



Dedicated to bringing out works that illustrate  
the extremes of human behavior



## ZALIN GRANT'S WAR TALES

### **POWS LEFT BEHIND IN INDOCHINA**

*How It Happened*

**By Zalin Grant**

Did we leave prisoners of war behind in Indochina?

I have been involved with this issue for over 40 years. First as a young army intelligence officer tracking U.S. POWs held in the Danang area. Then as a journalist for Time magazine and The New Republic, and as the author of four books on the war, including *SURVIVORS*, the true story of nine American POWs held in South and North Vietnam. I've talked to many former prisoners of war and the families of the missing the action. I've interviewed the officials involved at the Pentagon and State Department. I have read DIA reports and transcripts of every congressional hearing that investigated the issue.

Here is the way I see it.

#### **The Nixon-Kissinger Lie**

It goes back to money and desperation. The North Vietnamese wanted money. Nixon was desperate to get out of the war.

This was February 1, 1973. The North Vietnamese were stalling on signing the peace agreements, trying to get the best deal. So Nixon sent them a secret letter, promising \$3.25 billion in war reparations—or "reconstruction aid."

Nixon wasn't called "Tricky Dick" for nothing. He attached a one-sentence amendment to his letter. The amendment said that the agreement would be "implemented by each member in accordance with its own constitutional provisions."

This innocuous-sounding phrase let Nixon and Kissinger weasel out of the deal by claiming it meant the money was contingent upon U.S. congressional approval. They knew at the time Congress wasn't going to cough up money for war reparations, the issue was too controversial. In fact, Congress passed a law forbidding direct aid to North Vietnam.

#### **NVA: "Show us the money."**

It was one thing to think the Vietnamese would turn over all American POWs at the time of the 1973 ceasefire if they had nothing further to gain, but quite another to believe they would give everybody back—their only insurance, in effect—if they had been promised a big payoff.

After Nixon resigned over Watergate, the NVA tried to outmaneuver Kissinger by reading the secret letter to a U.S. Congressional delegation visiting Hanoi in 1975. The NVA left out the amendment. But

Congress finally pried the whole letter out of the State Department. By this time, though, the American public was totally fed up with the war and didn't want to hear about it.

### **NVA: "Or we'll blackmail you."**

The North Vietnamese were not so stupid as to get caught holding back American prisoners of war from the Hanoi Hilton. But the scene was set in Laos for them to carry out a little blackmail without ever having to admit they had not returned all the POWs.

Laos gave the Vietnamese what the Nixon administration liked to call, when plotting its own devious moves, "plausible deniability."

Hanoi is only about a 100 miles from the Laos border. There are a number of mountain tribes in Laos. We are familiar with the Hmong because they were led by the CIA and fought on the American side. But there were other tribes controlled by the North Vietnamese.

It would have been the easiest thing in the world to leave POWs under guard by tribesmen in a jungled area of Laos where you couldn't see 20 feet in front of you. The tribes people weren't talking and the secret could be confined to a very small number of the Hanoi leadership.

### **Laos: The Shell Game**

The U.S. and North Vietnam always played a shell game with each other in Laos. Both sides treated Laos as a separate conflict from the Vietnam War. Washington maintained the charade of Laos' independence and "neutrality" by using the CIA to run the ground war, while downplaying the massive bombing by U.S. planes flying from Thailand. For years the U.S. Air Force claimed that planes shot down in Laos were actually shot down in North Vietnam.

The North Vietnamese held to the fiction that they had no troops in Laos. They promoted the myth that the Pathet Lao guerrillas were allies completely independent of Hanoi when, in fact, they were order-taking puppets.

The North Vietnamese believed they were making more off the shell game than the U.S. And in fact they were. If the U.S. had treated Laos as part of the Vietnam War and sent troops there from start, they could have closed down the Ho Chi Minh trail and strangled Hanoi's supply route into Vietnam.

### **528 MIAs in Laos**

When the 1973 Vietnam ceasefire was signed, 528 Americans were listed as missing in Laos. Their capture was considered a separate issue from the POWs held in Hanoi. And no POWs were returned from Laos at the time of the 1973 ceasefire except nine who had been moved directly to Hanoi immediately after their capture.

The fate of the 528 presumably would be determined when the Laotian conflict was resolved. But that didn't happen. The Americans held in Laos disappeared without a trace, as if into a black hole. Based on statistical probability alone, it was highly unlikely that they had all died or been killed at the time they were shot down.

