



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

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AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR: There are **1,642** personnel listed by the Department of Defense (DoD) as missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War, a number that had not changed since October of last year. Very recently, the name of **Captain Douglas Ferguson, USAF**, listed as MIA in Laos on December 30, 1969, was released. Captain Ferguson's remains were recovered April 13, 2013, and identified February 14, 2014. The number of Americans announced by DoD as returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now 941. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and ID'd before the end of the war, bring the official total of US personnel accounted for from the Vietnam War to 1,004. Of the 1,642 unaccounted-for personnel, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,275 (VN-469, VS-806); Laos-307; Cambodia-53; PRC territorial waters-7; over-water losses on DoD's list of No Further Pursuit cases number well over 600.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DIRECTS ACTION: Entitled "DoD Structure for Past Conflict Personnel Accounting," the signed February 20th directive was addressed to all senior officials in the Department of Defense, as follows: *"After intensive review, I have determined that the Department of Defense must change the way it manages accounting for personnel missing from past conflicts. I have directed the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to provide me, within 30 days, a plan for how to organize the Department most effectively to increase to the maximum extent possible the numbers of missing Service personnel accounted for annually while ensuring timely and accurate information is provided to their families.*

This plan should address organizational and process changes required to consolidate all Departmental assets into a single, accountable entity that has oversight of all personnel accounting resources, research, and operations across the Department. It should propose methods to maximize the number of identifications, improve transparency for families, reduce duplicative functions, and establish a system for centralized, complete, fully accessible personnel case files for missing personnel. At a minimum, this plan should articulate recommendations for changes to the civilian and military personnel policies, contracting and acquisition policies, statutory and regulatory authorities, facilities, budgets, and procedures to ensure effective oversight of laboratory operations. This effort should be informed by past studies and reviews.

The Military Departments, Combatant Commands, and OSD Components shall provide the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy with all information and materials needed for this planning effort. This is a top priority for the Department.

I am deeply committed to the fullest extent possible the accounting for missing Servicemembers. Upon receipt of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy's plan, I am prepared to direct changes to use the Department's resources for this mission more effectively and efficiently."

League Chairman of the Board Comment: Secretary Hagel's welcome action gave a short-term deadline to the senior official he selected to lead the POW/MIA accounting community reorganization effort – recently confirmed Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD/SOLIC) Michael Lumpkin, retired Naval officer and former SEAL Commander. Assistant Secretary Lumpkin, also serving as Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD-P), provided his recommendations to Secretary Hagel before the end of March. Secretary Lumpkin held an in-process review of where things stood with major national veteran organizations and the League to follow-up a teleconference briefing he provided prior to Secretary Hagel's directive announcement. The League looks forward to actions that will finally correct systemic dysfunction.

DEFENSE SECRETARY ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO POW/MIA ACCOUNTING EFFORT: Taken from the verbatim transcript of Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel's press briefing on March 31st: *"Let me now turn to another matter before taking your questions, and that is the finding and recovering and identifying the remains of America's missing from past conflicts. This effort is not just a top priority for the Department of Defense; it's our responsibility and our obligation."*

In February, I directed the acting undersecretary of defense for policy, Mike Lumpkin, to provide me with recommendations on how to reorganize the Joint Prisoner of War, Missing in Action Accounting Command or otherwise known as JPAC, so that DOD could more effectively account for our missing personnel and ensure their families receive timely and accurate information.

Based on his recommendations, I've directed the department to undertake the following steps to reorganize this effort into a single, accountable organization that has complete oversight of personnel accounting resources, research and operations.

First, we will establish a new Defense agency that combines the Defense Prisoners of War, Missing Personnel Office, or otherwise known as DPMO, the JPAC office, and select functions of the U.S. Air Force's Life Scientists Equipment Laboratory. This agency will be overseen by the undersecretary of defense for policy.

By consolidating functions, we will resolve issues of duplication and inefficiency, and build a stronger, more transparent and more responsive organization.

All communications with family members of the missing from past conflicts will be managed and will be organized by this new agency.

Second, to streamline the identification process, an armed forces medical examiner, working for the new agency, will be single -- will be the single DOD identification authority. They will oversee the scientific operations of the central identification laboratory in Hawaii and other laboratories in Omaha and Dayton.

Third, to centralize budgetary resources for this important mission, we will work with Congress to realign its appropriations into a single budget.

Fourth, to improve the search, recovery and identification process, the department will implement a centralized database and case management system, containing all missing service members' information.

Fifth, I've directed the department to develop proposals for expanding public/private partnerships in identifying our missing. The goal is to leverage the capabilities and the efforts of organizations outside of government that responsibly work to account for our missing.

