



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

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HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL: All who receive and read this message are wished a year in 2018 that is richly blessed with good health, positive contributions, plentiful opportunities and great happiness.

LEAGUE DELEGATION EN ROUTE TO SOUTHEAST ASIA: A National League of POW/MIA Families Delegation, led by Chairman of the Board/CEO Ms. Ann Mills-Griffiths, will travel to Southeast Asia (Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, & Thailand) January 11-30th. She will be joined once again by the League Senior Policy Advisor since 1989 Richard Childress, COL, USA (Ret), and, for the first time, MIA daughter Cindy Stonebraker, a second-term elected member of the League's Board of Directors.

Parallel to the League Delegation, and representing the Special Operations Association (SOA) and Special Forces Association (SFA) will be Mike Taylor, LTC, USA/SF (Ret), Vice President of SOA and Chairman of the joint SOA/SFA POW/MIA Committee. He will be joined in Hanoi by Mr. Robert "Spider" Parks, a member of the SOA/SFA POW/MIA Committee. Mrs. Elli Childress and Mrs. Laura Taylor will accompany their respective husbands and participate with delegation members in social events and cultural and other activities.

Both delegations will meet with US Ambassadors and Embassy officials, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Stony Beach specialists and DPAA Detachment personnel in each country. The League delegation will meet with senior officials in Laos, Vietnam and, hopefully, Cambodia, to share goals and ideas and discuss topics of mutual interest to advance the accounting mission. The SOA/SFA delegation will meet with American and foreign veterans, some of whom fought as enemies during the war. While in Laos, representatives of both delegations (Stonebraker, M. Taylor and L. Taylor) will visit excavation sites to thank US and host nation personnel for their often dangerous efforts during Joint Field Activities (JFAs) to account for missing loved ones and unreturned fellow veterans.

AMERICANS RECENTLY ACCOUNTED FOR: There has been no change in DPAA's statistics on Vietnam War missing since September 11th of last year. At that time, DPAA reported the accounting for **CAPT James. R. Bauder, USN**, of CA, listed as MIA 9/21/66 in North Vietnam, recovered 6/11/17, and ID'd 8-28-17. DPAA previously reported the accounting for **CMSgt Donald J. Hall, USAF**, listed as MIA 2/6/67 in North Vietnam, recovered 4/3/17, and ID'd 8/18/17. Previously, DPAA's 8/15/17 statistics cited **Col Martin R. Scott, USAF**, of OK, listed as MIA 3/15/66 in North Vietnam, recovered 12/12/15 and ID'd 6/15/17, and **1st Lt David T. Dinan, III, USAF**, of NJ, listed as KIA/BNR in Laos on 3/17/69, recovered 4/8/14, and ID'd 8/7/17.

The number still missing and otherwise unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War is 1,602. There were only 16 accounted for in Fiscal Year 2017, but, hopefully, there will be many more returned during FY2018, which began on October 1, 2017. Of the **1,602 still missing (POW/MIA) and unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR)**, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia or Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,253 (VN-458, VS-795); Laos-294; Cambodia-48; PRC territorial waters-7. (Country-specific numbers fluctuate when investigations result in changes to loss locations.) Since formation 1970, the League has sought the return of all POWs, the fullest possible accounting for the missing, and repatriation of all recoverable remains. The total accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is **981**. A breakdown by country of the 981 Americans accounted for since the April 30, 1975 end of the Vietnam War is: Vietnam – 665, Laos – 271, Cambodia – 42, and the PRC – 3. In addition, 63 US personnel were accounted for between 1973 and 1975, for a grand total of 1,044. These 63 Americans, accounted for by US-only efforts in areas where access was possible, were not due to cooperation by post-war governments in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. Combined, a total of 279 have been accounted for from Laos, 720 from Vietnam, 42 from Cambodia and 3 from the PRC.

PRESIDENT TRUMP MEETS WITH VIETNAMESE COUNTERPART IN HANOI: Following the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) meeting in Da Nang, President Trump and his party went to Hanoi. While there, he and Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang held a Joint Press Conference during which President Trump referred to the POW/MIA accounting mission. President Trump made a clearer statement at the Hyatt Regency in Da Nang, while participating in a “Meet and Greet” with American veterans, stating, *“Our accountability efforts in Vietnam are very, very important to all of us. We will not rest until all of the 1,253 missing veterans are returned home. I want to thank the government of Vietnam for their assistance in our efforts.”* (**Chairman’s Comment:** Ignore the number used (1,253), provided in error by staff too new to the POW/MIA accounting mission to be fully aware of the fact that of the 1,602 still missing from the Vietnam War, 294 are unaccounted-for in Laos, 48 in Cambodia and 7 in the PRC, 90% of them lost in areas controlled by Vietnamese forces during the war.)

