

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
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PRESS BRIEFING

BY

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National Stadium

Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam

7:00 P.M. (L)

MR. SIEWERT: We'll begin today -- we'll try to do this a little bit like we did yesterday. We'll begin with a briefing on the bilateral with Prime Minister Mori. Jack Pritchard, from the NSC, will be on hand to give you a readout of that. And then Stan Roth, who is the Assistant Secretary for East Asian Pacific Affairs at the State Department, will give you a run through of the bilateral with Jiang Zemin of China. And then they'll both be available for your questions.

Mr. Sperling will be in after that to give you a rundown on the APEC meetings today. And then I'll be available for any follow-up questions. So we'll start with Jack.

The statements, questions and answers by Mr. Pritchard have been removed from this may review them by [clicking here](#).

The statements, questions and answers by Assistant Secretary Roth on China have may review them by [clicking here](#).

Q Did the President's Vietnam trip come up at all?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROTH: No.

Okay, thank you.

MR. SIEWERT: While we're waiting for Mr. Sperling, let me read a joint statement that the President is issuing on a -- Gene can answer questions on this, I'll just read the statement to give a sense that this is coming, so you can prepare the hardest possible questions for the late arriving NEC Director. This will be issued today jointly by President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Goh.

"President Bill Clinton of the United States of America and Prime Minister Goh of Singapore have agreed to start negotiations on a bilateral free trade agreement. The U.S. and Singapore are both firm supporters of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, APEC, and are committed to APEC's Bogor goals of free and open trade and investment by 2010 for industrialized economies and 2020 for

developing economies.

The statements, questions and answers by Mr. Siewert on APEC have been removed from this transcript, but you may review them by [clicking here](#).

Q Jake, on the Vietnam trip, American officials have said in the past that the Vietnamese have been quite helpful of late trying to recover remains of the missing. Do you have any figures on what's the missing count now, and any figures on, any estimates on remains that could be recovered? Or do we think we're sort of reaching the end of the line on recovering remains?

MR. SIEWERT: Let me see if I can get -- there is some reference -- there are some specific figures in the speech, but since this speech is not in final form, I'll try to get you the best possible numbers we have.

We have provided a great deal of documentation to the Vietnamese to help locate -- over 350,000, 400,000 pages of documents that can help them in their efforts to find both Vietnamese and American soldiers who are missing in action. And we're prepared to provide more documentation that could help now the search for some of those who are missing. But in terms of actual recoveries, I think we're going to try to prepare a briefing in Vietnam on the status of that, that will be more detailed, and the President may have some final numbers for you tomorrow.

Q Jake, does the President believe that his opposition to the war as a youth been a facilitating factor in being able to bridge the divide between the two countries?

MR. SIEWERT: I've never heard him actually address that directly. I know he was asked this question the other day. This is not a visit that's really about the President's past or about -- this is a visit that is designed to mark a new chapter in our relationship with the Vietnamese. Obviously, the war divided Americans, divided Vietnam in a lot of ways. But we're not here to reflect upon the history at any great length, or to highlight some of the divisions. And, if anything, this is meant to heal those divisions and point the way towards a new future.

I think many of you have noted in the stories I've seen that 60 percent of Vietnamese have been born since the war, and for most of them that's a very distant memory. I don't think the President has any intention of spending a lot of time thinking too much about his own personal past here. He's focused on what we can do to build a better future between the United States and Vietnam.

Q Did Mrs. Clinton share President Clinton's opposition to the war?

MR. SIEWERT: I have no idea. You can put that to her or to her staff. I've never seen any reporting on that.

Q Jake, do you know why the President signed that "bring them home alive" legislation last week on Vietnam? Does he or the administration believe that there are MIAs, alive MIAs out there, that we would need to promise citizenship to Vietnamese that might help bring them back?

MR. SIEWERT: I think he believes that we should leave no stone unturned in the search for MIAs. He did address this question directly in an interview he conducted the other day with the Associated Press and he said that he had -- there's no reason to think right now, that there is no evidence right now that there are any living MIAs. But we follow every lead and try to leave no stone unturned as we try to search and find any such people. So he feels -- I don't know the particulars of that legislation, but I assume it's designed to help encourage that search for MIAs.

Mr. Sperling is here, so I will let him run through the APEC proceedings of today and the FTA

negotiations.

**The statements, questions and answers by
Mr. Sperling on the APEC proceedings and FTA negotiations have
may review them by [clicking here](#).**

Thank you.

Someone asked a question -- Kim Dae Jung did raise at the meeting today that he wanted to see North Korea involved at the working group level as a guest in the coming APEC and that he hoped that from there they could follow the process of membership. There is a moratorium on membership in APEC until 2008 but he did make an explicit request for North Korea to be involved in the working groups at lower levels as a guest and the United States' view on that is that we would be supportive of seeing North Korea involved at a working group level.

Thank you.

END 8:05 P.M. (L)