These steps will help improve the accounting mission, increase the number of identifications of our missing, provide greater transparency for their families, and expand our case file system to include all missing personnel.

We will continue to do everything we can to account for and bring as many of our missing and fallen service personnel as possible home here to the United States.

We've been listening to and consulting with veterans' service organizations about how to improve the department's MIA operations. And I appreciate, we all appreciate, their input and their support to ensure the full accounting of all of our country's missing service members. And we will continue to work closely together as we go forward.

I want to particularly thank Mike Lumpkin and his team for their efforts.

And I also want to thank the veterans' organizations who have been so important over so many years to this effort.

And in particular – in particular, I want to thank Ann Mills Griffiths of the National League of Families, for her many, many years of service and leadership on this project.

Ann came to see me last December. I've known Ann and worked with her for over 30 years on many projects. And she presented to me a five-page, single-spaced, well thought through (memo), first, identification of the issues; a framing of the problems; and I thought some very, very solid recommendations on how we go forward.

So she deserves a lot of credit. Her organization deserves credit, as well as the institutions and veterans organizations that have been key to this effort for many years.

Thank you. I'd be glad to respond to questions.”

Question from Journalist: *“Mr. Secretary, on that -- on that last issue, how does all this address the basic demand of the families of the missing that you provide faster and more reliable accounting? And if I may throw in a second question, if you don't mind, could you confirm the reports that the Russians have begun pulling forces back from the border with Ukraine?”*

Secretary Hagel's Reply: *“Well, on the first question, Bob, I think if you really break this down as to what we've done here, as to how it relates to the families, we're streamlining everything. We're streamlining the organization, the process and the resources. And what that means to families is, first, they will be communicated with clearly, directly, and it will be communications from one central location. That has not been the case.*

They'll have a place where they can go to identify updates, questions, concerns. And it won't be a one-way street. It will be a two-way street. We'll communicate with them.

I think another reason the families will strongly support what we're doing is it helps us do the job. It helps us get the mission accomplished. We've got tens of thousands of missing all over the world. And it's a difficult -- it's a very difficult mission. And if we put together a better institution, organization, better management, better structure, better use of our resources, then I hope we'll be far more effective in being able to accomplish the mission of identifying these missing remains and getting these missing remains brought home to the families.

So, I'm much encouraged, and I again want to say how much we all appreciate the good work that's been done here. There's -- there's not a more poignant, emotional, important issue in our society today, and you all know this, than you take care of the people who gave their lives to this country, and you take care of their families. And that has been a critical component of who we are as Americans from -- from beginning -- from the beginning of this republic.”

League Chairman of the Board Comment: Secretary of Defense Hagel's decision on March 31st to take dramatic steps to completely reorganize DoD's POW/MIA accounting effort is encouraging, and I appreciated the positive comments the Secretary made about the role the League and I have played over the decades. Importantly, his commendation reinforces the League going forward in case, as in most such reorganization endeavors, things start going off-track. As President Reagan admonished, "Trust, but verify!"

Though a very positive development with serious promise, the real tests, as well as potential dangers, will be in implementation, but I'm cautiously optimistic. Much depends on who is selected to be the civilian political-appointee Director of this new DoD Agency and flag/general officer Deputy Director, as well as a third senior official, possibly Vice Director, to head the DC-based element. The plan is to bring in "outside" leadership, so we'll see.

The challenges are complex and so will be the solutions. Many factors led to Secretary Hagel's March 31st announcement and, clearly, he found helpful and instructive the League's background memo and reorganization plan provided last December 4th. There undoubtedly were many other inputs from individuals, organizations and Congress, but few have the League's four decades of experience, knowledge and consistent dedication to the accounting mission. In reality, the League has the greatest direct involvement in Secretary Lumpkin's recommendations and Secretary Hagel's resulting decisions, but many thousands will be affected by the ultimate outcome, including those serving our nation today.

It is important to have the chain of command at the same level (USD-P) as other DoD agencies. Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michael Lumpkin has made it his mission to know the specifics and seems to seriously care about getting it right, as does Secretary Hagel. The Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), the League and other family representatives had a follow-up meeting with Secretary Lumpkin on April 3rd. The intention was to obtain further clarification, but decisions on details, such as personnel changes, are not yet decided, though a transition team has already been formed. This team has been given only 45 days to come up with timelines and goals to be achieved, heading toward full activation of the new agency by FY2015, if possible.

Patience will be required, but all can expect significant attention to this subject at the **League's 45th Annual Meeting, June 11-14th**. Acting USD-P Lumpkin has already confirmed participation in the Opening Session, and **Secretary of Defense Hagel has been invited for the 45th Annual Dinner & Candlelight Ceremony**. Use the Registration Form on the last page of this newsletter.

