

THE WHITE HOUSE

**Office of the Press Secretary
(Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam)**

For Immediate Release

November 18, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT TO THE JOINT TASK FORCE-FULL ACCOUNTING EXCAVATION PARTICIPANTS

**JTF-FA Excavation Site
Tien Chau Village, Socialist Republic of Vietnam**

11:30 A.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: At this spot 33 years ago this month, Captain Lawrence Evert's F-105 was shot down. No parachute was seen, the area was heavily defended and there was no chance for a search.

Today, I am honored to be here with Captain Evert's sons, Dan and David, and I thank them for coming. We believe we owe them, and all Americans like them, what they came here for -- a chance, finally, to take their father home.

America is very proud of our Joint Task Force-Full Accounting. These young men and women have traveled half way around the world to bring home comrades fallen in the war that ended before many of them were born. They spend up to 200 days a year here working to recover remains for American families.

We are also grateful for the service of the members of the Central Identification Labs, who help to end the anguish of not knowing.

Our nation has made a commitment that we will not rest until we've achieved the fullest possible accounting for our lost veterans. But it is only possible for us to fulfill our promise with the cooperation and support of the Vietnamese government and the Vietnamese people.

I want to personally thank the people of this village, this district and province for your kindness, for coming forward with artifacts and information to help the search, and for working so hard alongside our service members and citizens.

I also want to express the profound thanks of the American people to the Vietnamese government for its support. Among other things, it sent engineers and technicians here to help us figure out how we can dig without destabilizing the railroad nearby.

The United States is doing what we can to repay the cooperation of the Vietnamese and their government by doing all we can to help the people of Vietnam find answers about their missing, as well. I brought with me over 350,000 pages of documents that I hope will provide some of those answers to the people of Vietnam. Whether we are American or Vietnamese, I think we all want to know where our loved ones are buried; I think we all want to be able to honor them and visit their grave sites. This common endeavor we make as friends is unprecedented in all of human history.

Once we met here as adversaries; today we work as partners. We are committed to keep at it until we bring every possible fallen hero home. In the process, we are committed to building a new future for the children of Vietnam and the children of the United States, a future of friendship and cooperation.

While working together to recover those who were lost in a long-ago war, we reduce the chances that any of our children will know war.

Again, on behalf of the American people, I would like to thank all the Americans who are involved in this astonishing endeavor, and all of our Vietnamese partners, who stand in the mud and work at the screens to try to find answers that are common to our humanity and go far beyond our differences. I thank you. (Applause.)

END 11:40 A.M. (L)