

President Clinton has promised to find out if Moscow carried out a KGB plan to bring captured Americans and possibly soldiers from Vietnam to the Soviet Union three decades ago

A SERIES OF ARTICLES ABOUT A SECRET KGB PLAN

STATE DEPARTMENT ACCUSED OF STIFLING POW-MIA PROBE WELDON SAYS RUSSIAN LAWMAKER TOLD HIM OF U.S. EFFORT

Washington Times (WT) - Tuesday, January 12, 1999

By: Bill Gertz - THE WASHINGTON TIMES

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A Russian parliamentarian who worked on prisoner-of-war issues claims the State Department discouraged Moscow from pursuing the fate of missing Americans, according to a senior member of Congress.

Rep. Curt Weldon said he is upset by the claim of the Duma member who told him about the State Department comments during a meeting in Moscow last month.

"During a conversation, the official told me 'I can tell you, we were told by your government, your State Department, not to pursue these issues,' " Mr. Weldon, Pennsylvania Republican, said in an interview.

The statement bolsters private criticism by some Pentagon officials that the State Department is refusing to press the Russian government to investigate cases of missing Americans.

Pentagon officials told The Washington Times last month that Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright delayed for months contacting senior Russian officials about a secret KGB plan to transport "knowledgeable Americans" to the Soviet Union during the late 1960s for intelligence purposes.

Mrs. Albright also failed to raise the issue directly with Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who is now prime minister, during several meetings. Mr. Primakov would have had direct knowledge of the secret plan while he was director of Russian intelligence in the early 1990s.

Mr. Weldon said he is investigating the claim and has written to Mrs. Albright asking for an explanation.

The Russian official was not identified by name, but Mr. Weldon said the official had worked on the U.S.-Russian Joint Commission on POWs headed by retired Russian Gen. Dmitri Volkogonov. The Duma members told Mr. Weldon about the problem in a private meeting.

"His accusation is quite disturbing in light of the administration's initial reluctance to aggressively pursue the matter with the Russian government," Mr. Weldon stated in a Jan. 6 letter to Mrs. Albright. "I urge that you investigate this charge and inform me of your findings."

Ann Johnson, a State Department spokeswoman, said the matter was "looked into," but no one in the State Department relayed such a message to any Duma members.

Asked if Mrs. Albright would raise the issue of the POW document during her upcoming meetings with Russian officials in Moscow, Miss Johnson said the agenda has not been set. "We do look forward to getting a

look at the results of the Russian investigation of this matter, as Prime Minister Primakov promised Vice President [Al] Gore in Kuala Lumpur in November," she said.

Gen. Volkogonov, who died in December 1995, disclosed in a memoir published in September that he had uncovered the secret plan by the KGB intelligence service during the late 1960s "to bring knowledgeable Americans to the Soviet Union for intelligence purposes."

After the plan was disclosed by The Times in November, White House spokesmen initially said President Clinton would not raise the issue in meetings with Mr. Primakov set for late November in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Later, the White House reversed its position and said the president would bring up the issue if talks at the POW commission in Moscow failed to resolve the matter.

After Mr. Clinton canceled his trip to Malaysia because of the crisis with Iraq, Mr. Gore raised the issue with Mr. Primakov.

Mr. Clinton said in a letter to a POW activist last month that he is "very concerned" about the Russian plan "given that American personnel were held as POWs in Southeast Asia during this same period." He promised to "press" the Russians to provide answers.

The president stated in a Dec. 18 letter to Delores Alford, chairman of the National Alliance of Families, that his administration is trying to find out about the authors of the KGB plan, whether it was carried out, and "the names of any Americans who were transferred." If the plan was not carried out, "we have requested documentation that convincingly proves this point," he said.

Mr. Weldon said in his letter to Mrs. Albright that he was encouraged by the administration's discussions, "but I remain deeply disappointed that you deferred pursuit of this matter for so long after it first came to your attention."

"With hundreds of U.S. POW-MIAs still unaccounted for, we must aggressively pursue all evidence which might help us determine their fate," he said. "The United States has no basis on which to turn its back on information which may lead us to closure on the POW issue. Nor should we fear repercussions from the Russian government, as it will not suffer the reputation of its predecessor's excesses, but may actually enhance its own reputation by fully disclosing the fact."

Mr. Weldon said that Mrs. Albright should investigate the Duma official's charge and "reaffirm the strong U.S. commitment to leave no stone unturned in the effort to determine the fact of all U.S. POWs."

**Clinton to prod Moscow on POWs
Russia may have held Americans
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By: Bill Gertz - THE WASHINGTON TIMES
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President Clinton has promised to find out if Moscow carried out a KGB plan to bring captured Americans and possibly soldiers from Vietnam to the Soviet Union three decades ago.