VFW MEDIA RELEASE: *"We appreciate Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel's personal involvement to reshape a multi-organizational structure that shares unity of purpose into one that also shares unity of command,"* said William A. Thien, a Vietnam veteran and national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Over the next 18 months, a Pentagon team will examine the requirements necessary to merge policy guidance, archival research and analysis, and worldwide field investigations and recovery operations into one organization. Those tasks are currently performed by the Defense POW/MIA Office, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, and portions of the Air Force Life Science Equipment Laboratory. Also being realigned is the scientific element of the mission, which moves JPAC's Central Identification Laboratory under the Armed Forces Medical Examiner, which already encompasses the Armed Forces DNA Laboratory. Included in the new look will be a centralized budget, a consolidated case management system, and expanded public-private partnerships. (The above was excerpted from a release dated March 31, 2014, put out by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US.)

LAOS & US HOLD POW/MIA CONSULTATIONS: On February 28th, JPAC Commander Major General Kelly McKeague, USAF, led a US delegation for talks in Vientiane. Discussions were positive and affirmed the significant maturity that has evolved over decades, with real exchanges and dialogue. Due to complex technical questions and specific arrangements required for field operations, greater formality had continued at the technical level. All are to be commended for bringing this constructive dialogue into a more suitable, cordial atmosphere, in keeping with today's bilateral relationship.

FIELD OPERATIONS: With budget agreement finally reached in Congress, JPAC conducted a Joint Field Activity (JFA) in Laos January 14th to February 17th, fielding three Recovery Teams (RTs) and one Investigation Team (IT), augmented by the DIA Stony Beach specialist. A longer JFA in Laos began March 4th and is expected to conclude April 14th, though with only one RT and one IT. It also appears that the next JFA in Laos will be comprised of only two RTs and one IT. Operations in **Cambodia** by one RT and one Underwater Recovery Team (URT), postponed twice in 2013, took place January 28th to April 2nd. Since the Stony Beach specialist is permanently in-country and conducts investigations whenever needed, there are no ITs scheduled in conjunction with the JFA. Four RTs began conducting operations in Vietnam on February 28th and concluded on March 27th. Two ITs also deployed on this JFA, plus the RIT (Research Investigation Team) and a Field Forensic Review (FFR).

45TH ANNUAL MEETING IS CRUCIAL: The 45th Annual Meeting will be held June 11–14th at the Hilton Crystal City Hotel. Having recently been informed of Secretary Hagel’s decision on completely reorganizing the POW/MIA accounting process, this national convention will be the first opportunity to receive a full explanation, with family members afforded the opportunity to raise questions. **IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT ALL POSSIBLE MEMBERS ATTEND!** Make plans now to be with us. COIN Assist transportation – Congressionally mandated, DoD-directed and Service-provided – will once again be available for two family members per man still missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War to attend. Funding, personnel and leadership changes and challenges within the POW/MIA community ensure information provided during the briefings and panels will be critical and will affect every interested family member.

As noted above, the **Keynote Speaker** at the **Opening Session** on Thursday, **June 12th**, 9 a.m. is **Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD-P) Michael Lumpkin**, the senior DoD official directed by the Secretary of Defense to develop recommendations on how best to achieve “complete reorganization” of DoD’s POW/MIA accounting effort. **Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel** is invited as guest speaker for the **45th Annual Dinner & Candlelight Ceremony.**

Two full days of presentations by current and former US officials and noted private experts will occur, as will official briefings from analytic personnel, field operators, scientists and guest presenters on the complete range of issue-related policy and operational matters. This year’s program also includes special workshops on Friday, June 13th, both before and after the **Service-hosted Luncheons.** A three-hour **Q&A session** with working-level officials from DPMO, JPAC, DIA’s Stony Beach Team, AFDIL and LSEL will be held on Saturday morning, June 14th, followed by the **League Business Session.** It is imperative that family members make travel arrangements to ensure participation at the business meeting and be available to vote on policy resolutions geared toward developing League positions about the way forward to achieve our shared accounting mission.

Registration: To register for the 45th Annual Meeting, use the last two pages of this newsletter; information on the workshops and the 2014 Program Ad Rate flyer appear on the reverse. PLEASE COMPLETE BOTH SIDES. League members (family and associate), please complete and return the form to the League office with your check covering the cost of meeting registration and dinner (if you choose to attend). Credentials for the meeting will be available for pick-up **Wednesday, June 11th from 3:00 – 9:00 p.m.** in the Crystal Room Foyer, Plaza Level. Orientation for newcomers will be held that same day from 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. in Patrick Henry Executive Boardroom, First Floor. The cost to **register for the meeting only is \$50.00.** Registration forms can also be found online at www.pow-miafamilies.org. If so inclined, your bank’s “bill-pay” program or PayPal can be used to submit payment for registration, thus saving check-writing, stamps, and time.