In addition, the White House issued a “Joint Statement between the United States of America and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.” In that official document, citing President Quang’s invitation to President Trump for a “state visit to Hanoi,” the following paragraph from the statement pertains:

“7. Both leaders reaffirmed the importance of continued cooperation to address the legacies of war. In this regard, President Quang expressed appreciation for the contribution of the United States to the successful dioxin remediation at Da Nang Airport, and welcomed the United States commitment to contribute to remediation at Bien Hoa Airport. He welcomed further United States assistance for persons with disabilities. President Trump expressed his appreciation for Vietnam’s full and continued cooperation in accounting for United States personnel still missing from the war, and pledged to cooperate with Vietnam in its efforts to locate its missing soldiers. The two leaders committed to cooperation in the removal of remnants of explosives from the war.”

Chairman’s Comment: President Trump’s trip to Vietnam brought the first inclusion of POW/MIA accounting on the agenda as a priority of the new Administration and the first known mention by our President concerning priority on accounting for our unreturned veterans, America’s POW/MIAs. It is reassuring that Trump Administration officials are now willing to listen and learn about the mission which the League has officially pursued since May 28, 1970 and, for many POW/MIA families, over 50 years. Communication, transparency and integrity are key factors in restoring shattered credibility to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), but with support from the White House, Secretary of State Tillerson, Secretary of Defense Mattis, our supportive US Ambassadors to Vietnam (Kritenbrink), Laos (Bitter), Cambodia (Heidt), the Russian Federation (Huntsman) and the People’s Republic of China (Branstad), plus the intelligence agencies and Members of Congress, there is reason for cautious optimism, but time is short. The opportunity resulting from many years of effort incrementally supporting increased military and political ties in response to ever-improving accounting cooperation is now reaching the point where achieving the fullest possible accounting is doable. There are many political factors that can cause implosions, but the opportunity is real!

US-RUSSIA JOINT COMMISSION (USRJC) ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS MET FOR 21ST PLENUM: On November 8th, the 21st Plenum of the USRJC met on November 8th in Moscow, led by US Co-Chairman General Robert “Doc” Foglesong, USAF (Ret), and Russian Co-Chairman General Colonel Valery Vostrotnin. This was DPAA Director McKeague’s first participation as a US Commissioner. He was joined on this occasion by two other US Commissioners, Mr. Tim Shea, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and Dr. Tim Nenner, National Archives & Records Administration (NARA). Invited to participate as observers were VFW Executive Director Bob Wallace and League Chairman of the Board Ann Mills-Griffiths. DPAA European-Mediterranean Regional Director Colonel Chris Forbes, USA, and members of his Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD) staff also attended and put in long, arduous hours in preparation, as had LTC Maxim Alexeyev, Chief of the Russian Commission Support Office, Russian Embassy in Washington, DC. This was a follow-on to earlier plenary sessions and the Russian Commission’s participation in the League’s 48th Annual Meeting in June, as well as the August DPAA-hosted Korean War/Cold War Annual Government Briefings, both held in the DC area.

Russia's Ministry of National Defense was the venue, and the content and presentation by DPAA Director Kelly McKeague, US Chairman of the Vietnam War Working Group, assisted by Svetlana Shevchenko, senior DPAA staff, was substantive and useful. Counterpart officials seem dedicated to assisting, but it is clear that top level Russian Government authorization is still required to gain access (directly or contracted) to necessary archival records. More detailed information should be released by DPAA when the official "minutes" of the Plenary and all working groups (including WWII, Korean War and Cold War) are completed and posted on DPAA's website. The 21st Plenum was well worth the time, effort and expense to attend. Importantly, inclusion of the League (family member) and veterans (VFW) showed unified support for the USRJC and gave us the opportunity to make a few points about the type of assistance needed from the Russian Government. That evening, US Ambassador to the Russian Federation Jon Huntsman and Mrs. Huntsman hosted a reception for the Russian and US Commissioners, observers and staff, at their lovely residence, Spaso House. Another highlight was the time spent on November 7th at the Air Defense Museum, outside central Moscow. A dedicated knowledgeable historian briefed on every era, including the Vietnam War, and was very informative and, hopefully, useful in the future as well, in terms of documents and leads.

On November 9th, US Chairman General Foglesong, Bob Wallace (VFW Executive Director), Russian Chairman General Vostrotin and Chairman/CEO of the National League of POW/MIA Families Ann Mills-Griffiths placed beautiful wreaths at the newly constructed national military cemetery, Russia's version of Arlington National Cemetery. Later that day, the entire US Delegation visited Patriot Park, listened to briefings and observed the largest collection of military hardware imaginable, including WWI and WWII equipment from the US, France, Great Britain and Germany, as well as current, sophisticated military equipment in use today in Syria and elsewhere. Several hours were spent walking through the displays and listening to presentations, then all enjoyed a delicious farewell dinner at the military dining hall. On November 10th, Mr. Wallace and Ms. Mills-Griffiths met with Ambassador Huntsman and his senior staff, accompanied by DPAA's longtime Russia specialist Dr. James Connell and Ms. Shevchenko. It is clear that Ambassador Huntsman and Embassy Moscow are and will be strong, informed supporters and advocates.

