



**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF POW/MIA FAMILIES**  
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**UPDATE: March 22, 2021**

**AMERICANS STILL MISSING AND UNACCOUNTED FOR FROM THE VIETNAM WAR:** The number missing (POW/MIA) and otherwise unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR) from the Vietnam War is now **1,584**. Though there finally has been one US Navy officer recovered and identified, the Navy Casualty Office has been unable to reach the PNOK. For this reason, DPAA is unable to release the name and unique circumstances involved. Until very recently, there had been no US personnel accounted for from the Vietnam War since July 2020. DPAA announced that some identifications are pending and may be announced soon but no number was given. DPAA laboratories and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) continue to focus efforts on identifying remains previously recovered, turned over unilaterally by foreign countries and/or buried in US cemeteries as unknowns at home and abroad. US teams are also conducting WWII, Korean War and Cold War field recoveries. The most recent large-scale unilateral turnover of remains was the K55 repatriation that followed the Singapore Agreement reached in the summer of 2018 by former President Trump and DPRK President Kim Jong Un. The latest count of possible US remains included in the K55 repatriation was just announced by DPAA as 72. Also, 80 remains were recently returned to South Korea.

**ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS & EVENTS SCHEDULED FOR FY2021; UNILATERAL SRV RECOVERIES HELPED COVER THE PULL-BACK CAUSED BY COVID 19:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Defense (DoD) banned all DoD travel in early 2020 and resumption of full scale Joint Field Activities (JFAs) in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia was canceled. Field operations resumed in Cambodia in early February in Ratanakiri Province, and a combination of three Joint Recovery Teams, one Joint Investigation Team, including DIA's Stony Beach Specialist, are now working in several sites in Vietnam. Two unilateral Vietnamese Recovery Teams are being added to plus-up the pace and scope of the long-delayed operations. Further complicating the field work is that each counterpart country has its own restrictions imposed due to the COVID virus.

Earlier this year, DPAA Deputy Director for Operations RDML Darius Banaji, USN, met virtually with the Cambodian POW/MIA Committee. US Ambassador to Cambodia Patrick Murphy and Cambodian Deputy Chairman Sieng Lapresse participated, as did DPAA IndoPacific Regional Director Col Brian Peterson, USMC. During this time, Vietnam fielded three Unilateral Recovery Teams (URTs), focused on a reported 78 cases. Some remains were recovered, though DPAA provided no details during the January 28<sup>th</sup> conference call update. Field operations in Laos have not yet resumed. DoD, DIA, State Department and other US agencies are still largely teleworking, but some are now alternating schedules to try to ensure greater in-person coverage and productivity. DIA Headquarters personnel, including Stony Beach specialists, are working in shifts, as are DPAA scientists in the respective laboratories at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, and Offutt AFB, Nebraska.

**DPAA & DIA SIGNED FORMAL MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU):** On September 17, 2020, DPAA Director Kelly McKeague and Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Director LTG Bob Ashley, USA, signed an MOU to formalize integration of DIA's Stony Beach Team of specialists into Vietnam War accounting operations. Formed in 1986, before the accounting mission broadened to include efforts to recover and identify personnel unaccounted-for from the Korean War, Cold War and World War II, Stony Beach's sole mission was and is Vietnam War accounting, with focused priority on Last Known Alive (LKA) cases of US personnel initially listed as POW/MIA.

**LEAGUE 51<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL MEETING RESCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 15-19, 2021:** As previously announced, the 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting did not take place June 24-28, 2020, was rescheduled for June 23-27 and is now again rescheduled. September 15-19, 2021, will hold only if DoD travel restrictions are lifted. Hilton Crystal City Hotel is open on a limited basis, and we're hoping for fewer restrictions and greater normalcy by September. Last year, DPAA cancelled Family Member Updates previously scheduled for March, April, May, August and September. The DPAA-hosted Annual Government Briefings for Korean War/Cold War Families, previously planned for August, were also cancelled. A virtual ZOOM Family Member Update was held November 7<sup>th</sup> in Little Rock, AR. An FMU scheduled for January 23<sup>rd</sup> was cancelled and will be rescheduled, plus a virtual FMU was held February 20<sup>th</sup> in Los Angeles and Hawaii. In all such FMUs, individual case reviews can be scheduled with US officials involved. The next FMU will again be virtual and held April 17<sup>th</sup>, in Albuquerque, NM.

