

June 22, 2013

AMERICANS ACCOUNTED-FOR: There are now **1,645** personnel listed by the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) as missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. Most recently, DPMO posted the name of **Lt Colonel Robert Pietsch, USAF**, from OH, listed as missing in Laos on April 30, 1968. His remains were recovered August 2, 2006 and identified May 7, 2013. Also announced recently was **Major Luis F. Guillerman, USAFR**, from PA, listed as MIA on April 30, 1968, in Laos. His remains were returned on February 14, 2006, and identified on May 13, 2013. The number of Americans announced by DPMO as returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now **938**. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and ID'd before the end of the war, bring the official total of remains repatriated from the Vietnam War to 1,001. Of the 1,645 missing for personnel, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,276 (VN-469, VS-807); Laos-309; Cambodia-53; PRC territorial waters-7; 450+ over-water losses are on DPMO's list as No Further Pursuit.

PRESIDENT OBAMA REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT: At Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day, the President made remarks, after laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns, affirming his commitment by stating in part"And that's why, on this day, we remember our sacred obligation to those who laid down their lives so we could live ours: to finish the job these men and women started by keeping our promise to those who wear America's uniform – to give our troops the resources they need; to keep faith with our veterans and their families, now and always; to never stop searching for those who have gone missing or who are held as prisoners of war."

LEAGUE 44TH ANNUAL MEETING: A full report will be included in the League Newsletter to be distributed soon, but overall, the meeting was the very positive for the issue, including special guest presentations by Deputy Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) David Shedd and Deputy PACOM Commander Lt Gen Thomas "Stash" Conant, USMC. The highlight of the 44th Annual Meeting Dinner was Vietnam's Ambassador to the United States H.E. Nguyen Quoc Cuong, who brought a message of strong commitment from his government to increase cooperation with the US to achieve the League's accounting objectives. This was the first time Vietnam's senior official in the United States had ever been asked to deliver remarks, and the warmth of his reception was evident.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION: Results of the election: Chairman Ann Mills-Griffiths, Vice Chairman Karoni Forrester, Secretary Susie Stephens-Harvey, Treasurer Mark Stephensen, and members Sue Scott, Pam Cain and Eldon Robinson, replacing David Gray, returned POW, who retired after serving 20 years.

DPMO DIRECTOR VISITS SOUTHEAST ASIA: In mid-May, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs Montague Winfield visited Vietnam (including a field recovery site), Laos and Cambodia for talks with senior officials in each country. Assuming that points raised in each country were those prepared in advance, DASD Winfield's visit was useful in reinforcing the importance that US officials, in particular the POW/MIA accounting community, and the American people attach to achieving longstanding

League accounting objectives. DASD Winfield stopped briefly at JPAC Headquarters in Hawaii en route home.

VIETNAM OPERATIONS: JPAC launched an Advance Team on May 10th to make preparations for the main body that arrived on May 20th and conducted recovery operations, concluding today. Three Recovery Teams (RTs) and two Vietnamese Recovery Teams (VRTs) worked at five different locations in southern provinces, plus one Underwater Recovery Team (URT). The previously scheduled Investigation Team (IT) was canceled, then partially restored; even the Research Investigation Team (RIT) was reduced in scope due to lack of funding. That shortage was temporarily corrected with the Continuing Resolution at FY13 levels. Due to a freeze on hiring and potential furloughs, it is important for Congress to be asked to ensure reliable funding for JPAC operations. JPAC also hosted a senior Vietnamese Ministry of Public Security (MPS) delegation that was en route back to Vietnam after completing its program in DC at the invitation of the CIA. Another month-long JPAC mission, involving six RTs and two ITs, is scheduled August 5th – September 7th.

OPERATIONS IN LAOS: Another Joint Field Activity (JFA) in Laos that began on April 26th concluded June 15th. Four Recovery Teams (RTs) conducted excavation operations at four separate sites, but no Investigation Team (IT) deployed. At long last, the Lao Government renewed a business license for Helicopters New Zealand, the company JPAC previously contracted to provide smaller, certified-safe helicopter support for remote site access.

This welcome news was recently conveyed by US Ambassador to Laos Karen Stewart and subsequently confirmed by JPAC. The League deeply appreciates the Lao Government's responsiveness to specific appeals for this decision and looks forward to a renewed pace of operations.

