



**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES OF AMERICAN
PRISONERS & MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

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**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF POW/MIA FAMILIES – WHOLE AGAIN!
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The League's full name, founding date and nonprofit 501(c)(3) status are now legally restored and fully funded! Our ability to advocate for achieving the fullest possible accounting for 1,579 Vietnam War missing is restored. This good news provides inspiration and confidence that the League's efforts to obtain answers on missing Americans will not only be sustained, but expanded. Thanks to a solid pledge of \$2M over the next five years, our long struggle to fund and sustain accounting efforts is now behind us! The first year's anonymous donation of \$400,000 has been deposited; affirmation was a relief. Confirmation didn't come through until early last month, in fact May 9, 2023, to be precise!!

The anonymous charitable donation resulted from the bequest of a Vietnam War Veteran intent on helping his "brotherhood." After first explaining his strong belief in our accounting efforts, the donor made clear his support for the League, as he did the need to preserve our 50+ year history for educational purposes. The generous pledge was made due to his confidence in our record of responsible policy and its implementation, including our Archival Preservation Project. The painful decision to dissolve the League, and the need to immediately inform the POW/MIA families – those most directly impacted – prompted the incredible generosity of a caring American. All of us are deeply grateful! His Foundation has also donated to other charitable military-related causes.

The League's efforts will be assessed by the donor at the end of each year and, so long as responsible issue-focused efforts are helping bring answers and reasonably increased accounting results, another \$400,000 will be donated each year until the end of five years, for a total of \$2,000,000.00. (For clarity, the donor is not related to nor a close friend to anyone who was or now is missing/unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War, nor a returned Vietnam War POW, nor connected by past or present accounting-related employment.)

This completely unexpected news prompted an immediate need for the Board of Directors to take action to revoke the prior decision to dissolve. In accordance with League Policy on Leadership and Internal Operations, a Poll of the Board was called on the question of revoking the earlier decision to dissolve. The intention was that the League would immediately be restored to an active 501(c)(3) nonprofit status with our mission intact. Following the Board majority vote on January 31st to dissolve the League due to lack of funds to continue, on February 7th, a third party filed with the District of Columbia Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP) in Washington, DC, a form to legally "reserve" for its own use the League's full organizational name when founded on May 28, 1970, at DAR Constitution Hall, adding only "LLC." This application occurred despite official DC notice to the League that final dissolution would not take place until December 31, 2023, and between the January 31st Board majority dissolution vote to dissolve and the February 11th Board Poll to revoke.

The action to reserve the League's name prevented efforts to fully restore it at that time and required the Board majority to approve forming a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which we officially named the "National League of Families of American Prisoners, Missing and Unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War." The new legal name accurately included all the families for whom we've sought answers since our founding, thus allowing us to continue without jeopardizing our sacred historical mission. In reality, most at home and abroad know the League simply as the "National League of POW/MIA Families." While very close to the original, the new name was sufficiently different to enable the League to move forward legally.

A specialized law firm, recommended by a long-time Board Member and implemented by the Chairman in regular communication with the full Board, and ably supported by League Administrator, worked with DC authorities to confirm the League's "active" status and reaffirm our founding date to prevent a break in the League's well-established history. Also mandatory was IRS confirmation of the League's original EIN #23-7071242.

Challenging and frustrating as have been the recent months of confusion, the League now has ample funding to support our expanding efforts. Thankfully, and on board as this is written, is Executive Director Dr. George "Jay" Veith! Jay comes to the position highly qualified, having served as the League's Archival Research Committee (ARC) Chairman, and with extensive knowledge of, and experience in, the accounting mission. He is also well known and respected by many Vietnam War POW/MIA families, researchers, authors, educators, DIA's Stony Beach Team members, and most long-involved, committed DPAA employees.

