



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

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**STATUS OF THE POW/MIA ISSUE: June 15, 2015**

1,627 Americans are now listed by DoD as missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War: Vietnam - 1,267 (VN-467 VS-802); Laos-302; Cambodia-49; Peoples Republic of China territorial waters-7. (These numbers occasionally fluctuate due to investigations resulting in changed locations of loss.) The League seeks the fullest possible accounting for those still missing and repatriation of all recoverable remains. The League's highest priority is accounting for Americans last known alive. Official intelligence indicates that Americans known to be in captivity in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were not returned at the end of the war. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it must be assumed that these Americans could still be alive, and the US Government should not rule out that possibility.

Vietnam established comprehensive wartime and post-war processes to collect and retain information and remains; thus, unilateral efforts by them to locate and return remains and provide records offered significant potential. Vietnam has taken many unilateral actions that are welcome and appreciated, but more can and should be done. Recently, Vietnam has increased implementation of commitments to provide long-sought archival records with relevant, case-related information, thanks in large part to improvement of working-level efforts. The early 2015 League Delegation brought commitments that offer real promise for increased success. First undertaken in northern Vietnam in 1985, joint field operations have dramatically changed and are now much more effective. Vietnamese officials are participating with greater seriousness and professionalism, achieving increased results. The process now includes both US-led Joint Excavation Teams and Vietnamese Recovery Teams (VRTs), led by Vietnamese and supported by fewer US personnel. This formula allows a greater number of teams to "increase the pace and scope of field operations," as requested by Vietnam during discussions since 2009. Due to increased military-to-military cooperation, US Navy assets are now allowed to participate in underwater survey and recovery operations, when requested. These steps, long advocated by the League, are now coming to fruition and are routinely raised by US officials at all levels.

After a rough period, joint field operations in Laos are now increasingly productive, even though more difficult than elsewhere. Accounting efforts had slowed due to Lao Government attempts to over-price payment for helicopter support and deny permission for ground transportation to accessible incident sites. Laos is now showing greater flexibility, earlier increased the number of US personnel permitted in-country, is allowing ground transportation to accessible sites, and has renewed a business license to a foreign company to provide reliable, smaller helicopter support. When helpful, Vietnamese witnesses are also allowed to participate in joint US-Lao operations. Fairly recently, the Lao Government finally agreed to permit the Defense Intelligence Agency's (DIA's) Stony Beach POW/MIA specialist to operate outside the confines of scheduled Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) field operations; however, despite strong support from, and interventions by, the US Ambassador, there are still some logistics challenges that must be addressed and resolved.

Related to DIA's Stony Beach Team, one Stony Beach Cambodia specialist works full time at the US Embassy in Phnom Penh, and research and field operations in Cambodia have received excellent support. Two Stony Beach personnel have for years rotated on temporary duty in and out of Vietnam, collecting information via archival research and interviews of potential witnesses. Vietnam was long ago requested to permit, and is still reportedly considering, permanent status for these two POW/MIA specialists. Successive US Ambassadors have strongly supported this important move, but increases in bilateral military relations should be sufficient to overcome any reluctance. The US Ambassador to Laos has also supported full use of the Lao specialist. It is hoped that the expanded bilateral relationships with Laos and Vietnam will mean these positive decisions will not be further delayed. All of the Stony Beach specialists are sorely needed to augment the investigation process and to facilitate locating additional incident sites for follow-up recoveries.

The greatest obstacles to increased accounting efforts in Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and worldwide are 1) too few qualified scientists to lead recovery teams; and 2) unreliable funding that has caused US cancellation of scheduled operations, thus sending mixed, negative signals to foreign governments and counterpart officials. These problems are reportedly being addressed by the "complete reorganization" directed by former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel. Over 80% of US losses in Laos and 90% in Cambodia occurred in areas where Vietnam's forces operated during the war. Vietnam's expanded provision of helpful records, further archival research, interviews and field operations are the core means to expand accounting for Vietnam War missing personnel. Improved investigation efforts may enable significant gaps in information to be filled.

**POW/MIA STATISTICS**  
**Live Sighting statistics provided by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA)**

Live Sightings: As of June 15, 2015, 1,995 first-hand live sighting reports have been received since 1975, none recently. 1,941 (97.29%) were resolved: 1,340 (67.17%) equated to Americans previously accounted for (i.e. returned POWs, missionaries or civilians detained for violating SRV codes); 45 (2.26%) correlated to wartime sightings of military personnel or pre-1975 sightings of civilians still unaccounted-for; 556 (27.87%) were determined to be fabrications. The remaining 54 (2.71%) unresolved first-hand reports are the focus of continuing analytical and collection efforts: 47 (2.36%) concern Americans reported in a captive environment; 7 (0.35%) are non-captive sightings. The years in which these 54 first hand sightings occurred are listed below:

Pre-1976	1976-1985	1986-1995	1996-2005	2006-2013	Total
36	3	1	13	1	54

Accountability: At the end of the Vietnam War, there reportedly were 2,583 unaccounted-for American prisoners, missing or killed in action/body not recovered. **As of June 15, 2015, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency lists 1,627 Americans as missing and unaccounted-for, 90+% of them in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos where Vietnamese operated during the war. A breakdown by year of recovery for the 956 Americans accounted for from Vietnam War-related losses since the end of the war in 1975 follows:**

1965-1974	War years: (recently identified)	2
1974-1975	Winding down USG effort	28
1976-1978	US/SRV normalization negotiations	47
1979-1980	US/SRV talks break down	1
1981-1985	1st Reagan Administration	23
1985-1989	2nd Reagan Administration	168
1989-1993	George H.W. Bush Administration	127
1993-1997	1st Clinton Administration	326
1997-2001	2nd Clinton Administration	54
2001-2004	1st George W. Bush Administration	64
2004-2008	2nd George W. Bush Administration	62
2008-2012	1 <sup>st</sup> Obama Administration	48
2012-2014	2 <sup>nd</sup> Obama Administration	6

According to the DPAA Lab, unilateral SRV repatriations of remains with scientific evidence of storage have accounted for less than 200 of the 649 from Vietnam; two were mistakenly listed as KIA/BNR in Vietnam in 1968, but remains were actually recovered at that time. All but seven of the 264 Americans accounted for in Laos since the end of the war have been the result of joint recoveries. The seven were recovered and turned over by indigenous personnel, six from Laos and one from Vietnam. In addition, three persons identified were recovered in Vietnam before the end of the war. There follows a breakdown by country of the 956 Americans accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975

Vietnam	649	Laos	264
China	3	Cambodia	40

An additional 63 US personnel were accounted for between 1973 and 1975, a grand total of **1,019**. These Americans were accounted for by unilateral US effort in areas where the US could gain access at that time, not due to government-to-government cooperation with the post-war governments of Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia.

**For the latest information, call the League's Office (703) 465-7432 or  
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