CAMBODIA FIELD OPERATIONS POSTPONED: Unfortunately, JPAC postponed the Cambodia JFA, scheduled to begin this past February that was to be comprised of two RTs and one URT. Despite sincere efforts by the JPAC Commander, recently imposed US legal requirements are unlikely to be met until later this fiscal year. Such legal hurdles involving contracting issues have never been necessary in past decades, but now appear to be required under new regulations. US Ambassador to Cambodia William Todd recently visited JPAC Headquarters and held a "round-table" with senior JPAC staff.

WORLDWIDE OPERATIONS: JPAC regularly deploys teams worldwide and continues to expand into more countries, recovering increasing numbers of US personnel who served and sacrificed for our country during WWII, the Korean War and the Cold War. JPAC'S team in South Korea met with Korean War Museum officials to discuss participation in the commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice. Operations recently concluded in Germany and Burma/Myanmar; cooperation in planning for the latter mission was reportedly outstanding, including a good public reaction to a "hot line" set up for source reporting. In addition, JPAC teams were recently deployed to the Philippines, Solomon Islands, other European countries and Palau. A recent return to Papua New Guinea (PNG) was for a WWII site assessment. Phase Two Testing (P2T) in India, also on WWII sites, was scheduled May 8th – June 7th, but postponed by the Government of India. JPAC also hosted a team of Chinese archivists from the People's

Liberation Army (PLA) on May 21-22nd. The League is proud and grateful that our work since 1970 has brought the enormous effort now ongoing. We strongly support such efforts, so long as the fullest possible accounting for Vietnam War missing personnel is not reduced or jeopardized.

STILL NO WORD ON COMMISSION CHARTER: The White House still has not approved the charter for the **US-Russia Joint Commission (USRJC) on POW/MIAs**. The National Security Staff (NSS) has moved at a snail's pace on this action that has been pending for several months. Now that former Senator John Kerry has been confirmed as Secretary of State, his position on the USRJC as the Senate Democrat is vacated. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has repeatedly been asked to name another Senate Democrat who is willing to be actively engaged, so perhaps action will finally occur. The other USRJC Congressional members are Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), and Representatives Sam Johnson (R-TX) and Tim Walz (D-MN). We appreciate the patience that these Commissioners and US Chairman General Robert "Doc" Foglesong, USAF (Ret) have shown throughout the unwarranted White House delay, and we continue to hope for results, soon.

H.R. 1520 INTRODUCED TO PREVENT HALT OF JPAC OPERATIONS: Representative Stephen Lynch (D-MA) introduced this bill on April 12th, to give flexibility to civilian personnel working in support of DoD efforts to account for missing US personnel. The measure would not exempt these DoD civilians, but would ensure that field operations can legally be scheduled and implemented. Without the exemption, field operations would have to be halted, due to the earlier stated requirement for affected civilians to take one furlough day per week. Field investigations and recoveries are longer than one week, thus scheduling would have been deemed illegal. The initial co-sponsor was Representative Glenn Thompson (R-PA), now joined by Representatives Danny Davis (D-IL), Brian Higgins (D-NY) and Mike Quigley (D-IL). Fortunately, recent statements by Navy officials indicated that furloughs may not be required. That is good news, but just in case, additional co-sponsors would be helpful.

ANOTHER HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE PROPOSED: Representative Michelle Bachman (R-MN), just introduced **H. Resolution 231**, requiring "a select committee to be known as the Select Committee on POW and MIA Affairs" to be formed. This Select Committee would be charged to "*conduct a full investigation of all unresolved matters relating to any United States personnel unaccounted for from the Vietnam era, the Korean conflict, World War II, Cold War Missions, Persian Gulf War, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation Enduring Freedom, including MIAs and POWs missing and captured.*" If formed, this select committee would be empowered to hold hearings, hire staff and conduct interviews for the remainder of the 113th Congress, i.e. for two years until the next election is held for the House of Representatives. **Comment:** The League strongly opposes H. Res. 231, due to past experience about the detrimental impact that would likely occur. In a worst-case scenario, the League would consider supporting such a proposal, but only as a last resort.

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS: Also introduced by Rep. Michelle Bachman, H.R. 2091 would "*amend Title 36, United States Code, to require that the POW/MIA flag be displayed on all days that the flag of the United States is displayed on certain Federal property.*" Introduction of this measure is appreciated, but chances of passage are almost nil due to the scope and financial impact of adoption.