Special Events: On Wednesday, June 11th, those who have picked up credentials are eligible to attend the **US Army’s Twilight Tattoo** at historic Fort Myer. Bus transportation will be available starting at 5:30 p.m. The **45th Annual Dinner & Candlelight Ceremony** will be held on Thursday, June 12th. For those inviting guests to the dinner, the cost will be \$55 per person. A **Strolling Strings Concert** and **non-denominational service** have been arranged for Friday, June 13th, at the close of that day’s session, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. The final event will be a **Talent Show & Game Night.** This event, on Saturday, June 14th, 7:00 – 10:00 p.m., will feature various team and individual games, as well as **free pizza** and a no-host bar. All are welcome to attend and bring friends and family.

Reservations: This year, the hotel rate for rooms at the **Hilton Crystal City Hotel** is **\$149.00** (plus tax), per room, per night – single or double, with an added charge of \$20 per night for each additional adult. To make reservations, call 800-HILTONS (800-445-8667), noting affiliation with the League’s 45th Annual Meeting. You can also go to www.hilton.com and use the code “**MIA2014.**” **Deadline to secure the special rate is May 16th.** The room-block is limited so early reservations are encouraged. If you have any problems with reservations, please contact the national office, 703-465-7432.

Transportation: As stipulated by Congress, the Secretary of Defense will again authorize COIN Assist transportation for two family members of each Vietnam War missing and unaccounted-for serviceman or civilian to attend. Service Casualty Officers will be sending information to the **Primary Next of Kin (PNOK)** about the 45th Annual Meeting and forms to complete for requesting COIN Assist transportation, case file reviews, and attendance at Service-hosted Luncheons. In authorizing COIN Assist, original Congressional intent was to ensure that each missing American would be represented at the League's annual meetings. Please help spread the word: **All family members** are eligible to attend the League's annual meeting at which official government briefings will be given. Some League events are open only to those who register for the full League 45th Annual Meeting. If you have questions, call the national office, 703-465-7432.

Boutique: This year, the Boutique will be held in the **Old Dominion Executive Board Room, Plaza Level**. In view of the tremendous success in years past, the League is again seeking suitable items for display or purchase. Please be selective. Either bring the item(s) with you and deliver them to League officials at registration or send them to the League office. Please include an itemized list noting each item's value. If you are interested in learning more about suggested donations or items that have sold well in the past, request a list from the national office, 703-465-7432.

Commemorative Program: Each year, the League publishes a special program that includes individual "ads" honoring missing US personnel, organizational ads with best wishes to the families gathered for the meeting, ads promoting POW/MIA-related and other products, etc. The 8th page of this newsletter provides the 2014 Program Ad Rates. The **deadline for receipt of ads is close of business on May 16th**. Email your camera-ready ad to Betty Bartels Murphy, MIA101925@aol.com, or Office Administrator Leslie Swidells, leslie.swidells@pow-miafamilies.org, and mail a copy with payment (or a PayPal receipt) to the national office.

Meet Your Congressman: It is more important than ever that elected Representatives and Senators know what POW/MIA family members, veterans and concerned citizens want from Congress regarding the accounting issue. If you plan to participate in Congressional visits this year, **make your appointment now**, and plan to arrive in Washington, DC, one day early, on Tuesday, June 10th, to be available on the morning of Wednesday, June 11th to meet with Chairman Mark Stephensen, Treasurer, Board member and Region IV Coordinator to obtain talking points to raise and materials with current information to provide during your visits with officials on Capitol Hill.

ONE MORE THING – VIETNAM WAR CASE-COORDINATION PROCESS: US Officials from DPMO, JPAC, LSEL and DIA (Stony Beach) met in Hawaii February 24-28th for the 48th Case Coordination Conference to determine the way ahead for nearly 400 of the 1,642 US personnel still unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. The process involves analysts and field investigators meeting for discussion and review of all available information on as many cases as either DPMO or JPAC analysts believe are prepared in terms of pursuing further action that could bring accountability. This process demonstrates that despite whatever dysfunction may occur within the leadership, the process involving Vietnam War accounting is relatively sophisticated, and one can only hope that those conducting archival research to retrieve information from US archives related to WWII losses will develop as outstanding a working relationship as has long existed among the talented Vietnam War-related professionals who work together productively and well. It is understood that this time, other senior JPAC officials observed the coordination process and gained a better understanding of how the two different RA components in DPMO and JPAC are complimentary, not a duplication of effort, as often alleged, an invaluable lesson that one hopes the many officials recently conducting investigations and assessments fully recognize.

Check the League Website: www.pow-miafamilies.org