



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

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**YEAR-END WRAP-UP NEWSLETTER  
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**AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR:** The number of US personnel missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War is still **1,618**, unchanged since June 9<sup>th</sup>. Most recently accounted for was **Colonel Patrick H. Wood, USAF**, listed as MIA on 2/6/67, North Vietnam, remains returned on 12/14/15, and identified 2/29/16. Just prior to this was **LCDR Frederick P. Crosby, USN**, listed as KIA/BNR, North Vietnam, on 6/1/65, remains returned 12/14/15, and identified on 2/17/16, but not announced by DPAA until 5/25/16. Also recently confirmed as accounted for was **Major Dean A. Klenda, USAF**, listed as MIA, North Vietnam, on 9/17/65, recovered 12/8/14 and identified 12/30/14, but also only recently announced by DPAA. Prior to that release, the most recent was **SFC Alan L. Boyer, USA/SF**, listed as MIA 3/28/68, Laos, recovered 6/16/98, and identified 3/16/16. This brings the total accounted for to **965** since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and identified before the end of the war, bring the total of US personnel accounted for from the Vietnam War to **1,028**. Of the 1,618 still missing (POW/MIA) and unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR), 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,261 (VN-463, VS-798); Laos-301; Cambodia-49; PRC territorial waters-7. These country-specific numbers can and do fluctuate when investigations result in changes to loss locations. Since formation in 1970, the League has sought the return of all POWs, the fullest possible accounting for those still missing, and repatriation of all recoverable remains.

**PRESIDENT ON COMMITMENT TO POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AT DAV NATIONAL CONVENTION:** Speaking at the Disabled American Veterans 95<sup>th</sup> National Convention on August 1<sup>st</sup>, President Obama stated, *"We've stood together at the Wall and remembered the lessons of Vietnam – that even when Americans may disagree about a war, we have to stand united in support of our troops. And that for mothers like Sara [Frances] Shay, who honored her missing son for more than 40 years, we will never stop working to bring home our prisoners of war and our missing in action. We leave nobody behind. No one."* The League appreciates the President's reference to America's longstanding commitment to achieve the accounting, though we also recognize fully that not all will be recovered, identified and returned to their families for honorable burial here in the United States.

**PRESIDENT VISITS VIETNAM:** While in Vietnam from May 22-25, President Obama met with senior Vietnamese officials and, holding a concluding press conference, stated, *"On behalf of the American people, including our veterans, I want to thank the government and the people of Vietnam for the many years of cooperation to account for Americans missing in action – solemn efforts that we'll continue together."*

**PRESIDENT VISITS LAOS FOR ASEAN LEADERS CONFERENCE:** On September 6<sup>th</sup>, President Obama met with Lao President Vorachit on the margins of the East Asia Summit. Laos is the 2016 Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and it is customary for leaders of nations to meet for bilateral discussions. In this instance, the portion of the lengthy *"Joint Declaration between the United States of America and the Lao People's Democratic Republic"* included one paragraph related specifically to the POW/MIA issue: *"President Obama expressed his appreciation for the Lao P.D.R.'s continued cooperation in providing for the fullest possible accounting for U.S. personnel missing from the war, including its recent steps to increase the efficiency of joint search efforts. The two sides would (sic) continue to meet semi-annually for technical discussions on mission planning and strive to complete the mission in a timely and efficient manner."*

**Chairman's Comment:** Since the President's trip, much factually deficient purported "analysis" has been published, some purposely duplicitous with accusations of US war crimes during the Vietnam War. Yet, perhaps unintentionally, this distorted view was advanced by President Obama's public statement that America's further humanitarian assistance to help eliminate unexploded ordnance (UXO) came as a *"moral obligation."*

In reality, President Obama's trip to Laos, the first by a sitting US President, was extremely important, especially to the Lao, but also to those of us who have worked steadily and cooperatively with the Lao Government and people for decades to account as fully as possible for missing US personnel. In that ever-improving, though often frustrating, process, the US has provided humanitarian assistance for decades, including increasing support to ameliorate UXO, despite the Lao Government having initially denied there was any problem in the early to mid-1980s, regularly declining US support and assistance. America is a caring, generous nation and, historically, we have worked to help suffering people after every war, not out of guilt as a moral obligation, but because we care.