In fact, the Pentagon had more than statistical probability to go on. It had detailed intelligence, including 300 reports (97 from CIA) and even photographs that indicated some of them had been held in prison camps and caves in northern Laos, near North Vietnam's border—a hundred miles or so from Hanoi.

### **Pathet Lao: "We're holding 158."**

A high-ranking Pathet Lao official had announced to his American visitors in 1969 that his guerrilla group was holding 158 U.S. POWs.

Given the number of missing in action and the realistic likelihood that many of them were dead, that sounded about right.

Therefore, it was not farfetched to speculate that the Vietnamese intended to use the American POWs in Laos to make sure Washington coughed up the \$3.25 billion Nixon and Kissinger had promised them—and promised them, according to the first clause of the secret letter, "without any political conditions."

If the money arrived on schedule, so might the POWs from Laos. The Vietnamese could claim that the two happenings were unrelated. And if the money didn't arrive—well, Hanoi could afford to wait and see what time would bring.

### **Nixon-Kissinger Won't Play or Pay**

From the beginning, Nixon and Kissinger refused to play the game. They knew they couldn't get the money from Congress. And they probably considered the secret letter just a trick to get the Vietnamese to sign the ceasefire agreement without further stalling.

So Nixon and Kissinger moved quickly to remove the POW/MIA question as a potentially damaging political issue. As far as they were concerned, all prisoners of war had returned from Indochina. Let the nation celebrate and forget.

### **Families Stunned by Nixon's Duplicity**

In January 1973, Nixon and Kissinger assured the POW/MIA families that an accounting of all Americans who died or did not come back would take place in the same 60-day period that the living POWs were returned from North Vietnam.

Then, less than two weeks after the last POW arrived in the U.S., the Pentagon announced that the remaining 2,500 MIAs would be reclassified as dead within the year. This despite the fact that the Pentagon still carried 138 of them as POWs, meaning strong evidence, including in some cases photographs and tape recordings, proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the men were alive and in North Vietnamese hands after their capture.

The Pentagon's move stunned the POW/MIA families. The U.S. Government's treatment of the families had been disgraceful from the beginning. They had been lied to, at times harassed by the FBI if they took anti-war positions, and treated in general with a sugar-coated contempt.

More than one POW wife said to me, "We were made to feel as if we had done something wrong by having husbands who were captured."

The families often were treated even worse by antiwar activists, who called their husbands and fathers "war criminals" and harassed them with greater fervor than FBI agents. The antiwar activists lost no chance to try to manipulate the families to score points against the government's war policies.

### **Families Band Together**

The National League of Families of American Prisoners in Southeast Asia had been formed in 1969. The families banded together not out of support for the U.S. Government but out of frustration that the Nixon administration was doing so little to help the POWs.

### **Ross Perot Jumps In**

The National League tried to launch a publicity campaign to bring attention to the issue. That brought the families into contact with a Texas billionaire named H. Ross Perot, 39, who loaded a group of wives on chartered airplanes for a whirlwind tour of Asia and Paris in late 1969 and early 1970, in an attempt to force Hanoi to come clean on the issue.

The trip was successful in one important sense. It did focus international attention on the POW issue—and on Ross Perot.

### **Nixon Jumps In Too**

The Nixon administration was surprised by the success of the POW wives in focusing attention on the issue. Later, POWs held in Hanoi found it hard to believe or accept that it was their wives, not their Commander-in-Chief, who had triggered the improvements in their prison conditions.

Nixon simply jumped on Perot's wagon and quickly moved to take political advantage of what the wives had done. From then on, the Nixon administration relentlessly hammered Hanoi with the charge of being "inhumane" to American prisoners of war.

In one of the endless ironies of the POW/MIA question, the administration's cynical use of the issue did in fact gain better treatment for the POWs and probably resulted in saving the lives of some prisoners.

Under international pressure, Hanoi improved the living conditions of POWs held in the jungles of South Vietnam, where a number had already died of malnutrition, and lessened the torture of those held in North Vietnam.

### **U.S. to Families: "Get Over It."**

But after the 1973 ceasefire was signed neither the Nixon administration nor the antiwar movement was on hand to support the families of the MIAs who were about to be declared dead without further investigation. If anything united the two opposing groups, which had fought so bitterly during the war, it was a unanimous feeling of indifference about the fate of the MIAs.

