



**EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
VIENTIANE, LAO PDR**

**AMBASSADOR**

May 14, 2018

Dear Ann and friends at the National League of Families:

It is a great honor and pleasure for me to have the opportunity to write to all of you again and to wish you well for a successful annual meeting. There have been a number of positive developments this year, both in the bilateral relationship and with respect to our shared mission to achieve the fullest possible accounting for our service members missing in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

The U.S. - Lao bilateral relationship continues to be on the upswing, powered in part by several high level visits. Most notably, the first ever visit of a Secretary of Commerce to Laos, as well as several Congressional delegations. Additionally, we have seen progress in our economic ties; we are planning a bilateral development program for the first time since USAID left in 1975; and we continue to work with the Lao to help clear unexploded ordnance from the war era. There are bumps in the road, but the overall picture is bright.

Of course, improvement in the overall relationship can only benefit the accounting mission. We saw that most clearly this year when you and your League delegation came to Laos to meet with our team, visit the field and renew friendships with Lao government officials. The warmth and deep bonds between the League delegation and their Lao partners was palpable and formed from a wellspring of respect and common purpose. At the Embassy, we recognize that whatever shared future we hope to build with the Lao people will be based on relationships like those that Ann and Dick have formed over the years. We know that DPAA Director Kelly McKeague – who also visited Laos this year – shares that vision and will seek to work with us and our Lao partners to achieve the fullest possible accounting in the nearest possible term. The Embassy remains fully committed to this mission.

Finally, but not least important, our Embassy has been honored this year by visits from several League families, as well as a school reunion for those whose families served in wartime Vientiane. These connections to our missing service members are unfailingly moving and serve to underscore the meaning of our work.

Thank you again for your friendship and support. I believe, at this meeting, you will be joined by our former Detachment Commander, Chris Goodrich. Major Goodrich has done extraordinary work here; I hope you will have the opportunity to speak with him during your time together.

Again, my best to you, Ann, and everyone attending this year's 49th Annual Meeting. I hope it is productive and informative.

Sincerely,

Rena Bitter