The truth is that Vietnam used "neutral" Laos for supply routes and, as a result, hundreds of tons of bombs were dropped. War is hell! People suffer, and the Lao people more than most due to its geographical location and long border with Vietnam, but the Vietnamese people also suffered horribly, as did Cambodians, much more than Americans, horrific as were US losses. And we're still seeking answers on as many as possible of the 1,618 listed as missing and unaccounted-for from that long-ago war, with ever-increasing cooperation from these governments in a spirit of humanitarian reciprocity, not from a basis of guilt on the part of any country.

Accounting for prior enemy combatants is a matter of honor among Armed Forces around the world, an international obligation under accepted rules of war, including the Geneva Conventions. It is NOT a "war legacy," as some mistakenly assert. Such "legacies" are appropriate for negotiations and dependent on internal policies of each engaged country. These are facts. Due to personal involvement in countless official USG and League delegations, I know firsthand – and the Lao, Vietnamese and Cambodian leaders also know – this historical reality. Yes, a few individuals committed recognized atrocities, but enough of the distorted attempts to persuade newly engaged or uninformed people that the United States is guilty of "war crimes." Such charges are unwarranted, insulting and completely false!

**US-RUSSIA JOINT COMMISSION (USRJC) ON POW/MIAs HELD FIRST PLENARY IN TEN YEARS:** After a decade-long lapse, the USRJC finally held plenary discussions May 22-25 at the Pentagon. This lack of official contact, much less substantive discussions, can be attributed primarily to on-again, off-again bilateral tensions and lack of high level political and policy support by both governments for resuming joint humanitarian accounting efforts. During this lengthy period, various scenarios were in play to terminate the Presidential Commission and replace this special presidentially-established communication channel with routine diplomatic contacts. Those efforts failed for many reasons, not least the strong opposition to such a move by the League and the major national veteran organizations. Those most directly impacted are eager to see momentum return to the work of the USRJC, a viable channel for engaging Russia and the states of the former Soviet Union.

The plenary was led on the Russian side by Colonel General Vostrotin, a national hero in the Russian Federation, and on the US side by General Robert "Doc" Foglesong, USAF (Ret). Former DPAA Director Mike Linnington, the DoD Commissioner at that time, was also present. A report published on May 26 by DPAA stated, *"...the USRJC was re-energized to make further progress in each of the four conflicts' working groups. All agreed to expand archival research opportunities in both countries. The US side declared that they will continue work to find information on the 264 servicemen Russia lists as MIA from its long involvement in Afghanistan. The US also indicated it will increase efforts to help the Russian side determine what happened to its missing citizens from other past wars and conflicts."* VFW National Adjutant and Executive Director Bob Wallace and League Chairman of the Board & CEO Ann Mills-Griffiths attended social functions hosted by the two delegations, one at the Army-Navy Country Club in Arlington, VA, another at the Russian Cultural Center in Washington, DC, hosted by the Russian Chairman, and a closing reception at the VFW's Headquarters on Capitol Hill, also in DC.

**Chairman's Comment:** The efforts to do away with the USRJC failed for several reasons, not least the strong opposition to such a move by the League, the VFW and other major national veteran organizations. Those most directly impacted are eager to see momentum return to the work of the USRJC, a viable channel for engaging Russia, despite rising tensions in bilateral relations. In fact, it is an opportune time to engage on a humanitarian basis precisely because of the rising tensions. Engagement with states of the former Soviet Union is ongoing and increasingly productive, especially in Ukraine where a successful field operation was recently conducted.