The prowar elements were not about to give into North Vietnamese demands for war reparations. The antiwar elements were not going to do anything to challenge people they considered the aggrieved party and heroes of the conflict. The media largely avoided taking sides.

So it was with a feeling of isolation that the National League of Families filed a lawsuit against the United States Government in 1973 to keep their relatives from arbitrarily being declared dead without further inquiry. A federal court agreed with the families and issued a restraining order to stop the Pentagon from reclassifying the MIAs.

From there the families turned to Congress to resolve their plight.

### **Sonny Sings Kissinger**

U.S. Representative G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery, Democrat of Mississippi, probably did more to derail the POW issue than any other government official except Henry Kissinger.

It was a safe bet that Sonny Montgomery would never be enshrined in a Pantheon of Great Thinkers who walked the halls of the U.S. Capitol. But his colleagues knew him as a gentleman of courtly Southern manners and someone who possessed an integrity that matched the scale of most professional politicians in Washington. He was a supporter of the military and proudly wore his stars as a general of the National Guard.

One has to assume that Sonny Montgomery sincerely believed that the U.S. should forget about the Vietnam War and move on. This was an attitude shared by millions of Americans, not all of them unsympathetic to the pain of the MIA families.

Sonny Montgomery decided that his House Select Committee on MIAs could do America a favor by declaring that all the MIAs were dead and that a proper accounting of their remains, except in a few cases, would be impossible.

Montgomery said the conclusions of his committee, arrived at in 1976, was based on, in his words, an "exhaustive" intelligence investigation. This was simply not true. There was hardly any investigation and the one carried out was at best perfunctory.

The only objective conclusion to be reached from an examination of the facts was a Standoff: The families couldn't prove any of their relatives were alive, but neither could the U.S. Government or Sonny Montgomery prove that they were all dead.

### **The Carter Kiss-Off**

Jimmy Carter, the new president in 1977, issued an amnesty for Vietnam-era draft dodgers and agreed with Sonny Montgomery that America should move on. He sent an emissary to tell Hanoi he was turning a new page in the Good Book and that he hoped to normalize relations with Vietnam.

Carter's peace-and-reconciliation strategy was based on the premise that good deeds would reap their own rewards which would result, among other things, in an accounting by Hanoi and a return of any American remains.

Carter paved the way for the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's admission to the United Nations. Then he ordered the Pentagon, over the objection of the families, to start once again reclassifying all the MIAs as dead.

### **Hanoi: "We want the money."**

The Vietnamese communists looked on Carter's Sunday School diplomacy with unhurried interest, to ascertain just how much they might gain from this new American attitude.

From the time the peace agreements were signed in 1973, the Vietnamese had said over and over that the MIA question could be resolved only when the U.S. coughed up the \$3.25 billion Nixon-Kissinger had promised them.

Henry Kissinger, when called upon by Congress in 1977 to explain his negotiating techniques, declared that the money-deal established by the secret letter was null and void because the money was contingent upon congressional approval, or because the North Vietnamese had not adhered to the terms of the peace agreements, or because -- anything but that he and Nixon had simply lied to the North Vietnamese.

The Carter administration's hope for an MIA accounting through normalization ended in late 1978 when Vietnam invaded Cambodia. The administration shifted gears and adopted a hard-line policy that effectively ended any immediate hope of resolving the issue.

No American remains were returned from Vietnam from 1978 to 1981.

### **Conspiracy!**

Not that the issue was getting much attention from the American public, except by the families and a few MIA buffs who began to charge that the government was engaged in a cover-up.

Sonny Montgomery once again loudly declared that no Americans were still alive, and went further by saying he believed the Vietnamese would never be able to provide the remains of more than 100 to a 150 of the American dead. But the number of people who believed in a cover-up and conspiracy was growing.

I talked to some of the most important of them. To some, it was a heart-felt matter and they were dedicated Americans. Others were using it as a political issue. And a few were out-and-out scammers raising money for themselves.

### **SURPRISE: Henry Was Lying**

Sonny Montgomery was still singing Kissinger's song. But Kissinger, now out of government and in the lucrative influence-peddling business, was indicating privately that the official line was a sham.