Now that the League has again been certified as "active" by DC officials and the IRS, all who were League members before this bizarre challenge occurred still are, but let us hear from you to update our records. We're confident that all family members still seeking answers to end uncertainty about missing loved ones will quickly respond. Our hope is that all of you who receive this message recognize the importance of our efforts and are willing to renew active commitment to those who serve our Nation. Membership forms are available on the League website and will be enclosed for subsequent hard-copy mailing by USPS. No dues are required for 2023 but, of course, donations are always welcome! We must pull together to reinforce the importance of implementing long-promised priority on our shared mission – accounting as fully as possible for America's POW/MIA and KIA/BNR from the Vietnam War.

This message is being sent to all for whom we have current email addresses and also will be sent by hard copy, with referenced enclosures, hoping to confirm that we have current data, phone numbers and email addresses, the latter being the quickest and least expensive way to reach out and keep all apprised of current, critical information. We must signal senior US and foreign officials that we are expecting increased accounting results in keeping with longstanding reasonable expectations and DPAA's pledge that accounting for Vietnam War missing is their highest operational priority.

Last December 12th, I again met with Vietnam's Minister of Public Security To Lam to convey the specific unilateral steps his government needs to take – with no further delays! We are determined to continue engaging senior foreign and US officials in all related agencies. To have confidence that increased, evidence-based results can be achieved, an objective intelligence assessment must occur soon. It is the only way to determine a reasonable "core" on which to base policy and implementation plans to obtain answers for the impacted families. The time is NOW!

When the League was formed to voice our concerns in 1970, it was because senior US officials thought they knew best.....THEY DIDN'T.....but, with President Reagan's long-established support, things finally began to change, then move forward in the 1980s. We need your help and support, and we've shown we don't give up or succumb to unwarranted attacks or pressure. You can count on us to move forward and do everything possible to help get the answers you seek, now inspired by our new Executive Director Dr. Jay Veith. He'll be supported by our dedicated League Administrator who stuck with us throughout this trying time to demonstrate her unwavering support and assistance.

As ever hopefully.....and moving forward with focused determination.....Ann Mills-Griffiths, Chairman of the Board

DR. GEORGE “JAY” VEITH NEW LEAGUE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: The League is pleased and proud to announce a highly qualified individual, Dr. Jay Veith, has agreed to serve as our Executive Director, principal spokesman and leader of policy and operations implementation. He replaces long-time CEO/Executive Director Ann Mills Griffiths who continues as Chairman of the Board of Directors.

Dr. Veith is a former U.S. Army Captain who served in armor units in the United States and Germany from 1979 –1987. He earned his PhD in history from Monash University and is the author of four books on the Vietnam War. They include *Code-Name Bright Light: The Untold Story of U.S. POW Rescue Efforts During the Vietnam War* (New York: The Free Press, 1998); *Leave No Man Behind: Bill Bell and the Search for American POW/MIAs from the Vietnam War* (Madison, WI: Goblinfern Press, 2004); *Black April: The Fall of South Vietnam, 1973-1975* (New York: Encounter Press, 2012); and most recently, *Drawn Swords in a Distant Land: South Vietnam’s Shattered Dreams* (New York: Encounter Press, 2021). Dr. Veith also published an e-book with the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars titled “The Return to War: North Vietnamese Decision-Making, 1973-1975” (Washington, D.C.: Cold War International History Project, November 2017). He has testified before Congress, spoken at many events on the POW/MIA accounting mission, and presented numerous papers at scholarly conferences on the Vietnam War. His CV is available upon request.

DPAA DIRECTOR AGAIN REJECTS NEED FOR INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT: Although the League has been requesting an objective intelligence assessment of the Vietnam War accounting mission for many years, two appeals were sent this year to DPAA Director Kelly McKeague. Always courteous, Director McKeague responded to both appeals, the most recent reply dated May 8th, in which he stated, *“As I indicated in my previous letter, the level of cooperation from Vietnam and in particular, the Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP), is stronger than ever. Coupled with each side’s recognition that the time horizon and window of opportunity are shrinking, there is ample motivation and the wherewithal on both sides to increase the pace and scope of activities in Vietnam in order to advance the mission.”*

Chairman’s Comment: It is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine well-founded, realistic accounting expectations without a current objective analysis as to where the issue stands. Common sense dictates the need for evidence-based objectivity to determine a core from which realistic expectations can be derived. Director McKeague appears to believe that merely cordial discussions with the Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP) with agreement to further increase the pace and scope of field activities will suffice. With no evidence-based expectations, nor responses on specific steps Minister of Public Security To Lam agreed to take during his December 12, 2022, meeting in Hanoi with the League Chairman of the Board, optimism is hard to achieve.