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOLLOWS-UP WITH MISSION TO MOSCOW:** COL Chris Forbes, USA, Director for Europe-Mediterranean Region (including USRJC, JCSD and former states of the USSR), and Regional Deputy Heather Harris, recently visited Moscow to meet with Colonel General Vostrotin. Though General Foglesong was originally slated to participate, other requirements on his schedule prevented necessary travel.

**TALKS HELD IN UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA:** COL Forbes and Archival Research Specialist/Linguist Svetlana Shevchenko just concluded a quick visit to the capitals of each country to pursue greater access to relevant archival documents and potential witnesses who served in the forces of the USSR during the early days of the Vietnam War. This is an encouraging initiative that the League fully supports. Ms. Shevchenko previously was a senior member of the Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD) in DPMO, but only recently reassigned into JCSD after an unwarranted and miscast, thankfully brief assignment in DPMO's External Communications Directorate.

**FORMER DPAA DIRECTOR'S VISIT TO THE PRC AND SOUTH KOREA:** Former DPAA Director Mike Linnington traveled to Beijing and Seoul. No specific information was shared on the discussions or their outcome, but shortly after the talks concluded, the PRC cancelled a long-planned field recovery mission near their border with North Korea (DPRK) purportedly for security reasons. He also visited Seoul and held talks with officials there, renewing longstanding ties with South Korean officials who continue to support US accounting efforts, even building their own "DPAA-equivalent" agency, with the experienced advice and counsel of DPAA's Deputy Director of Outreach & Communication, Johnie E. Webb, retired Army LTC and former Commander and Deputy Commander of the Central Identification Laboratory (CIL), merged with Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA) into Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) in 2003.

**Chairman's Comment:** Prior to these discussions, the League urged the former DPAA Director to raise the need for responsiveness by Beijing, not only on the known PRC-controlled POW camps during the Korean War, but on records that surely exist related to PRC personnel who served during the Vietnam War. Specifically requested were archival documents related to communication units in the Vieng Xai/Sam Neua cave complex in northern Laos visited by a 1982 League Delegation. The League has long recognized the need for PRC cooperation to account for US personnel lost during the Vietnam and Korean wars, hoping that new initiatives, backed by political will at the highest level, will soon be possible and that PRC officials will at long last be responsive.

**DPAA DIRECTOR RESIGNATION:** LTG Michael S. Linnington, USA (Ret), named as DPAA Director in June, 2015, abruptly resigned on June 16<sup>th</sup> to accept a position as CEO of the Wounded Warrior Project, a disgraced NGO headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida. All appreciated his 2015 pledge to provide continuity for the long term and were looking forward to learning about improvements made over the past year and plans for further implementing his commitment to sustain DPAA's priority on Vietnam War accounting for at least the next 3-5 years. The unexpected pledge-reversal dramatically changed the environment; however, all present for the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting were courteous and attentive to Mr. Linnington's explanation for his sudden departure.

**LEAGUE POSITION:** In response to the June 16<sup>th</sup> emailed announcement, the following statement was released by Ann Mills-Griffiths, League Chairman of the Board & CEO: *"Almost exactly a year ago, at our 46th Annual Meeting, DPAA Director Mike Linnington gave the families and veterans his word that he would be with this mission 'for the long term, at least ten years.' His unexpected resignation came as a shocking reversal. Emails and calls since the announcement expressed understandable frustration and anger, but we've been through many disappointments since 1992 and know the long-serving dedicated civilians have been the core of accounting efforts for years. We trust them to continue as they have, in the interest of all. This latest episode will bring greater, even more unified determination to move forward, on that you can rely."*

**ONGOING SEARCH FOR DPAA DIRECTOR:** The personnel process required publicly advertising the position and, inexplicably, the advertisement included NO requirement for any POW/MIA accounting experience, nor even any experience in dealing specifically or generally with Southeast Asia. For the first few months, a panel of three US officials, including then DPAA Principal Director, now DPAA Acting Director, Fern Sumpter Winbush, sorted through applications to select those to be interviewed. Following the interviews, recommendations were made to Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD-P) Brian McKeon, the selecting official. While rumors have been rampant, no announcement has yet been made, but the name of the new DPAA Director will be released as soon as available, via the League's electronic updates, and posted on the League website and Facebook page.