"Of course the Vietnamese have several hundred [MIA] cases they could account for immediately," Kissinger told Congressman Robert Dornan, an MIA activist. "I resist using the word 'warehousing,' but in a sense they have this information, if not the boxes of bones, warehoused, to be used for political purposes."

Did Kissinger base his assessment on secret intelligence reports or simply on personal speculation? In either case he proved to be right. And "warehousing" turned out to be the appropriate word.

### **The Mortician Testifies**

Some months later, in November 1979, one of the most credible sources ever to surface on the MIA question appeared in the United States to testify that the communists had warehoused hundreds of American remains in Hanoi.

The source was a Vietnamese of Chinese extraction who was expelled from North Vietnam during the anti-Chinese hysteria of the late 1970s. He had been a professional mortician in Hanoi since 1951. He was known to the French government, and had been photographed by Americans when the communists turned over two MIA remains to Senator George McGovern.

The mortician told a congressional investigating subcommittee that he had processed 452 remains of American servicemen. Subtracting the 26 already returned by Hanoi, that meant the communists were holding on to at least 426 remains. The mortician described the professional procedures the Vietnamese used from the moment an American aircraft was shot down until the time, in the event the pilot was killed, that his remains were placed in a box.

More ominously, he said that the communists intended to do exactly what they had done with the remains of French servicemen for twenty years after the French war ended in 1954: barter bones for cash.

The mortician's testimony persuaded even the most skeptical that the Vietnamese had been lying all the time about the unavailability of further remains. And if they were lying about that, it didn't require a great leap of logic for many people to suspect they also might be lying about not holding live POWs.

The number of Americans who believed POWs were left behind and believed there was a cover-up going on in Washington began to grow across the nation.

### **Reagan Was Ready**

Ironically, the charges of a cover-up began to grow at the time the country elected the first president since the Vietnam War who appeared genuinely dedicated to trying to resolve the issue. Ronald Reagan had spoken out about MIAs as California's governor, and his administration quickly moved to give the question the kind of priority it had never before received.

Instead of basing his policy on the presumption that all MIAs were dead, Reagan declared that no one could exclude the possibility that some Americans were still alive.

The two Reagan administration officials mainly responsible for developing MIA policy over the long-term were Richard L. Armitage and Richard Childress. Rich Armitage was a bald, bullet-shaped Annapolis graduate who had resigned his commission and failed as a businessman in Bangkok, then caught on with Senator Bob Dole and afterward was appointed an assistant secretary in the Pentagon.

Armitage had served in Vietnam, as had the smoother and more handsome Dick Childress, an army lieutenant colonel and contact point for the issue on the National Security Council.

There was an element of re-fighting the Vietnam War, this time to win, in the attitude of both men toward the MIA problem.

Later, when I asked Armitage why the administration didn't just give the Vietnamese the promised Nixon money in an attempt to resolve the issue, he exploded, "Well, fuck them!"

Both Armitage and Childress showed sharp claws in the unending political catfights that arose over the cover-up issue, quick to bat down anyone who tried to trespass on what they considered their turf. When a move was made to appoint Ross Perot head of a presidential commission to try to clear up the MIA question, Armitage and Childress went all out to defeat the attempt. They considered Perot a loose cannon and a threat with Republican political aspirations.

But even given the serpentine politics that entwined the issue, it was stretching reason to believe that either one of them was involved in a cover-up. They had, in fact, brought the director of the National League of Families, Ann Mills Griffiths, whose pilot-brother was missing, into the administration's policy planning concerning the issue—unlike Jimmy Carter, who had refused to include her because he believed a family member would be "too emotional."

Ann Griffiths, in her forties at the time, was anything but emotional—an attractive, hardworking divorcée who was as much a political operator as Armitage and Childress, and who was blunt-spoken to the point of calling Pentagon officers who fell for Vietnamese propaganda ploys "incredibly naïve" and those who believed in a cover-up "liars and crazies."

Eventually, Griffiths herself was linked to a cover-up by some of the conspiracy buffs because she had been given access to government secrets concerning the MIAs, thus, they said, had been co-opted. The

National League of Families was bitterly split between those who believed the government was doing everything realistically possible to resolve the issue and those convinced that a cover-up was going on.

### **DIA INCOMPETENCE**

In June 1985 retired Lieutenant General Eugene Tighe, a former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, testified before a congressional subcommittee that he was convinced U.S. POWs were still alive.

