



NATIONAL LEAGUE OF POW/MIA FAMILIES

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www.pow-miafamilies.org

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THE LEAGUE OFFICE IS TELEWORKING UNTIL RESTRICTIONS ARE EASED

POW/MIA FLAG IN US CAPITOL ROTUNDA: With unanimous bipartisan support in the 100th 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 101st 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." The League-originated POW/MIA flag was 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 and without consulting the League or DPAA, until after removing the POW/MIA flag from its customary position of honor, the most visible location in Washington, DC.

Chairman's Comment: The League is grateful for this tremendous support, which is a meaningful signal to senior counterpart 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 possible efforts will be made to recover and bring home our UNRETURNED Veterans.

When this occurred, DPAA and the League were notified within minutes of each other, 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 14th, 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 removal of the POW/MIA flag from atop the White House would send conflicting signals domestically and internationally to counterpart 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.

AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR: The number missing (POW/MIA) and otherwise unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR) from the Vietnam War is **STILL 1,585**. A September 24, 2020, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) release stated that **Air Force Maj. Paul A. Avolese** was lost in a mid-air collision on July 7, 1967, and he was presumed dead on July 24, 1967. There was no mention when remains were recovered or by whom, but interment services are pending. In a July 14, 2020 release, DPAA announced that **1st Lt. Alva R. Krogman, USAF**, KIA/BNR, was accounted for on July 7, 2020. Lt. Krogman was flying on a visual reconnaissance mission over Savannakhet Province, Laos, on January 17, 1967, when his aircraft was hit and went down. Search and Rescue (SAR) operations were initiated immediately, but were shut down within a few hours after one of the SAR aircraft was also shot down. In February, 2020, a US team of unexploded ordnance removal specialists initially recovered remains while clearing the site in preparation for an April joint recovery mission. **This was only the second identification of a previously missing/unaccounted-for Vietnam War Veteran to be announced since July 26, 2019.**

ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS/EVENTS CANCELED; UNILATERAL SRV RECOVERIES CONTINUED: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Defense (DoD) banned all DoD travel, initially until May 15, 2020, then extended until June 30th and travel is still limited, but DoD has begun the process of incrementally lifting restrictions. The DPAA pulled teams from the field, returned them to the US and cancelled all field operations until further notice; however, Vietnam agreed to conduct unilateral recoveries in several provinces. Reportedly, there have been three such periods, with multiple recovery teams, and one reported repatriation ceremony, plus another period of unilateral SRV recoveries involving three teams was fielded more recently in northern provinces.

DPAA & DIA SIGN 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 formally solidify 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 51ST ANNUAL MEETING RESCHEDULED FOR JUNE 23-27, 2021: As previously announced, the 51st Annual Meeting did not take place June 24-28th this year, and has been rescheduled for June 23-27, 2021. The Hilton Crystal City Hotel is open on a limited basis, and we're hoping for fewer restrictions and greater normalcy by mid-2021. **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 recently held in Little Rock, AR. Due to the seriousness and unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic, DoD travel restrictions have been applied worldwide. In addition, DoD, DIA, State Department and other US agencies were largely teleworking, but are now alternating schedules to try to ensure greater in-person coverage.

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. **100% of the proceeds** raised from your 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.



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