"I have been very concerned about a possible KGB plan 'to transport knowledgeable Americans' to the U.S.S.R. in the 1960s for intelligence purposes," Mr. Clinton wrote in a letter to a prisoner-of-war (POW) activist. "I agree we must do everything possible to get to the bottom of these reports, given that American personnel were held as POWs in Southeast Asia during this same period."

The letter from Mr. Clinton was sent Dec. 18 to Delores Apodaca Alford, chairman of the National Alliance of Families, a group that has pressed for a full accounting of missing Americans from the Vietnam War and other conflicts.

Mr. Clinton said in his letter that Vice President Al Gore pressed Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov during a Nov. 17 meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, "for help to determine whether this plan existed or was acted upon."

"Primakov offered to look into these reports and to update us on his efforts," Mr. Clinton said. "We have also asked for information on the authors of the plan, the names of any Americans who were transferred, and information on their fate."

Mr. Clinton said that "if the plan was not carried out, we have requested documentation that convincingly proves this point."

"My administration will continue to pursue the POW/MIA issue aggressively with the Russian leadership," Mr. Clinton said.

The president's interest in the matter appears in sharp contrast to his initial response to a report last month about the KGB plan disclosed by The Washington Times.

The Times disclosed in November that a retired Russian general working on a U.S.-Russian joint commission on missing prisoners had uncovered a historical document from the Soviet intelligence archives he described in his personal papers as "sensational."

Gen. Dmitri Volkoganov wrote that several years ago he asked Mr. Primakov, who was then chief of Russian intelligence, to release the document but the request was rejected. The plan called for "delivering informed Americans to the U.S.S.R. for intelligence-gathering purposes," Gen. Volkoganov, who died in 1995, wrote in a recently published memoir.

Asked in November if Mr. Clinton would raise the issue with Mr. Primakov about the KGB plan during a meeting planned in Malaysia, White House Press Secretary Joe Lockhart said the president was "not expected" to broach the subject.

A day later the White House said Mr. Clinton would become personally involved in finding out about the Volkoganov document, but only after U.S. and Russian officials discussed the matter during a Moscow POW commission meeting in late November.

During the meeting, Russian officials gave conflicting answers about the KGB plan. One Russian intelligence official said there was no plan to take Americans to the Soviet Union, and a second official said a document about the plan exists but would not be released because it is classified.

Since Mr. Primakov became prime minister, Moscow has taken a distinctly anti-U.S. positions on many issues, including nuclear and missile technology transfers to Iran, and the recent air strikes on Iraq ..

A State Department spokesman said the agenda for Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright's meetings in Moscow later this month has not been set but she hopes to hear soon on the results of a Russian investigation into the matter.

Pentagon officials were particularly upset that Mrs. Albright waited more than eight months before asking the Russian government about the secret KGB plan because she did not want to pressure Moscow during its recent political and economic crisis.

The KGB plan was uncovered in January among papers donated to the Library of Congress, but Mrs. Albright waited until Oct. 29 to contact Russia's foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, by letter.

A letter from Mrs. Albright to Mr. Primakov was drafted but never sent because it might upset Moscow during its political and economic crisis that began in August, officials said.

State Department official Lonnie Spiegel, who handles Russia policy, told Pentagon officials in September that the secretary had more urgent matters to discuss with Moscow than the KGB document.

Albright delayed pressing Russians POW report issue set aside for time

Washington Times (WT) - Monday, November 30, 1998

By: Bill Gertz - THE WASHINGTON TIMES

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Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright waited months before asking the Russian government about a KGB document suggesting captured Americans were taken to the Soviet Union for intelligence purposes during the late 1960s, according to Clinton administration officials.

A document mentioning the KGB program was discovered by the Pentagon in January among the papers of a retired Russian general. President Clinton was notified in March about what investigators viewed as a major discovery that could shed light on the fate of nearly 2,000 missing Americans from the Vietnam War. A month later, the State Department was informed.

Mrs. Albright, however, did not act until Oct. 29 in writing to the new Russian foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, seeking information about the plan, said officials who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Delays in the case have upset a number of officials familiar with internal discussions on the issue. State Department officials "have been dragging their feet on this since the start," complained one.

A letter drafted in June from Mrs. Albright to Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov, a former intelligence chief with direct knowledge about the KGB program, was never sent because of State Department concerns it would upset Moscow during its financial and political crisis in August, the officials said.

Russian Gen. Dmitri Volkogonov, a historian and co-chairman of a U.S.-Russian commission on POWs, revealed what he called a "sensational" KGB document on the plan in his memoirs published in September. It was first revealed in papers his daughter donated to the Library of Congress last year.

The plan called for "delivering informed Americans to the U.S.S.R. for intelligence-gathering purposes," Gen. Volkogonov, who died in 1995, stated.