52nd ANNUAL MEETING AGAIN POSTPONED/TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS NAMED: The Board deeply regrets that, given the significant legal and financial challenges we had to overcome, there was insufficient time to develop the informative and constructive annual meeting that the families want and deserve. Having said that, the renovated League Office reopened on June 1st.

Also, as called for in the League’s Bylaws, now that the original League name and status are restored, a seven-member Board of Directors is again required. Two vacancies left by resignations of the dissenting minority needed to be filled. Since there were no more 2021-2023 candidates on the list of applicants, and in accordance with the Bylaws, two active, longstanding League members with loved ones still missing were appointed by the Chairman of the Board.

The two new Board Members are Anne Holt, MIA sister from CA, and Fred Pringle, MIA son from OH. Both immediately agreed to the Chairman’s request to serve until the 2024-25 Board of Directors election moves forward in the Spring.

By that time, the League's ever-increasing membership, now comprised of both original members and new applicants, solicited DUES FREE for the year, is being updated. That process will soon be finalized and, supported by the Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), will provide a clearer understanding of potential advocacy for the accounting mission with Congress, the Administration and the media.

DPAA-HOSTED ANNUAL GOVERNMENT BRIEFINGS JUNE 29-30, 2023: DPAA will host Annual Government Briefings (AGB) on the Vietnam War accounting effort in Washington, DC, June 29-30th. No program of events has been provided to the families of the 1,579 missing and unaccounted-for Vietnam War Veterans who have been invited. They have been provided with COIN Assist transportation to attend, plus registration materials and information concerning the Mayflower Hotel, downtown Washington, DC. In response to a League request, it is now understood that family members of those recovered, returned, identified and now accounted-for are not being invited to attend, but will be permitted to observe the briefings if they choose to do so. The AGB will also be live-streamed, via the DPAA website: <https://www.dpaa.mil/>

An in-person meeting of the League Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, June 28th at the League Office so all Board Members will be on hand to attend the AGB, and we all look forward to hearing Director McKeague's report on his just-concluded visit to Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. **That evening, 5:00 – 7:00 PM, a League-hosted Welcome Reception will be held at the Washington, DC, headquarters of The American Legion, a short walk around the corner and across the street from the Mayflower Hotel.** All family members of missing Vietnam War Veterans are invited and urged to attend and interact with League Board Members, leaders of DC-based Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), and some engaged US officials. Questions? Call the League Office, 703-465-7432, or send an email to admin@pow-miafamilies.org.

SOA/SFA LEADERS VISIT DPAA HAWAII HEADQUARTERS: On May 11th, SOA/SFA POW/MIA Committee Chairman David Gordon, SOA President Doug Godshall, Committee Adviser, in-state Committee Member Kimo Wheeler, and League Chairman of the Board Ann Mills-Griffiths, an adviser to the SOA/SFA POW/MIA Committee, visited DPAA Operational Headquarters in Hawaii. Due to a DoD-approved \$60M budget plus-up anticipated for FY24, making a total of \$190M when finally approved, there was an ongoing DPAA planning conference on expanding Vietnam War field operations and those in other regional countries related to WWII losses. For this reason, DPAA Detachment 1, 2 and 3 Commanders and staff from Thailand/Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos were on hand, an unexpected, most welcome development. All of them were present during the Chairman's early December 2022 trip to Hanoi, Phnom Penh and Vientiane.

The good news? All three Detachment Commanders – LTC Travis Walter, USA, Det. 2-Hanoi, MAJ Charles Keesling, USA, Det. 3-Vientiane, and Lt Col Steve Lanuzo, USAF, Det. 1-Bangkok, who oversees joint field operations in Cambodia – are impressive. Though with comparatively little historical information or experience dealing with Communist officials, current Detachment Commanders and senior staff are very capable in terms of organizing and executing field operations within specific restrictions and parameters.