Tighe said, "The human reporting that came out of Southeast Asia on live Americans held there against their will was among the most detailed of human reporting I have ever seen."

General Tighe charged that DIA's analysts had developed "a mind-set to debunk" what he considered very credible reports on the POWs.

Tighe's testimony confirmed what some observers had suspected all along: that DIA had done a perfectly lousy job in collecting, analyzing, and acting on information about POWs still held. For Tighe had been the DIA official most closely connected with the problem during the seven critical years from 1974 to 1981.

If DIA analysts had a negative mind-set, why hadn't he fired or transferred them? And why didn't he speak out about this "most detailed of human reporting" before he retired in 1981?

What the former director didn't say was that the whole DIA approach to the MIAs during the early years was farcical. Only five to eight officers worked on the matter at DIA headquarters in the Pentagon, and Tighe tried at one time to cut back on that number.

The impressive sounding Joint Casualty Resolution Center in Bangkok, which was the on-scene collection agency for Indochina, had a staff of three, no secretary, and not even a car. And with all the thousands of refugees flowing out of Indochina who were potential sources of information, DIA processed only an average of thirty reports a year during the four critical years, 1975-78.

DIA finally gave more attention and resources to the problem beginning in 1979, after Congress held the agency's feet to the fire. But important and irretrievable time had been lost.

The believers in a cover-up, instead of running General Tighe out of town on a rail for his self-confessed incompetence, actually hailed him as a hero for revealing the truth about the "conspiracy."

With so much money being bandied about by the freelancers who were trying to solve the problem their own way, alleged sightings of Americans in Indochina suddenly skyrocketed, going from thirty a year shortly after the war was over to 1200 reports by 1985.

Many of those were phony dog-tag reports inspired by the Vietnamese communists themselves to confuse and distract the intelligence agencies, perhaps out of mischief or perhaps because they were feeling the heat of the chase.

After one conspiracy group floated balloons from Thailand to Laos announcing a million-dollar reward for information on POWs, the only surprise was not that many dirt-poor Asian farmers began to report seeing missing Americans but that Elvis wasn't included in the sightings.

One hustler, taking time off from his job of flimflamming tourists in Bangkok, hired an Australian to pose as a POW in the jungle. Then he offered to sell the video to the U.S. Government for several million dollars, a scam that actually got as far as the negotiating stage.

### **Weight of Evidence Says Yes**

Yet, after the money-making scams were exposed, after the doctored photos were discarded, after the fabricated reports were discounted, and after all the waffling qualifiers known to Washington were attached to the remaining information--still, the weight of evidence strongly indicated that some American POWs had been left behind.

Who were they? Where were they? How many?

That couldn't be determined. But there, they seemed to be.

Still, why a cover-up?

One theory advanced by conspiracy theorists was that it would "embarrass" government officials to admit POWs were alive and abandoned. But if ever two individuals seemed born to be embarrass proof, they were named Nixon and Kissinger. And it wasn't reasonable to believe that Ronald Reagan or George H.W. Bush did not want to solve the problem.

As for Bill Clinton and George W. Bush—well, I'll let you fill in your own blanks here.

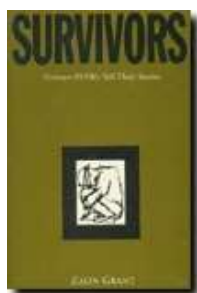
Another theory was that the CIA feared its alleged dealings in the opium trade in Laos might be revealed if a POW were allowed to return home. But the CIA's involvement with opium was an old charge and hardly seemed a compelling reason for a cover-up.

After all, who would be surprised to learn at this late date that CIA had signed a blood contract with the Devil himself to smuggle dope, kill whales, and overthrow Christianity?

Actually, CIA had never shown much of an interest either way in the MIA question. The agency appeared quietly content to let DIA entangle itself in the spider web.

### **Why They Were Left Behind**

What the conspiracy theorists seemed unable to accept was that if any Americans were left behind, as the weight of evidence suggested they were, the problem began with the cynical political decision taken by Nixon and Kissinger in 1973 and their efforts to cover up what they had promised Hanoi.



Eventually it became a "cover-up" based not on a conspiracy but on the indifference and incompetence of the U.S. Government. Also, many people, including the media, wished to bring a definitive close to the war. And the MIA issue was a door jam. Finally, of course, we are back where we started.