Officials familiar with the U.S. government's deliberations said they were upset with the State Department's failure to pursue information about the POW issue, which the administration has said is a high priority. "They didn't want to upset the Russians," said an official close to the issue.

Lonnie Spiegel, a State Department official involved in Russia policy, told Pentagon officials in September the department had more urgent matters to discuss with Moscow. Mrs. Albright's letter to Mr. Primakov was not sent because of the "large number of issues between the U.S. and Russian governments that required immediate attention," according to officials familiar with the meeting.

According to Miss Spiegel, the department put off sending the secretary's letter to Mr. Primakov until after Mrs. Albright had first met with the new foreign minister, Mr. Ivanov.

The failure to press the Russians on the issue highlights the Clinton administration's general reticence to press Moscow about contentious issues, said officials critical of the soft-line policy.

According to the officials, Denis Clift, a member of a joint U.S.-Russian commission on POWs, objected to the delays during a Sept. 16 meeting of U.S. officials, when the Albright letter was discussed. The failure to contact Mr. Primakov "did not make sense," he said.

Mr. Clift, a former DIA official who is president of the Joint Military Intelligence College, said Mr. Primakov was "specifically mentioned" in the Volkogonov book disclosing the KGB program, and thus any letters should

be sent to Mr. Primakov and not the foreign minister.

Miss Spiegel could not be reached for comment. But Nerissa Cook, another State Department official involved in Russian policy and POW issues, declined to comment when asked Friday about State's handling of the issue.

Another State Department official said that Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering asked Deputy Foreign Minister Gerogi Mamedov about the KGB program during a meeting in London earlier this year, but the issue never reached any high levels of the U.S. or Russian governments until November.

Moscow has refused to release the document despite numerous U.S. government appeals, including a recent request by Vice President Al Gore to Mr. Primakov on Nov. 17 in Malaysia, and requests made at a U.S.-Russia POW commission meeting in Moscow three weeks ago.

In July, Mr. Gore was scheduled to discuss the matter during a dinner meeting with Russian Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko in Moscow. But the topic never came up because Mr. Gore became sidetracked with other topics.

Mrs. Albright never wrote or asked Mr. Primakov about the POW issue, even though she had developed close ties to the Russian. Mrs. Albright and Mr. Primakov performed a song-and-dance routine together during a banquet July 28 in Manila that was put on as part of a diplomatic forum sponsored by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Details about the KGB document were first reported by The Washington Times on Nov. 9. In response, the White House initially said President Clinton would not ask Mr. Primakov about the matter during a scheduled meeting in Malaysia. A day later, White House officials insisted the president might bring up the subject, but the meeting never took place due to the crisis over Iraq.

Instead, Mr. Gore met Mr. Primakov on Nov. 17 in Kuala Lumpur, and the Russian prime minister agreed to look into the matter, according to U.S. officials.

Russian officials have provided conflicting statements about the KGB plan identified by Gen. Volkogonov. During the POW commission meeting earlier this month in Moscow, one official from the SVR intelligence service said the document did not exist. A second SVR official said the document was classified and would not be released.

Bits 'N' Pieces

Nov. 21, 1998

Voice From the Grave - When Russian General Dmitri Volkogonov passed away in December 1995, we all hoped that he left some message or information behind indicating that American POWs were transported to the former Soviet Union, during the Vietnam War. The message we hoped for was located in January 1998, among the General's personal papers, donated to the Library of Congress.

In his native Russian, General Volkogonov wrote of his efforts to help resolve the fate of American POWs. "I am not certain that we have fully clarified everything. I know that quite a few documents were destroyed. However, one document, probably sensational, is still in storage. I have a copy of it. Its content is as follows: at the end of the 1960s the KGB (external foreign intelligence) was given the task of "delivering informed Americans to the USSR for intelligence gathering purposes." When I found this sensational paper in a "special pouch," I immediately went to Y. M. Primakov (Director of Foreign Intelligence). He called in his people. They brought in a copy of this project signed; it seems to me, by Semichastny (I will explain). For a long time, there was a search underway to find traces of this task. These, the traces, as I had expected "were not found." They said that the task had not been accomplished. So how did this happen in fact? The regime was such that one could speculate on the wildest of variants. This remained a secret, which I could not penetrate. I also did not

report this to my much-esteemed Ambassador, M. Toon. I am speaking about this now in the hope that these notes will make it into my book Reflections. (Note: in the text the word Reflections is underlined.)"

General Volkogonov's notes continued: "History, especially Soviet history, is full of secrets, and very often evil. With the exception of this incident, I can say that I have done something in order to raise the mysterious curtain from them...."

On November 9th, 1998, in an article by Bill Gertz, the Washington Times broke the story of the document's existence. According to the article, "Moscow is refusing to turn over a secret KGB document suggesting captured Americans were taken to the Soviet Union in the late 1960s for "intelligence-gathering purposes..."

