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U.S. congressman says no MIAs alive in Vietnam

United Press International
HANOI, Vietnam — The room fell silent and the eight American congressmen looked at one another.

Their delegation chairman, Rep. G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery, D-Miss., had said a delicate thing and would anyone disagree?

"I think it's the general feeling of this group that there are no Americans still alive in Southeast Asia," he said.

It is not a statement cherished by any man up for election this November. Hope has made zealous of some of the families of the 329 American servicemen still listed as missing in action in the Indochina War.

A congressman facing election does not count his friends: they might vote. He counts his foes: they always vote.

At first none of the seven colleagues spoke. Hanoi street noises — the honking of a Russian-made bus, the oral cadence of isometric exercisers across the street — echoed into the state guest house room.

House Speaker Thomas O'Neill had sent the eight to scout better American-Vietnamese relations and that was dandy; but they also came to press the search for MIAs and

that is delicate among voters, sir.

Tall Sam Hall, D-Tex., a former trial lawyer with a head of long gray hair in a style Lone Star State voters still cherish in their tribunes, folded his hands over his chest and straightened in his chair.

"I'm not going to accept that," he said. "I just have a gut feeling that one of these MIAs will show up someday. Sonny, I wish I shared your view, but I don't."

"I wish I could share your view. I don't," Montgomery said.

Rep. Henson Moore, R-La., leaned forward from his chair. "I'm not willing to say all are dead. The probability any are alive is low, very low. But there is a chance."

Montgomery, a tall courtly southerner, a closet power who played golf with Richard Nixon and tennis with Jimmy Carter, turned from his center chair to face Moore.

Sonny Montgomery would never criticize a fellow member of the House. He is a believer in all for one and one for all and moderation in all things.

"The families of the MIAs are going to jump on that hope you have," he said.

Moore met Montgomery's sad eyes. He is a Republican and Sonny is a Democrat, but both are southerners and members of the same club.

Moore said he believes that North Vietnam is sincere in trying to track down the remains of missing Americans. Hanoi had just produced 11 more remains, bones in boxes, found at remote plane crash sites.

And, yes, Hanoi had sent its search experts to be schooled by the Pentagon's MIA laboratory in Hawaii

and, yes, Vietnam is even willing to teach Laos how to hunt.

"But I'm not sure they've given all their files, everything they've got," the Louisianian said.

Rep. Ike Skelton, D-Mo., proud that Harry Truman's wife endorsed his election, shook his head at Moore.

"Logic drives us irresistibly to the conclusion that none are alive," he said.

He said any American survivor would have been used by Hanoi "either for propaganda or as a bargaining chip."

Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., spoke. He was stretched in his wide-backed chair and dressed in the blouse and slacks tailored for him when, as a wounded Marine officer in South Vietnam, he had gone leave in what was then Saigon.

He spoke of his experience and said he agreed with Montgomery. "Absolutely no one could be survived who was not a prisoner; there is absolutely no evidence any prisoners remaining in Vietnam," he said.

Reps. George Daniel, D-Calif., and Jim Broyhill, R-Ind., said they agreed with Montgomery.

Tony Won Pat, Guam's delegate to Congress and a member of House Armed Services Committee, hunched forward. At last his legs touched the carpet.

"I believe we should close the chapter on hope," he said. "I do, too," said Montgomery. Silence.

"The committee has decided six to two," Montgomery said. Hope had lost.

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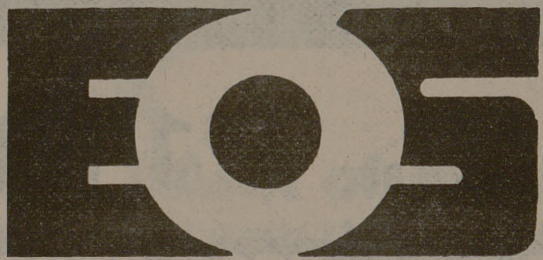
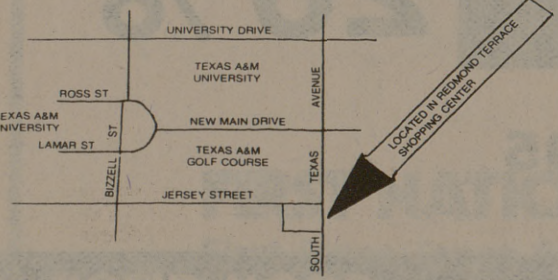
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Cambodians aided by Chinese troops

United Press International
HANOI, Vietnam — Chinese troops and heavy artillery are fighting with Cambodian forces in the border war against Vietnam, Hanoi officials said Tuesday.

The Vietnamese leaders made the charge in private talks with an American congressional delegation and then repeated the allegation to U.S. reporters traveling with the mission.

Vietnamese spokesman Ngo Dien told the reporters Peking has sent "advisers and cadre" to aid the Cambodian troops battling on the Vietnamese border.

Asked if Chinese troops were taking a direct part in the fighting, Dien said "Yes."

He said Peking has dispatched 130mm artillery to the Cambodians.

"The Cambodians are incapable of operating such big guns," Dien said. "They are being manned by Chinese."

The Vietnamese have captured at least one of the big Chinese guns, he said.

Dien said the Cambodians have increased their army from three divisions of about 5,000 men to about 20 divisions because of Chinese aid.

"These Cambodian divisions are fully-armed by the Chinese," he said.

Dien told the Americans Peking will agree on diplomatic relations with the United States only if the Cambodians can find a way to do it.

He said "We are doing our best in helping trace American soldiers listed as missing in action in a war."

The congressmen said they will receive the remains of 11 MIA Saturday and fly them to Clark Air Base in the Philippines on Monday.

The eight-man delegation possibly came to search for 340 servicemen listed as missing in action but the Vietnamese apparently tended to take advantage of the opportunity to press for normalization of ties with Washington.

is making trouble for Vietnam because Hanoi "is an obstacle to them. We will not follow their lead."

"They want all the people around them to be enemies of the Soviet Union."

Diem was asked if Vietnam would allow the Russians to have military bases in Vietnam, including a deep harbor of Cam Ranh Bay dominating the South China Sea.

He responded this "is something to be discussed."

"The United States knows better than anyone else that there are no foreign bases in Vietnam," he said, but he did not rule out Soviet bases in the future.

Asked if Hanoi and Washington will agree on diplomatic relations, Dien said "I think our representatives can find a way to do it."

He said "We are doing our best in helping trace American soldiers listed as missing in action in a war."

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