate that.

Mr. Fulton. I don't disagree that many of us are frustrated and we are afraid of the future of these men, and that is why so many of us are concerned. But I cannot see what a new committee that is an ad hoc committee without legislative status, can do that this subcommittee that has legislative status and can take action is already doing. You see, the difference in the type of committee you ladies are suggesting is that that committee can investigate, but yet it has no status in the legislative process. It must be a standing committee of the Congress, a regular legislative committee, in order to report out legislation. So in my view you would be moving away from a subcommittee that has legislative status, has taken action, to a committee which would just be a debating society.

Mrs. Stockdale. I disagree with you. I think a committee with a full-time staff that worked on this problem full time would be extremely reassuring and helpful, and they could make many contributions to the other committees that might be somewhat interested but don't have the time or the information.

Mr. Fulton. But when they have no legislative power to report out a bill, then they become a debating society. This committee has the legislative power to act on legislation, and in two instances we have shown you we have put this up at the top of U.S. foreign policy, the question of the prisoners of war and the missing in action. We are the ones who have done this.

Mrs. Stockdale. I am not like the minister in church who bawls out the congregation for the people who don't come to church. I know that you are the only people that will hear us, and I appreciate that. I don't want you to stop what you're doing; I just want more added to it. I want a full-time staff working on a full-time committee on this particular problem, in addition to everything that you are doing.

Mr. Fulton. But you must be careful that you are not the preacher, preaching to the church choir, because we are on your side.

Mrs. Stockdale. I know you are on my side, otherwise you would not be hearing me. Nobody else will listen to us.

Mr. Fulton. Then why do away with us?

FULL-TIME COMMITTEE STAFF NEEDED

Mrs. Stockdale. I don't want to do away with you, I just said that I want you to continue. I do not want to do away with you in any way, shape, or form. You are the legislative; that is why this committee does not need legislative power because you have that power. I do think that we need a committee with a staff that works on the problem full time.

Mr. Fulton. You remember that Congress by setting up committees, jurisdictions has exclusive jurisdiction. In each of its separate committees, they do not overlap. So if you set up a separate committee, you will then take the jurisdiction away from this committee
which has the legislative authority, and put it into an ad hoc committee without such legislative authority. I am really doing this to point out to you what congressional procedures are that I don’t think you may have thought of when you made the recommendation of another committee working on the subject, which, of course, would take the legislation away from us.

Mr. ZABLOCKI. Mrs. North.

Mrs. NORTH. Is it not conceivable for this committee to choose a staff of people responsible to this committee to do nothing but spend all of their time working on this problem?

Mr. FULTON. You would be surprised the time the members of this subcommittee and the members of the staff of the Foreign Affairs Committee have spent on these subjects, because they are as complicated a subject as any of us have ever run into in all of our experience in Congress.

Mrs. STOCKDALE. We understand the complication of the situation. You are right; I do not know all the intricacies of the committee procedures and so forth, but I think you’re too smart not to know how to go about establishing such a committee that would be effective, if you want to. I have too much faith in you; I know you can do it if you want to.

Mr. FULTON. I think that is just the way we are, so that might be a difference of opinion, but I think we are doing everything that we can. I am sure that you have heard Mr. Broomfield, a Republican on this committee; and you have heard me, another Republican, compliment the chairman, a Democrat, Mr. Zablocki, for his intensive efforts, and also across party lines both every Republican and Democrat on this subcommittee.

Mrs. STOCKDALE. I am not criticizing this committee.

Mr. ZABLOCKI. If the gentleman from Pennsylvania would permit my time, I would like to take 30 seconds merely to state we went through all of this at our last hearing. I am sure the ladies understand and I had stated at that time, that an ad hoc committee, investigatory committee, would be welcomed by the chairman but this subcommittee or the Foreign Affairs Committee do not have authority to establish ad hoc committees. Such an ad hoc committee or a joint committee could only be established by the Rules Committee.

In the past I gave assurance; and I want to reiterate at this time that we will have a continuing effort and continuing interest in the problem of the POW’s and MIA’s. At the time of our last hearings I said our subcommittee would meet on the POW/MIA issue at least once a month. That might be about the number of times an ad hoc committee would meet. As you know, such an ad hoc committee would be comprised of various Members of Congress, some of whom may not have the background and information of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Nevertheless, I can sympathize with your desire to bring to this subcommittee to stop our efforts but you want additional efforts and we will assist you.