**Chairman's Comments:** The unexpected need to select a new Director for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) has caused serious disruption and no small amount of uncertainty and concern. While sudden, as well as disappointing to some, we are thankful the former Director opted to move on. We hope and pray someone who is truly experienced and dedicated to the accounting mission will be selected. We've survived much greater set-backs over the years, so we're moving forward with even greater determination.

In that effort, we're counting on POW/MIA families, veteran organizations, and others similarly motivated to help us sustain the unprecedented accounting effort we've worked so hard to establish and, if possible, expand the process even further, as Vietnam has repeatedly requested. Time is running out, especially for Vietnam War accounting. We are losing close family members and veterans who have the greatest stake in obtaining answers, just as we are losing firsthand witnesses with information to help account for our missing. Despite scientific advances, identifiable remains are increasingly difficult to recover due to acidic soil and climatic conditions, plus incident sites are being destroyed by growth and construction.

Such development is helpful to the hard-working people of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, but it also narrows the remaining window of opportunity to account for our missing. We deeply appreciate the efforts now ongoing, though admittedly with recent ups and downs, and are grateful for your continuing commitment and support. Thankfully, President Reagan came into office in 1981 with longstanding commitment; otherwise, we would not today see over 600 US military and civilian personnel working full time to account for America's POW/MIAs, our UNRETURNED VETERANS, and recover others killed in earlier wars and conflicts who didn't make it home. Nor would we have seen 965 previously missing Vietnam Veterans accounted for and returned to their families since the end of the war in 1975.

We recognize that accounting for all of the missing will never be possible and, as economic realities continue, we increasingly rely on the support of organizations and concerned citizens to help sustain our efforts. Working together, we can and must ensure that the fullest possible accounting is achieved. That is precisely the message needed by those serving today in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and around the world. They must know that should they be captured or missing, we will be there for them.

**US-LAO CONSULTATIONS HELD IN HAWAII:** A Lao Delegation was in Hawaii August 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>, meeting with DPAA and DIA officials regarding future operations. DPAA Deputy Director BG Mark S. Spindler, USA, led the US Delegation, and H. E. Khoanta Phalivong, Director General of Europe & Americas Department, Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led the Lao Delegation. The focus was to seek agreement for US teams to base-camp at incident site locations to reduce travel time and costs for helicopter support, primarily blade hours. This would maximize time in the field to conduct investigation and recovery efforts, as would an increase in the number of personnel allowed in-country simultaneously – from 53 to 65, when needed. The Lao agreed on a case-by-case basis to the personnel increase and to consider base-camping at incident sites. These decisions will help meet current budget requirements to do more with less in terms of funding and effectiveness, meaning results.

**US-VIETNAM & US-CAMBODIA POW/MIA TALKS HELD:** BG Spindler held talks this Fall with counter-part officials in Vietnam, reportedly geared at generating greater accounting results with few, if any, additional funds or personnel. Col Mike Gann, USMC, DPAA Director for the Asia Pacific Region, and Jack Kull, long-time Southeast Asia policy officer, also participated in the talks in Hanoi and Phnom Penh. In the latter, discussions focused on resolving the alleged border conflict that is preventing a recovery mission close to their shared border with Laos.

**Chairman's Comment:** Political issues, including disagreements over border delineation, should not be permitted to impede humanitarian cooperation, including the mission to account for missing US personnel. The League calls on Lao and Cambodian leaders to settle their differences or set them aside and cooperate constructively to allow the technical specialists to proceed without further delay.

