

Remarks of Frank Miller
Chief, Asia Pacific Regional Center
Defense Intelligence Agency
48th Annual Meeting
National League of POW/MIA Families

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to be here with so many dedicated people, committed to such an important mission!

Thank you to Ann for allowing me to speak to you all, and for your service and leadership over the years.

A little personal background here, if I may.

Although never directly assigned to the POW/MIA recovery mission, I have a long history of support, starting with my Dad, who as a civilian attaché in South Vietnam '74-'75, was responsible for several crash site finds. Recovery in those days was by JCRC.

Later I supported interviews of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong as a Chinese linguist in the early '90's. This is when I first encountered DIA's STONY BEACH program.

Most widely known is my time as Defense Attaché in Hanoi 1999-2002, during which I worked closely with Det 2 JTFFA to identify potential leads and encourage them to cooperate. Not always an easy task, but you should know that our efforts to recover and identify our missing inspired the Vietnamese families to pressure their government to do the same. So your work here serves more than just ourselves.

I was also the senior U.S. military officer in country when the helicopter crash took the lives of 7 Americans and 9 Vietnamese in 2001. That was a rough time and I am very appreciative that the League honored their families last year at your annual dinner.

What brings us all here today is one of the most righteous causes in human history: showing our respect—not just our respect, but our duty—to those who have sacrificed so much for our liberty. The poem “Those Now Gone” by Roger Hancock, written in 2004, partially captures this duty very well.

Allow me to present an excerpt...

Those Now Gone

Fallen Servicemen,
For our country fought;
Liberty, freedom,
The primary reason.

...Veterans who served,
And lived to tell;
The horrors, and risks,
now sleep in peace.

...Unknown soldier, MIA,
remembrance our way,
to honor you as well,
victims of a warrior's hell.

...Sleep now sleep tight,
Rest now, duty done,
Price paid in life or death,
The vigilance now be ours.

The final line of this poem, "The vigilance now be ours," really captures the essence of DIA's commitment to the mission of accounting for our missing. The STONY BEACH team has been solely committed to this mission since the team's inception, now over thirty years ago, and DIA's commitment to this mission is unwavering.

Most of you know the STONY BEACH members well, as they have been a fixture at your annual meetings for many years, but for those who don't know them or are here for the first time, let me capture a few important points about the value the STONY BEACH team brings to our shared accounting mission.

STONY BEACH's mission is to provide human intelligence support to the US efforts to account as fully as possible for Americans missing from the Vietnam War. I emphasize that last part, "missing from the Vietnam War." We, in DIA, are proud of the fact that STONY BEACH is the ONLY Department of Defense organization dedicated exclusively to Vietnam War accounting.

DIA's STONY BEACH Team is comprised of seven highly qualified, trained, and dedicated experts. We have two specialists in Bangkok, Thailand (David White and Dustin Roses), one in Vientiane, Laos (Leo Spivey), one in Phnom Penh, Cambodia (Eric Phillips), two Vietnam specialists; one in Washington, D.C. (Hugh Mullaly) and one in Hawaii (Mike Najim), and our Program Manager here in our Washington, D.C. Headquarters (Brad Taylor).

Let me talk a little bit about the qualifications and training required of our STONY BEACH members. DIA requires each team member to speak at least one Southeast Asian language at a professional level, but our current STONY BEACH team is so good that every single member speaks more than one language. DIA's stringent language requirement allows team members to directly interview foreign witnesses, interact with partner-nation government officials, and scour foreign language documents for reportable information pertaining to POW/MIA cases.

Other training required of our team includes strategic debriefing (or interview) training. This is a demanding flagship training requirement for STONY BEACH that focuses on planning for interviews, applying appropriate techniques, and properly reporting information derived from interviews. This training allows our STONY BEACH team to obtain the maximum amount of information from interviews and, at times, note inconsistencies and detect deception.

Other training our STONY BEACH team members have undergone pertinent to this mission include attaché training, counterintelligence training, interrogation training, and analyst training, and five of our team of seven are former or retired military.

Now that you know who we are, I'd like to talk about what we do and what we've accomplished this past year. If you recall, last year, Ms. Melissa Drisko, the Deputy Director of DIA, spoke to you about two areas of focus for our STONY BEACH team: improving coordination and collaboration with DPAA operators and refocusing operational efforts in Vietnam. As we engaged in this effort this past year, we encountered some successes and some disappointments.

Let me start with the successes. I'm pleased to announce that DIA has finally moved one STONY BEACH Vietnam specialist from Washington, D.C. to Hawaii. This STONY BEACH specialist will continue to conduct rotational assignments in Vietnam, but he will also be able to coordinate and de-conflict STONY BEACH operations and reporting with Hawaii-based DPAA operators. This already has and will continue to significantly streamline our ability to increase both level of effort and access to Vietnam and obtain necessary reporting feedback to analysts that will help guide future STONY BEACH operations.

Another success we encountered this past year is participation in the first Vietnam DPAA Joint Field Activity in approximately 10 years. Joint Field Activities provide us with invaluable access to the field and partner nation officials that we otherwise would not have. We look forward to continuing this effort in the coming year.

STONY BEACH is also engaged in many other new initiatives involving groups of foreign nationals and U.S. citizens that I am unable to discuss in detail, but please know that we continue to innovate and develop projects and processes that result in valuable reporting.

The result of our new initiatives and refining our focus has been the release of 201 reports so far this year. This is twice the number of reports published when compared to this time last year. Our reporting included information on POW sightings, crash sites, burial sites, remains traders, and other Vietnamese order-of-battle information.

As just one example of the importance of this body of reporting, in a recent DPAA-hosted POW/MIA Case Coordination Conference, 70 STONY BEACH reports provided information and leads on cases that were under review.

Those are some of our successes, but we've also had a few disappointments requiring attention and persistence this coming year. First, we have not yet been successful in our attempts to obtain a permanent presence in Vietnam, but our resolve continues.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention the strong advocacy and support - over many years - that the League has provided in this aspect of our mission, both with senior US and foreign officials. That advocacy has significantly helped create a favorable environment for us to submit a new proposal currently being staffed at the State Department to place one Vietnam STONY BEACH specialist in the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi. We are hopeful that with the support of our

Ambassador and the improving bilateral relationship with Vietnam, this proposal will be approved, and we hope to report good news to you next year.

DIA has also had an issue with the timely redaction and public release of STONY BEACH reports. The review process is too long and DIA's FOIA Office is not turning these reports around in the agreed timeframe. We understand how important this information is to you, the families, and let me assure you that this is on our radar, and we are taking steps to fix this problem.

Let me conclude by reaffirming what every DIA leader has told the families in years past. DIA is committed to sustaining the STONY BEACH Program and has a long-term commitment to this mission. That commitment is strong and unwavering and "vigilance" will continue to be ours!