If the Rules Committee would see fit to approve or authorize an ad hoc committee on this particular subject, let me assure you I would be very pleased and happy to support that. In the meantime, however, this subcommittee will continue our efforts and concern in the plight of the POW/MIA’s. We will appreciate your understanding of what we are trying to do and we shall continue. I know that you don’t want
this committee to stop our efforts, but you want additional efforts and we will assist you. I decline without that, and I am sure that is not our attitude. I think our paramount interest is to get the problem put off the Senate Armed Services Committee. In addition to that, we have the Rules Committee, I hope you understand.

Mrs. Stockdale. Excuse me. Would you initiate the action with the Rules Committee?

Mr. Zablocki. At this point let me be very honest. That would be sort of a self-indictment of my efforts and that of the subcommittee. I would prefer not to initiate such action with the Rules Committee. I hope you understand.

Mrs. Stockdale. Yes, I understand.

Mr. Fulton. Would you yield for a suggestion?

Mr. Zablocki. Delighted to.

Mr. Fulton. The House Foreign Affairs Committee is not the only committee of the Congress which should take cognizance and jurisdiction of this problem. There is the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the two Armed Services Committees of the House and of the Senate. That is, the Armed Services Committee of the House has jurisdiction of every serviceman in the U.S. Forces. Likewise, the Senate Armed Services Committee has present jurisdiction of every U.S. serviceman in our forces. In addition to that, we have the Veterans' Affairs Committee of the House and there is now a new Veterans' Committee of the Senate that have jurisdiction of anything having to do with people who have been connected with the service and may or may not be in the service at the then present time the issue comes up.

So we have many committees but the problem is who is taking the interest and who is exercising the jurisdiction? In answer to that question, we come back to our fine chairman, Mr. Zablocki, and the rest of us on this subcommittee as being the ones who have taken an intense interest, many of us because of personal reasons. And under those circumstances to set aside a subcommittee that is acting—

Mrs. Stockdale. We don't want to set it aside. That is not true.

Mr. Fulton. Then how do you get away from the congressional rule that each committee shall have its own separate jurisdiction, because overlapping jurisdictions of committees will cause confusion? How do you get away from that? I believe the chairman that we would be saying to the Rules Committee—which has now made a rule that they will take no new actions beginning October 1 for the rest of this session. They will take none, so that I think we would be saying to the Rules Committee we are voluntarily abdicating our jurisdiction and we feel that somebody else can do it better and I don't think they can.

Mr. Zablocki. Mrs. North.

Mr. Bingham. May I comment?

Mr. Zablocki. Yes. I have stopped the clock of my own time but I think the gentleman from Pennsylvania—

Mr. Fulton. I think this is very important.

Mr. Zablocki. We will have the one comment.

Mrs. North. We don't want you out of business, you are our friends and we know that. Perhaps what we are trying to convey to you is our very deep sense of frustration that perhaps you are our only friends.

Mr. Zablocki. The chairman understands that.

Mrs. North. Perhaps some of you could get us invited to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Armed Services Com-
committee and Veterans' Affairs Committee to testify and we would not have to be asking for other action, or that we would have to ask for a reprogramming of funds to do the job. I am sure that the Comptroller General would be on our side.

COMPOSITION OF SELECT COMMITTEE

Mrs. Stockdale. Or a select committee could be composed of members from all the committees you have just mentioned, and then they in turn could make recommendations to the proper legislative body.

Mr. Fulton. We have invited them here to testify from the House and the Senate, invited everybody.

Mr. Zablocki. Mr. Bingham.

Mr. Bingham. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have no question to ask but I would like to make a little statement and then ask you ladies to comment.

I attended the coffee that you had this morning and I was impressed with the number of people that you had at that meeting. You also had a very good turnout of the Members of the Senate and the House. I think there is tremendous interest in your problem and if it does not appear always on the surface it is because of a sense of frustration of what to do about it.

Now, I am of the view that we will not get the prisoners of war and the missing in action, accounting that we want, the release of the prisoners of war and the accounting of the MIAs until the war is over as far as the United States is concerned.

Mrs. North in her statement has stated, and I think it is a reasonable demand, that we do what should be done to obtain the release of the prisoners. Well, I think a majority of the Senate and close to a majority of the House now believe that the action that should be taken to obtain the release of the prisoners is to set a date for the termination of the U.S. participation in the war, conditional upon the release of the prisoners and upon the accounting being made that it is the force of the present Mansfield resolution which is being reintroduced in the Senate.

I just want to say that I hope very much that your organization and others like it will decide in the democratic way that this is the course you should pursue, that this is the focus of the action that you should take. I don't know of any other way to get the prisoners out and I think it would have a tremendous impact on the Congress and on the administration if your organization would get behind this move, which I think is growing in Congress, to require the end of the American participation in this war so that we can get the prisoners out.