**JOINT FIELD OPERATIONS:** First quarter Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) Joint Field Activities (JFAs) just concluded in Laos and Vietnam. In Laos, there were three Recovery Teams (RTs) that included on-site participation by the DIA Stony Beach Specialist from October 22 – December 8<sup>th</sup>. Five RTs and two Investigation Teams (ITs) conducted operations in three regions (north, central and south) of Vietnam from October 23 – December 9<sup>th</sup>. A Joint Forensic Review on December 7<sup>th</sup> resulted in repatriation of remains believed to be those of US personnel. There also was a unilateral underwater site survey, a small operation off the coast of Quang Tri, Vietnam, intended to identify aircraft wreckage that was discovered by local citizens.

Before the end of FY 2016, September 30<sup>th</sup>, operations in Vietnam included a 45-day JFA during which approximately 100 US personnel, comprised of 5 RTs, 2 unilateral Vietnamese RTs, and 1 Research Investigation Team (RIT), worked simultaneously. In January, JFAs are scheduled to resume in Cambodia.

US Ambassadors to Vietnam and Laos, Ted Osius and Rena Bitter, respectively, accompanied by US Embassy staff members, visited field sites in both countries. Their active support provides positive reinforcement to the field teams and underscores the priority the United States attaches to the accounting mission.

There were also about 100 DPAA personnel deployed on WWII accounting operations in Papua New Guinea, France, Germany, Kwajalein and Hawaii (all recently concluded), mostly recovery teams for roughly 6-7 weeks each. In addition, those engaged in public-private partnerships with DPAA – both paid and volunteer – are working around the world. History Flight is continuing recoveries of USMC personnel lost during WWII in Tarawa, and university-based archeologists are engaged in the Philippines and France.

**DPAA OPERATIONAL BUDGET REQUIREMENTS STILL UNCERTAIN:** It is still unclear whether DPAA will have the funds required to continue to “increase the pace and scope of operations,” as has repeatedly been requested by Vietnam. Despite continuing internal dysfunction, DPAA has been proceeding well since becoming fully operational in January of this year; however, the plus-up of \$20 million to reach the necessary FY17 budget total of \$132 million for planned operational requirements must still be approved.

**YOUR HELP IS URGENTLY NEEDED!** WRITE TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS TO REQUEST APPROVAL OF INCREASED FY17 DPAA FUNDING FROM \$112 TO \$132 MILLION. ALSO, REQUEST EXEMPTION OF DPAA FUNDING FROM ANY REDUCTIONS. JUST AS VETERANS CARE IS RIGHTFULLY PROTECTED BY EXEMPTING DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (DVA) BUDGETS FROM ACROSS-THE-BOARD AND/OR SEQUESTRATION REDUCTIONS, FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING FOR AMERICA'S UNRETURNED VETERANS, OUR MISSING MEN, DESERVES EQUAL PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW.

**NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY – 2016:** Countless ceremonies were held across the United States and around the world, including US Embassies in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. Many of the international commemorations were held under the auspices of the Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA) at military installations. Again this year, the national ceremony was held at the Pentagon. It was held in 1984 at the White House and 1988 at the US Capitol. The speakers this year were Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Paul Selva, USAF, Senator John Cornyn (R-TX), and Captain Gerald Coffee, USN, held as a POW in Vietnam for over seven years, until his release in February, 1973.

In his remarks, Secretary Carter stated in part, *“We gather here together today to recognize our nation’s former prisoners of war and those still missing....and recommit ourselves to fulfilling our solemn pledge: to make every effort to bring all – all – our men and women home to their families.”* He went on to say, *“And to all the families here today and around the world – whether you’ve been reunited or are still waiting for your loved one – thank you for your patriotism and courage in the face of uncertainty, and thank you for all you’ve given to this country.”* In reference to DoD’s efforts, and his own commitment, he stated, *“....we won’t stop – I won’t stop – until we achieve the fullest possible accounting for all our missing.....We work hard to meet our commitment to yesterday’s personnel to honor their service and their families. But there’s another reason we do so: we know what it means to the men and women serving today, those who will serve in the future and their families. As they see everything we’re doing to provide the fullest possible accounting of those who served before....they know we’ll do the same for them.....and the men and women of DPAA – the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency – work day in and day out, in remote field sites and high-tech laboratories alike, across the United States and around the world to meet that promise and to give hope and solace to our families.”*