Since a DPAA predecessor organization long ago terminated Detachment 4 in Cambodia, DIA's Stony Beach Cambodia Specialist Eric Phillips is a highly capable on-the-ground interviewer, aided by DPAA's Cambodia Specialist Vina Chhouk, now rotating in/out from Hawaii, as Eric Phillips soon will be. The SOA/SFA Delegation was also treated to an informative briefing in the Lab by Dr. Denise To, a highly capable senior anthropologist and previous briefer at League Annual Meetings.

HONORING THE LATE LIEUTENANT COLONEL MIKE TAYLOR, USA/SF: A primary purpose for the timing of the SOA/SFA visit to Hawaii was to honor the late LTC Mike Taylor, USA/SF. Until his death, Mike was Chairman of the SOA/SFA POW/MIA Committee and Vice President of the Special Operations Association. Inurnment of his remains occurred at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) and his Celebration of Life at the beautiful Royal Hawaiian Golf Club. It was a privilege to represent the League at the meaningful services.

In early 2018, Mike and his wonderful wife, Laura, accompanied the League Delegation to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, the first time ever that a major VSO was asked to participate. His follow-up report was given to the League's 49th Annual Meeting in June and the Special Operations Association Reunion (SOAR) held in October in Las Vegas. He was a legend in the Special Forces community, serving in MACV-SOG and other challenging assignments over five years during the Vietnam War and many other difficult assignments in the Middle East in more recent years.

LTC Taylor received countless awards and was selected to be a Distinguished Member of the Special Forces Regiment, selected by the Board of Senior Special Forces personnel. It is the highest award that can be bestowed on a member of the US Army Special Forces. During the 49th Annual Meeting in 2018, Mike was recognized with the League Award, and the 51st Annual Meeting in 2021, co-hosted live and online with DPAA, received the League's highest honor, the Distinguished Service Award!

VIETNAM WAR ACCOUNTING STATUS TODAY: Until the planning meeting to utilize the increase in DPAA's budget referenced above, and because nearly 90% of all losses are in the Indo-Pacific region, the pace of field operations had been largely planned by then Director of INDOPACOM Operations Col Matt Brannen, USMC. In a surprising series of moves, Col Brannen was suddenly replaced by Mr. Chris Phelps, a retired Marine Lieutenant Colonel. Col Brannen was moved up to DPAA Deputy Director for Operations (Acting), replacing RDML Darius Binaji, USN, who was DPAA's third in command after Director McKeague and Principal Deputy Director Fern Sumpter Winbush. In a first-ever such action within the accounting mission writ large, RDML Binaji was "Returned to Service" for failing to meet DPAA Director Kelly K. McKeague's leadership expectations. (It was a step long overdue, and a relief to many.)

Field operations of the DPAA Detachments in Vietnam are carefully monitored by the Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP) within guidelines approved from above. Thoroughly informed and trained on the unique history of US-Vietnam wartime and post-war relations since entering the Ministries of Defense, Public Security or Foreign Affairs, the VNOSMP is the monitor of US accounting operations, including tracking and dispensing US funds in payment for their support and assistance. The VNOSMP just celebrated their 50th Anniversary at a commemoration attended by DPAA Director McKeague and his delegation, along with the 35th purported anniversary of joint field operations that actually began in 1985, but became more sustained in 1988.

IF ATTENDING THE ANNUAL GOVERNMENT BRIEFINGS JUNE 29-30TH, PLEASE BE SURE TO COME TO THE LEAGUE-HOSTED WELCOME RECEPTION: 5:00-7:00 PM, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28TH, AMERICAN LEGION BUILDING, 1608 K STREET, NW, WASHINGTON, DC. (A SHORT WALK AROUND THE CORNER AND ACROSS THE STREET.)

SAVE POSTAGE AND SIMPLIFY UPDATING YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION BY USING THE MEMBERSHIP FORMS ON THE WEBSITE.