



# Washington State Legislature Olympia Washington

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## **Washington State Lawmakers Hail Agreement on Missing in Action Americans**

Two Washington state lawmakers are optimistic about future relations with Cambodia, following discussions with government officials that led to the resumption of the search for the remains of Americans missing in action from the Vietnam War.

State Senator Doug Ericksen and State Representative Vincent Buys have met several times with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and senior government officials, discussing trade and other issues. Ericksen and Buys most recently travelled to New York City in late September and met with Prime Minister Hun Sen during the Prime Minister's visit to the United Nations General Assembly.

"Families of those Americans who are missing in action have spent nearly 50 years seeking answers about their loved ones," Ericksen said. "I'm very happy our discussions with Prime Minister Hun Sen played a part in hopefully offering comfort to parents, spouses and children of our service members."

Representative Buys said the meetings have been positive. "It became apparent the MIA/POW program was very important to the Prime Minister," Buys said. "I believe this is a very strong gesture of Cambodia's desire for better connections between our two nations."

The U.S. government lists 48 Americans as still unaccounted for in Cambodia. 42 remains were recovered before the program was suspended a year ago.

According to Ann Mills-Griffiths, Chairman and CEO of the National League of POW/MIA Families, "Prior to the temporary suspension, Cambodia was viewed as the gold standard of POW/MIA accounting cooperation. We are deeply grateful that Prime Minister Hun Sen has lifted the suspension and resumed bilateral humanitarian operations to bring answers to the families whose loved ones are still missing Cambodia. We deeply appreciate the initiative taken by Senator Doug Ericksen and Representative Vincent Buys to help restore US-Cambodian accounting efforts in time for field operations during the dry season."

In an October 2nd letter to the Prime Minister, Ericksen and Buys urged Prime Minister Hun Sen to resume the search for MIA Americans as a signal that Cambodia wished to improve its relationship with the U.S. In his response today the Prime Minister said, “As we have discussed before and at your personal request...my Government, in the same compassionate spirit, agreed to resume this important POW/MIA field mission.”

Ericksen said Hun Sun’s gesture sends a positive message for the future. “We are looking forward to building upon the relationships we have built with the people of Cambodia to improve economic, cultural and political ties between our nations. This is a big step in the right direction.”

Media availability is anticipated Monday, October 15. Time and location TBD.

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