Vice Chairman General Selva’s remarks were inspirational, stating *“Your sacrifice is humbling and we thank you for your faith and your perseverance as we work to keep our promise to you. You are for us a beacon of hope. And welcome to the many of you who are committed to trying to bring every fallen American home from foreign shores. We are grateful for your continued determination.”* He ended by stating, *“The motto on the POW/MIA flag is one we have internalized to our very core. ‘We will never forget.’ It is emblazoned on our hearts as is the memory of every member we have lost in battle.”* The impressive national ceremony concluded with the Missing Man Flyover of Cobra Gunships, symbolism appreciated by all present.

**47<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING HELD JUNE 22-25<sup>TH</sup>:** Despite the DPAA Director’s unexpected resignation and the last-minute withdrawal of Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work, the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting was the largest and most productive in years. Deputy Secretary Work was replaced by **Acting Under Secretary for Personnel & Readiness Peter Levine** as the Opening Session Keynote Speaker on June 23<sup>rd</sup>.

At the **Opening Session** and, in addition to Acting Under Secretary for Personnel & Readiness Peter Levine, the League welcomed Mr. Daniel Krittenbrink Senior Director for Asian Affairs, White House National Security Staff, who conveyed full support of the President and his administration. This year, Senior Policy Advisor Richard Childress delivered the central League assessment – fully coordinated with and supported by League Chairman of the Board and CEO Ann Mills-Griffiths – providing the League’s assessment of DPAA’s first year as a DoD agency. His fair, objective, critical observations were based not only on his 26-year Army career, including many years as a Southeast Asia Foreign Area Officer and a 1968 tour as a District Senior Advisor in the second least pacified province of South Vietnam, but even more importantly, his eight years as Director of Asian Affairs during President Reagan’s two terms in office. His assessment held the rapt attention of family members, veterans and all US officials present. **The full text of Childress’ remarks is available on the League’s web site, [www.pow-miafamilies.org](http://www.pow-miafamilies.org)**, as are nearly all official presentations, though former DPAA Director Linnington again had nothing in writing.

**DIA Deputy Director Melissa Drisko** spelled out DIA's full and continuing support for its **Stony Beach Team** of specialists, now the only US Government unit focused solely on Vietnam War accounting. Since inception, SB has focused primarily on Last Known Alive (LKA) cases, interviewing witnesses, collecting relevant archival material and augmenting DPAA investigation capabilities, including those of DPAA Detachments in Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. Ms. Drisko stated in part: *"In August of last year, the Director of DIA, Lt Gen Stewart, had the opportunity to meet with Ann. In that meeting, Lt Gen Stewart made a commitment that DIA will continue to support the POW/MIA accounting mission through its Stony Beach Program.....to reaffirm Lt Gen Stewart's pledge of support, DIA values and is committed to continuing its longstanding support to those who are missing, to their families, and to our nation. DIA is proud of the fact that Stony Beach is the only organization within the DoD accounting community exclusively focused on Vietnam War accounting."*

The 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Dinner & Commemorative Candlelight Ceremony was extra special this year, with **Army Chief of Staff General Mark A. Milley** as the speaker. His supportive, meaningful remarks inspired all present, as did his participation, along with **Vietnam's Ambassador to the United States H.E. Pham Quang Vinh**, in reading aloud the names of 16 American and Vietnamese personnel who lost their lives on April 7, 2001, in a tragic helicopter accident while on a mission to account for our missing. Some of their families were honored guests at the dinner.