STONY BEACH TEAM PERMANENT STATUS IN VIETNAM NOT YET CONFIRMED: In early December, the League was informed that the Government of Vietnam had formally given approval for a Defense Intelligence Agency Stony Beach specialist to be permanently assigned to the US Embassy in Hanoi. The information, therefore the announcement, appears to have been in error, or at least premature. This information was provided as solid and reliable. All should have been celebrating the successful result of many, many years of effort, in particular by the League. Strong support was also provided by past US Ambassadors and others posted in Vietnam, including immediate past US Ambassador to Vietnam Ted Osius, but also successive DIA Directors. New US Ambassador to Vietnam Daniel Kritenbrink is also on board and supportive, but now the approval appears to be in doubt, or at least not yet formalized. Despite this temporary delay, the League deeply appreciates the efforts of all who helped form the DIA Stony Beach Team in 1986, continued to support them through years of personnel reductions, and fought off attempts to reassign these irreplaceable specialists.

Chairman's Comment: The Stony Beach Team is comprised of highly trained specialists, language-capable, culturally familiar investigators who augment DPAA Investigation Teams, as they have done effectively for years despite having to rotate on a temporary basis in and out of Vietnam. The confusion over Vietnam's decision will likely be short-lived, because a favorable decision on the permanent presence of Stony Beach by Vietnam's leadership is overdue. A positive decision is in keeping with current assurances of openness, an end to limits on the numbers of US personnel in-country simultaneously, increasing military-to-military and economic cooperation, and the current political environment. I am confident Vietnam's leadership will act soon to approve permanent change of station (PCS) for DIA's Stony Beach specialist. When that occurs, it will be most welcome, deeply appreciated and will expedite investigations to develop leads by interviewing firsthand witnesses before it is too late.

There has long been a permanent Stony Beach specialist in Cambodia, filling the gaps since the former JTF-FA Detachment was pulled out. Its 4 responsibilities have since been handled by Detachment 1 in Bangkok. The Stony Beach specialist is the on-site point-of-contact and an invaluable link to the very high level Cambodia POW/MIA Committee. A few years ago, and after 14+ years of consistent League effort, the Lao Government agreed to permit a Stony Beach specialist to be permanently assigned to the US Embassy in Vientiane. Having said that, however, they have most often been restricted to working within the limited timeframe of in-country JFAs (Joint Field Activities), rather than unescorted and pursuing opportunities as they arise.

DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES: DPAA-hosted Family Member Updates (FMUs) are scheduled for 2018 and no longer restricted solely to family members. With advance arrangements, invited representatives of responsible VSOs are included, as are League and other NGO officials who are not family members. Also, the ** notation indicates that briefings are in conjunction with the League's upcoming 49th Annual Meeting, June 21-24, 2018, obviously NOT hosted by DPAA.

2018 Family Update Schedule*	
Date	Location
January 20	San Diego, CA
February 24	Jacksonville, FL
March 24	El Paso, TX
April 21	Rapid City, SD
May 19	Louisville, KY
June 21-24	Washington, D.C.**

COMMITMENT TO THE LEAGUE: As of January 1st of each year, it is time to send in your dues, or pay online, whether family or associate member, to continue as an active member of the National League of POW/MIA Families. It is your decision, but rest assured, as the past war with the smallest number of men still missing and unaccounted-for, there is consistent pressure to devote ever-greater attention and funding to remains recoveries for WWII and Korean War, including disinterment of known KIAs who were buried as unknowns due to lack of scientific capability at that time to individually identify them. The families of wars and conflicts further past are very active with their own Members of Congress, House and Senate, urging them to weigh in to pressure DPAA to pursue their own case. Political pressure is difficult to deal with for any US Government department or agency, but schedules for pursuing accountability must be based on logic and reason, precise criteria that are pursued with transparency and clarity. Such criteria must include as a first priority endangered sites, regardless of the war in which the US personnel were lost, and other critical factors. That means the League must remain strong and viable, as we have been for nearly 50 years. DO YOUR PART, and donate to the League, including \$25 for each family (voting) or associate member, as well as \$25 per year for veteran group, such as Post and Chapters of the major national veteran organizations. Enlist your local community, whether your church, civic group or community service group. Or hold fundraisers for the League, but whether a lot is raised or not, bringing your community into supporting the accounting mission is far more important than the precise amount raised.

Donate today, 501(C) 3, #23-7071242, at www.pow-miafamilies.org