**POW/MIA FLAG IN US CAPITOL ROTUNDA:** With unanimous bipartisan support in the 100<sup>th</sup> Congress, the League's POW/MIA Flag was installed in the US Capitol Rotunda on March 9, 1989. Since that date, it has been displayed *"as a powerful symbol of America's determination to account for US personnel still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War."* The 101<sup>st</sup> Congress also passed bipartisan legislation recognizing our POW/MIA flag and designating it *"the symbol of our Nation's concern and commitment to resolving as fully as possible the fates of Americans still prisoner, missing and unaccounted for in Southeast Asia."*

**Chairman's Comment:** Media coverage of the lawless intrusion at the US Capitol on January 6th clearly showed our POW/MIA flag on display. It is important for all to understand that the accounting mission our POW/MIA flag represents is bipartisan-supported and has been since the League was formed on May 28, 1970.

**WHITE HOUSE IN VIOLATION OF PUBLIC LAW 116-67, MANDATING THE POW/MIA FLAG BE DISPLAYED YEAR-ROUND:** Despite President Trump's decision to sign bipartisan-supported legislation in the House and Senate into law on November 7, 2019, the White House is now in violation of the mandate and intention of the "National POW/MIA Flag Act." By law, the League-originated POW/MIA flag was, and is, directed to be visibly displayed whenever the US flag is posted on Federal properties, including the White House, the US Capitol, all US Senate and House Buildings, the World War II Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial and the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial, every national cemetery, buildings containing the official offices of the Secretaries of State, Defense and Veterans Affairs, the Director of the Selective Service system, all major military installations, as directed by the Secretary of Defense, all VA medical centers, and all offices of the US Postal Service.

Flag Day is one of the six days each year when previously existing laws required that our POW/MIA flag be flown, in addition to Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, National POW/MIA Recognition Day and Veterans Day. On Flag Day, June 14, 2020, the POW/MIA Flag was removed from atop the White House and placed on a separate flag pole, under the US flag, but scarcely visible in a small cluster of trees outside the circular drive around the South Lawn and at some distance from the White House and Old Executive Office Building. Strangely, this occurred only six months after President Trump had signed into law the separate bills passed by the House and Senate requiring visible display of the POW/MIA flag on "all days on which the flag of the United States is displayed," including "at the White House." Apparently, some uninformed staff, looking for a less visible alternative to its customary position on top of the White House, made the decision to find an alternative and did so without any consideration of implications to the accounting mission or consulting the League or DPAA.

**Chairman's Comment:** The League is grateful for the tremendous support of the 100<sup>th</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Congresses and the meaningful signals to senior US and foreign officials whose cooperation and responsiveness are absolutely necessary. It also signals worldwide that America stands behind and with those who serve – past, present and future – and, if captured or missing, all reasonable efforts will be made to recover and bring home as many as possible of our UNRETURNED veterans. On June 14<sup>th</sup>, within minutes of each other, DPAA and the League were notified of the POW/MIA flag removal from the top of the White House, but given no reason, nor any indication as to who had made the decision to construct a new flagpole on the edge of the South Lawn and remove the POW/MIA flag from atop the White House, especially on Flag Day, June 14<sup>th</sup>, when and where it had proudly flown for decades. Even more strange, the POW/MIA flag was not in its rightful position on September 18, 2020, National POW/MIA Recognition Day. The way this was handled was truly bizarre and, to date, DPAA Director McKeague and League Chairman/CEO Ann Mills-Griffiths have not been provided the rationale. The League informed White House officials that removing the POW/MIA flag from atop the White House sends conflicting signals domestically and internationally to foreign governments which figure prominently in US efforts to achieve the fullest possible accounting, in particular for Vietnam War POW/MIAs. It was also noted that such an action could be viewed as reducing priority and seriousness of US efforts and intentions, including with the DPRK, as accounting for Americans lost during the Korean War was Point #4 of the 2018 Singapore Agreement.

**SUPPORT THE LEAGUE:** You can support the League on Facebook by creating a fundraiser to celebrate meaningful occasions and events. Opportunities are nearly endless, ranging from appeals for donations to the League in lieu of birthday gifts or to honor your missing loved one on the anniversary of his loss, and, if returned, his story commemorating his recovery, etc. If you would like to create a fundraiser to benefit the League, visit [www.facebook.com/fund/powmiafamilies](http://www.facebook.com/fund/powmiafamilies). **100% of the proceeds** raised from your Facebook fundraiser will benefit the League! You and your family, friends and colleagues can also support the League by shopping at **Amazon Smile**. It is simple and automatic, **at no extra cost to you**. Just visit <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7071242>, and you will find the exact same prices, vast selection and convenient shopping to which you may be increasingly accustomed. The added bonus? The **Amazon Smile Foundation** automatically donates 0.5% of the cost of your eligible purchases to the League. **Donate today, 501(C)3, Fed Tax ID #23-7071242, at [www.pow-miafamilies.org](http://www.pow-miafamilies.org)**