LTC Rennie M. Cory, Jr., USA, Detachment Commander  
LTC George D. Martin, USA, Incoming Detachment Commander  
Maj Charles E. Lewis, USAF, Deputy Detachment Commander  
MSgt Steven L. Moser, USAF, Linguist  
HMC Pedro J. Gonzales, USN, Medic  
SFC Tommy J. Murphy, USA, Mortuary Affairs Specialist  
TSgt Robert M. Flynn, USAF, Linguist  
Mr. Nguyen Thanh Ha, Deputy Director, Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP)  
SrCol Tran Van Bien, Ministry of National Defense, People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN)  
Mr. Nguyen Van Ha, Northern Services Flight Company (NSFC)  
LTC Nguyen Thanh Son, NSFC, PAVN Air Force  
MAJ Vu Pham The Kien, NSFC, PAVN Air Force  
MAJ Nguyen Huu Nham, NSFC, PAVN Air Force  
LT Giap Thanh Ngan, NSFC, PAVN Air Force  
LT Dan Ngoc, USFC, PAVN Air Force  
LT Pham Duy Dung, NSFC, PAVN Air Force

Also honored were US Army Captain Richard Rees and Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Air Force Sergeant Nguyen Van Hai, both killed on December 15, 1973, while on an unarmed recovery mission in southern Vietnam. **League Senior Policy Advisor Richard T. Childress** read aloud the names of all Americans still missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War with family present for the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Dinner.

**ATTEND DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES:** The 2017 calendar for Family Updates is January 28<sup>th</sup>, Phoenix, AZ; February 25<sup>th</sup>, Charleston, SC; March 25<sup>th</sup>, New Orleans, LA, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, Kansas City, MO, May 20<sup>th</sup>, Syracuse, NY, during the League's 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting June 21-24<sup>th</sup>, and September 9<sup>th</sup>, Detroit, MI. You may have noticed postings on the DPAA website indicating 1,276 family members have thus far in 2016 attended these updates. What is unstated, therefore unclear, is that only roughly 20% of that number are Vietnam War families.

This is for four primary reasons: 1) Only 1,618 US personnel still missing and otherwise unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War, but over 7,700 unaccounted-for from the Korean War and over 73,000 from WWII. Obviously, the pool of Korean War and WWII family members is MUCH greater than those impacted by the Vietnam War of the few impacted by the Cold War. 2) Vietnam War POW/MIA family members who chose to be informed were flown to Washington, DC, to attend the League's early annual meetings, begun in 1970, well before the January 27, 1973, formal end of active US engagement in the war. 3) During the way, Service Casualty Offices and DoD officials actively recommended that family members join the League as a means of mutual support and to ensure receipt of current information on the status of their missing loved ones and US Government efforts to account for them. 4) The vast majority of active Vietnam War family members are those whose missing loved one was originally listed as POW or MIA. KIA/BNR families were not eligible to be League members until those listed as POW and MIA were systematically presumed dead during the late 1970s. By membership vote, the League bylaws were changed at that time.

**ATTENDING DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES SHOWS YOU ARE ENGAGED AND EXPECT PRIORITY EFFORT BASED ON THE REALITY THAT MOST IMMEDIATE VIETNAM WAR FAMILY MEMBERS ARE STILL LIVING. THUS, THERE IS LOGIC IN PLACING OPERATIONAL PRIORITY ON ACCOUNTING FOR VIETNAM WAR MISSING, INCLUDING THE URGENT ISSUE OF PURSUING ANSWERS ON LAST KNOWN ALIVE CASES.**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION UPCOMING:** The League's seven-member governing body is elected every other year for a two-year term. The next election will be for the 2017-2019 Board of Directors. The only requirement is that an applicants must be a current League family member in good standing (dues paid). Board meetings are usually held in the League's national office, quarterly. On occasion, the Board Chairman makes a decision or calls for a vote on holding a conference call meeting, in lieu of in-person. Please give serious thought to becoming an applicant for the election.