I know there are some among you or there are other organizations of wives and families of POWs and MIAs who do take this view. I gather that up until now this has not been the view of the majority of your group but I just want to say that in my judgment this is the way to get the prisoners out. I don't see any other way and I hope that your organization that is meeting now will decide to support this course of action.

Mr. Zablocki. Mrs. North.

Mrs. North. I would like to inform Mr. Bingham that at our meeting yesterday afternoon a vote was taken on this and that the delegation almost unanimously voted to remain in a humanitarian organiza-
tion. There are too many divergent political views within the league membership itself and our best interests and our best strengths are served by remaining united on the humanitarian efforts and each individual is encouraged to do whatever they feel they must as their own dictates direct them to pursue whatever course they feel should be followed politically.

Mrs. Stockdale. You see, Mr. Bingham, over the years we have been told that this was the way or this was the way or this was the way and we as a nonprofit charitable organization do not feel that we can tell you what is the way that we have to leave that to those who are skilled in the political field. I don’t think anybody would disagree that we don’t want the war to end.

Mr. Bingham. How is that again?

WANT THE WAR TO END

Mrs. Stockdale. I don’t think that there is any family member with somebody missing or captured that does not want the war to end. I don’t think there is any disagreement on that point at all, it is just that most of us do not feel that we are competent to say exactly how this should be done.

Mr. Bingham. Well, I appreciate your feeling. I must say that I regret that this was the action taken but, perhaps, the course that could be taken is for your group to continue as it does and for other groups of families and wives, parents, sons, and daughters who feel they can take a position—and I know some do—to operate independently in that regard.

Mrs. Stockdale. There is nothing stopping any person from belonging to as many organizations or groups as he or she wants to.

Mr. Bingham. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Zablocki. Governor Thomson.

Mr. Thomson. No questions.

Mr. Zablocki. Mr. Davis.

Mr. Davis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank both of you ladies for fine statements. I would also like to call your attention to a fact that I think is absolutely true—in the hearts and minds of every single Member of the Congress, Senate or House, there is a deep and abiding concern for the POW’s and the MIA’s. I think you can put that down as a fact, and there is a keen desire to do something about it.

I also think, if the truth were known, that a great deal of time is devoted to the problem in the offices of the different Members of the House and Senate, and the relatively small number of people in this room today does not mean that the degree of interest on the part of Congress is small—it isn’t small.

I think that if a clearcut solution were offered you would see all Members of the House and the Senate unite. I don’t think there is any reasonable solution that would go without the support of the two bodies. It would be, of course, far preferable to continuing committee action if a clearcut, wise, and responsible solution could be found and implemented immediately. I simply wanted to say that we should not be misled by the number of people at today’s hearing because the force of the feeling for you is tremendous.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Zabelocki. I hesitated to ask this question earlier. I do know that the league is apolitical and its primary purpose for being established is for humanitarian purposes—to promote humanitarian treatment of our prisoners of war and missing in action.

However, regarding the possible motives of the North Vietnamese in reducing the flow of mail from the POW's, granting the obvious of course, would you agree, Mrs. North, with Mrs. Stockdale that the intention may be to increase the anguish of the families so that they will, in turn, exert greater pressure on President Nixon to capitulate to the North Vietnamese demands? Is that, in fact, happening in your opinion? I know you are not speaking for the league.

Mrs. North. Yes; I would agree very much with what Mrs. Stockdale said. I think it would also increase the anguish between the family members as she pointed out and that would cause them to take action that they might otherwise never have considered taking.

BILLS PENDING BEFORE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

Mr. Zabelocki. Very good. Now for the record and in view of some of the statements, particularly those of Mrs. Stockdale, it should be explained that there are, as you know, several bills providing tax exemption for the military missing in action. They are pending before the Ways and Means Committee in the category of miscellaneous bills. As you know, the Ways and Means Committee at the present time has an enormous task on other legislative measures, so called priority legislation, however, it is my understanding that full consideration to the proposals will be scheduled as soon as possible.

I want to again reemphasize that all of the suggestions you have made are actively being considered by various committees.

We certainly thank you for all of the suggestions in the past. It has been and will continue to be the policy of the chairman and this subcommittee to share your views with the proper committees in order that your proposals may be given proper and full consideration.

I see Mr. Findley has arrived.

Mr. Findley, do you have any questions?

Mr. Findley. No.

Mr. Zabelocki. Are there any further questions?

If there are no further questions, Mrs. Stockdale and Mrs. North on behalf of the subcommittee and myself thank you sincerely for your testimony. We share your concern. We will continue our efforts.

Mrs. North. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. Stockdale. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And I thank the members of your committee.

Mr. Zabelocki. The subcommittee stands adjourned until further notice.

(Whereupon, at 11:45 a.m., the subcommittee adjourned, subject to the call of the Chair.)