The article continued, "The Russian government has told U.S. officials the plan was never carried out, and Moscow recently turned down U.S. government requests to study the intelligence document, saying it is classified and will not be released, the officials said...."

Confusion - In the days that followed the Washington Times Nov. 9th article, some confusion arose. The Russians first claimed that the document did not exist, then stated the document would not be released because it is classified. Further reporting indicated that Russian officials admitted the existence of the plan to transfer American POWs to the former Soviet Union but insisted the plan was never carried out."

"Never Carried Out" - Helloooooooooo - During the Vietnam War, the Soviets provided North Vietnam with advisors, troops, supplies, munitions, and aircraft. U.S. airmen were routinely dodging SAM missiles and destroying their launch sites. These were the same SAM missile sites defending the former Soviet Union. Who doesn't think the Soviets had a passing interest in the technology that could easily destroy their defenses and the men who operated that technology? Were the Soviets pouring millions of rubles into the North Vietnamese war effort with no expectation for a return on their investment? Hardly!

Currently, the United States government (translation - the taxpayer) is providing billions of dollars of aid to the Russian government. It is the opinion of the National Alliance of Families that all such aid be stopped until the Russian government provides this and all other documentation relating to American POWs from the Korean War, Cold War and War in Indochina. It is time we get some return on our dollars.

What The Russians Are Saying - The following is excerpted from a Russian News Itar-Tass article dated November 18th. "...The U.S. is especially interested in a specific document in the archives of the former KGB, which is allegedly connected with the use by the Soviet foreign intelligence late in the 1960s of Americans, taken prisoner in Vietnam.. ."

"...The Washington Times newspaper reported on Tuesday that last October U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright raised the question of a possibility of familiarizing American experts with this document in a letter to Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov."

"However, the Russian side replied in the negative, referring to its secret nature. The U.S. delegation which participated in a regular meeting of the bilateral commission in Moscow last week received approximately the same reply...."

National Intelligence Estimate - released July 1998 discussed the possibility of transfer of Vietnam era POWs to the Soviet Union. According to the report, "a few reports of transfers of U.S. POWs to Russia and other countries are unexplained and the books remain open."

Everything Old Is New Again - Between 1992 and 1996, both former NSA intelligence analysts Jerry Mooney and former Czech General Jan Senja testified that American POWs from Vietnam were transferred to the Soviet Union, during the Vietnam War.

General Senja testified he handled the transfer of over 200 American POWs, to the Soviet Union. Mr. Mooney testified that based on intercepted intelligence, American airmen were indeed transferred to the Soviet Union.

Additionally, he provided the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs a list of men he believed, based on intelligence available, were "Moscow Bound."

The information provided by both men were summarily debunked by either committee members or those within the Defense Department, charged with investigating the POW/MIA issue.

Mindset to Debunk - The following is excerpted from a 1990 letter, written by an employee of the Defense Intelligence Agency to the one POW/MIA family member. "...The assertions Mr. Mooney makes in his affidavit are absurd... he could not have accumulated a private list of PWs, much less the more detailed notes which he now claims. I also find it difficult to believe that more than 20 years later he could recreate from memory, some 400 pages from these alleged files...."

"...You should also be aware that there is not now nor has there ever been, a list of Americans designated as "MB" or Moscow Bound." Further, there is no intelligence whatsoever to indicate that any U.S. PWs were ever moved from Indochina to the Soviet Union."

Maybe this DIA employee wasn't really looking for the information or listening when it was handed to him. We think it is time for another look at the information provided by General Senja and Jerry Mooney.

Let's Not Forget - In June of 1992, Russian President Boris Yeltsin arrived in the U.S. making a stunning claim about American POWs transferred to the Soviet Union. During an interview with NBC's Dateline, Yeltsin stated - "Our archives have shown this to be true. Some of them were transferred to the territory of the former U.S.S.R. and were kept in labor camps. We don't have complete data and can only surmise that some of them may still be alive."

With this statement, the Bush White House panicked. First they claimed that Dateline had translated the Russian President's remarks incorrectly. NBC verified the translation. Then, the famous unnamed source surfaced inferring that perhaps the Russian President had too much Vodka on the trip over and misspoke.

Finally, in his memoirs former Secretary of State James Baker stated he advised Yeltsin to speak about POWs before Congress, as it would make a favorable impression. It would also increase chances of a favorable vote on the issue of aid to the struggling Russian Republic.

Yeltsin made the mistake of thinking the U.S. government was really interested in POWs and spoke to the media prior to his appearance before Congress. We believe Yeltsin spoke the truth during his Dateline interview. With the subsequent debunking of his statement by unnamed White House sources, Yeltsin got the message -- Just because we ask about POWs doesn't mean we want the answers.