You would be expected to read and respond to all emails initiated by the Chairman and abide by established guidelines. With few exceptions, those elected absorb all expenses associated with attendance at called board meetings, including transportation and accommodations; there is no per diem associated with being a member of the League's Board of Directors. If you have any questions or wish to review the guidelines, as well as Articles or Incorporation and Bylaws, please contact Leslie Swindells, League Administrator, at [Leslie.Swindells@pow-miafamilies.org](mailto:Leslie.Swindells@pow-miafamilies.org). Applications will be sent to all League members in the first Newsletter distributed in 2017, so please think carefully about whether you could contribute to the accounting mission by volunteering and, if elected, to serving on the 2017-2019 Board of Directors.

**DON'T FORGET YOUR DUES!** To be eligible to vote in the 217-2019 Board of Directors election, family members must be up to date on payment of dues by the time the ballots are distributed, usually by the end of March in an election year. Dues can be paid directly by sending a check to the League office, or through PayPal on line by using a credit card. If your dues have not been paid by January 31<sup>st</sup>, you will receiving ONE postcard reminder before your name is removed from the list of active League members. Please remember, it is crucial that the League remain strong, and that means actively engaged family and associate members. There is no other organization like the League and, without the League, you would not today see the large, new Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) that is working for you, the American taxpayer. The League must remain strong, and only each of you can make that happen.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW FOR 48<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING – JUNE 21-25, 2017:** As has been the case for the last many years, the League's national convention, in our case officially called the **48<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**, will again be held at the Hilton Crystal City Hotel. Anyone with suggestions for inclusion in the three-day program should email League Administrator Leslie Swindells, [Leslie.Swindells@pow-miafamilies.org](mailto:Leslie.Swindells@pow-miafamilies.org), or call the League office, 703-465-7432. Get your reservations early by calling 800-291-9434, using the **Code MIA**. The rate per night is \$152.00, plus 13% tax, single or double, with an added charge of \$20 per night for each additional adult. The discounted parking rate per day is \$14.00. Please remember, to maximize your time in Washington, DC, plan to arrive on Wednesday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, and depart on Sunday, June 25<sup>th</sup>. That will allow you to take full advantage of all planned activities, including some new events. Also, don't forget to be thinking of what message you want included to honor your missing loved one or friend in next year's 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Program.

**MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN:** I wish I could say the League is ending 2016 on a positive note. Such is not the case. Serious turbulence and uncertainty have arisen due to the first DPAA Director having abruptly walked out, leaving a huge gap. Truthfully, I'm relieved and thankful that the repressive, antagonistic, even hostile attitude toward the League is greatly reduced, though the Acting Director clearly does not intend to reverse policies, regulations or practices established by the former Director. In reality, the "transparency" directed by former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Christine Wormuth has been non-existent; the opposite has been the norm. There has been a total lack of transparency and strict guidance NOT to share information outside the bureaucracy. Never in the last four decades has there been less information distributed to the families, veterans or publicly. We're hoping a new DPAA Director will be named and that he will reverse the repressive, restrictive practices imposed on the DPAA workforce so we all can work together toward the common accounting goals we share. We also sincerely hope that incoming Trump Administration appointees will take serious interest and pursue policies based on historical knowledge since President Reagan recognized the importance and raised the priority responsible for where we are today. High level support and interventions can be and have been necessary at critical junctures over the years, thankfully not often. Now is the right time to press ahead without reservations, but with a clear understanding of how we got to where we are and what is necessary now to achieve the end-game. That is my wish for the New Year, and I ask for your prayers and commitment to share my vision of accomplishing the mission we started so long ago.



*Warmest wishes for a Merry Christmas and a healthy Happy New Year!*

*2015 – 2017 Board of Directors*

*Pam Cain  
Karoni Forrester  
Ann Mills-Griffiths  
Eldon Robinson  
Mark Stephensen  
Sue Scott  
Cindy Stonebraker*