Will the truth ever come out?

Who knows? But I wouldn't be surprised.

### **HENRY KISSINGER: His Role in the Search for Photographers Sean Flynn and Dana Stone MIA in Cambodia.**

This was early November 1973. Walter Cronkite had arranged for us to meet with Henry Kissinger at the White House. Cronkite was chairman of a committee of journalists who were trying to bring about the release of Sean Flynn and Dana Stone and other international journalists who had been captured in Cambodia in 1970.

Three members of the Committee—Walter Cronkite, Peter Arnett, Richard Dudman—and myself as the Committee's chief researcher were to meet with Kissinger. Arnett was a Pulitzer-Prize winning reporter for the Associated Press. Dudman was a reporter for the St Louis Post-Dispatch who had been captured and released in Cambodia.

I had begun working on the problem in April 1970 at the request of Time magazine and CBS. Flynn, who was the son of actor Errol Flynn, worked for Time. Stone was a cameraman for CBS. They were captured on April 6, 1970. I had continued my research for the Cronkite Committee, which was formed in late 1970 and included—besides Cronkite, Arnett, and Dudman—Tom Wicker, Barry Bingham Sr., Otis Chandler, Osborn Elliott, Murray Gart, Katharine Graham, David Halberstam, Ward Just, and Frank McCulloch.

The Committee had examined the information I had collected and also the reports from DIA and CIA and the State Department about the missing newsmen. We were pretty sure that the journalists were still alive and being held near Kratie City on the Mekong River in northeast Cambodia.



Henry Kissinger had been promoted to Secretary of State but he continued to act as Richard Nixon's national security advisor. He asked us to meet him at his White House office. He greeted Cronkite, who by then had attained the rank of "the most trusted man in America," very extravagantly. After reading our documents and examining the maps that pinpointed the location of the journalists, he immediately offered his help.

Kissinger said he would get in touch with the North Vietnamese and also send the information we had collected to the Chinese and ask for their help. It was good information, he said, and our case was well-made.

We left his office in high spirits. "Kissinger is really going to move on this," we told each other.

So we were stunned when we received Kissinger's letter to Hanoi, which was passed on to Walter Cronkite by Kissinger's deputy, General Brent Scowcroft. Cronkite sent us a photocopy of the letter and said, "This is not what he told us he would do."

Kissinger had already washed his hands of the American military MIAs. Now, to us, it seemed that he was doing the same thing to the missing American journalists.

Here is what happened, according to the ex-Khmer Rouge I interviewed, a defector who was installed as the prime minister of the country after the Vietnamese overran Cambodia in 1978. He was in Kratie when the journalists were captured.

Three months after Kissinger sent the cable to the North Vietnamese and passed on our documents to the Chinese, the ex-prime minister said that the Khmer Rouge had killed all the journalists and bulldozed the camp where they were held. Then they killed all the camp's guards and chased down the camp commander and killed him too.

A coincidence? Or did Henry Kissinger play Pontius Pilate?

Below is a clear copy I made of the letter Kissinger sent to the North Vietnamese, followed by the less legible photocopy I received of the original Kissinger cable.

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FM THE SITUATION ROOM WHP 591

TO GENERAL GUAY

ZEN

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY WH 37450

VIA YELLOW PATCH

DELIVER AT OPENING OF BUSINESS

TO: GENERAL GUAY

FROM: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

PLEASE DELIVER THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO YOUR CUSTOMER DURING

4CB, & #974.

TO: MR. LE DUC TO

FROM: DR. HENRY A. KISSINGER

I want to thank you for your personal message to me of October 27, confirming our mutual desire to continue our constructive and cooperative relationship. This means a great deal to me.

Please permit me to raise a subject of a personal and not a governmental matter.

A group of American journalists, representing many members of their profession from all political persuasions, have come to me to inquire if anything further could be done to determine the fate of some of their colleagues who have been missing in Cambodia. Investigations and searches that they have conducted independently have led to them to believe that their colleagues might be alive. They asked me whether the DRV was in a position to assist in this matter. I told them that we had no basis for believing that these journalists were alive, or that the DRV was in a position to assist. Nevertheless, I told them I would make one further inquiry.

I do this, as I say, in a wholly unofficial capacity. These missing journalists are civilians and private civilians, not employees of the United States Government. The United States Government will make no public representations on the matter and will not treat this matter in propagandistic fashion.

I recall that we received the DRV's assurance a year ago that you had been informed by your ally in Cambodia that there were no American captives held in Cambodia. Should we learn that these American journalists are indeed alive, we would treat this as welcome news and as a sign of goodwill on the part of your ally. We would receive this news in that same spirit.

Any information from the DRV, or any wise advice from the Special Advisor about this part of Indochina with which he has a long familiarity, would be deeply appreciated by the American people.

With Personal Regards,

Henry A. Kissinger

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FM THE SITUATION ROOM VHP591  
TO GENERAL QUAY

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T O P S E C R E T SENSITIVE EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY WH37468

VIA YELLOW PATCH

DELIVER AT OPENING OF BUSINESS

TO: GENERAL QUAY  
FROM: GENERAL SCROFROT

PLEASE DELIVER THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO YOUR CUSTOMER DURING  
4CG, A #274.

TO: MR. LE DUC THO  
FROM: DR. HENRY A. KISSINGER

I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR WARM PERSONAL MESSAGE TO ME OF  
OCTOBER 27, CONFIRMING OUR MUTUAL DESIRE TO CONTINUE OUR  
OBSTRUCTIVE AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP. THIS MEANS A GREAT DEAL  
TO ME.

PLEASE PERMIT ME TO RAISE A SUBJECT AS A PERSONAL AND NOT A  
GOVERNMENTAL MATTER.

A GROUP OF AMERICAN JOURNALISTS, REPRESENTING MANY MEMBERS OF THEIR PROFESSION FROM ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS, HAVE COME TO ME TO INQUIRE IF ANYTHING FURTHER COULD BE DONE TO DETERMINE THE FATE OF SOME OF THEIR COLLEAGUES WHO HAVE BEEN MISSING IN CAMBODIA. INVESTIGATIONS AND SEARCHES THAT THEY HAVE CONDUCTED INDEPENDENTLY HAVE LED THEM TO BELIEVE THAT THEIR COLLEAGUES MIGHT BE ALIVE. THEY ASKED ME WHETHER THE DRV WAS IN A POSITION TO ASSIST IN THIS MATTER. I TOLD THEM THAT WE HAD NO BASIS FOR BELIEVING THAT THESE AMERICAN JOURNALISTS WERE ALIVE, OR THAT THE DRV WAS IN A POSITION TO ASSIST. NEVERTHELESS, I TOLD THEM I WOULD MAKE ONE FURTHER INQUIRY.

I DO THIS, AS I SAY, IN A WHOLLY UNOFFICIAL CAPACITY. THESE MISSING JOURNALISTS ARE CIVILIANS AND PRIVATE CITIZENS, NOT EMPLOYEES OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE NO PUBLIC REPRESENTATION ON THE MATTER AND WILL NOT TREAT THIS MATTER IN PROPAGANDISTIC FASHION.

I RECALL THAT WE RECEIVED THE DRV'S ASSURANCE A YEAR AGO THAT YOU HAD BEEN INFORMED BY YOUR ALLY IN CAMBODIA THAT THERE WERE NO AMERICAN CAPTIVES HELD IN CAMBODIA. SHOULD WE LEARN THAT THESE AMERICAN JOURNALISTS ARE INDEED ALIVE, WE WOULD TREAT THIS AS WELCOME NEWS AND AS A SIGN OF GOODWILL ON THE PART OF YOUR ALLY. WE WOULD RECEIVE THIS NEWS IN THAT SAME SPIRIT.

ANY INFORMATION FROM THE DRV, OR ANY WISE ADVICE FROM THE SPECIAL ADVISER ABOUT THIS PART OF INDOCHINA WITH WHICH HE HAS A LONG FAMILIARITY, WOULD BE DEEPLY APPRECIATED BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

WITH PERSONAL REGARDS,

HENRY A. KISSINGER



**ZALIN GRANT served as an Army Intelligence Officer in Vietnam. A former journalist for Time and The New Republic, he is the author of six books, including FACING THE PHOENIX: The CIA and the Political Defeat of the United States in Vietnam, which was also translated and published without permission in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. For further bio, see: [www.pythiapress.com/letters/war.htm](http://www.pythiapress.com/letters/war.htm) (Photo by Janice Terry – July 12, 2012)  
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