



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

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**AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR:** There are still 1,641 personnel listed by the Department of Defense as missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War, a number that has not changed for several months. The number of Americans announced by DoD as returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now 942. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and ID'd before the end of the war, bring the official total of US personnel accounted for from the Vietnam War to 1,005. Of the 1,641 total, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,275 (VN-469, VS-806); Laos-306; Cambodia-53; PRC territorial waters-7. Over-water losses on DoD's list of No Further Pursuit cases number well over 600.

**SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ON NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY:** At the national ceremony held at the Pentagon on September 19<sup>th</sup>, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel stated in part: *"The United States appreciates the ongoing support of many allies and partners across the globe – many represented here today – and on behalf of the men and women of our military, I thank you. You have helped us in recovering our missing. A good example of many of these efforts is Vietnam. Vietnam has been providing an increasing amount of archival documents to support our pursuit of our missing Americans. We appreciate these efforts and will continue to build on this partnership going forward.....As many of you know, earlier this year I directed the Defense Department to organize this effort into a single, accountable operation that has the responsibility for personnel accounting resources, research, and operations....resolving issues of duplication and inefficiency, while also making that organization stronger, more effective, more transparent, and more responsive....DoD has been working closely with everyone who has a stake in this mission – including families, the veterans' service organizations that are represented here today, and I thank them, Congress, and the agencies' workforce. We've made progress in this transformation, and the new Defense Personnel Accounting Agency will achieve initial operating capability this January."*

**OPERATIONS:** On August 26<sup>th</sup>, JPAC hosted POW/MIA Consultations with the Lao that were not especially encouraging in terms of results achieved, but important in that views were exchanged, and the US request for renewed cooperation by **Laos** on archival documents was not rejected. Field operations will resume later this month, providing funds are available, though again not reaching the full number allowed of 53 US personnel operating in-country at the same time.

Operations in **Cambodia** have been sporadic at best, and only one field operation occurred in 2014, postponed twice in 2013, but another is scheduled later this month if funds are available. For the first time in over 20 years, technical level talks are not being held with Cambodia in FY2014 that just ended, but plans are being considered for senior level discussions with Cambodia's POW/MIA Committee leadership before the end of the calendar year.

Another series of field operations took place in **Vietnam** from August 5<sup>th</sup> to September 7<sup>th</sup> that included a Joint Forensic Review (JFR). On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, JPAC hosted annual Technical Talks with Vietnamese counterparts, and the VNOSMP Delegation again asked for an increase in the pace and scope of field operations, now scheduled to begin in late October, ending before the Christmas holidays.

**DIA'S STONY BEACH:** While DIA's Acting Director David Shedd and his team at Headquarters continues to strongly support their specialized, highly trained and motivated team, only in Cambodia are Stony Beach specialists allowed to perform their assigned tasks as intended. In Laos, despite agreement at long last to allow PCS (permanent change of station) for the one SB specialist, he has not been allowed to conduct the investigations and interviews that best serve the mission. In Vietnam, the leadership has thus far failed to approve PCS for the two Vietnam specialists, but I am optimistic that such will soon occur due to the increased military-to-military cooperation.

**ONGOING REORGANIZATION:** The work that is ongoing is led by Senior DoD civilian, Alisa Stack, who is the head of a transition team, the Personnel Accounting Consolidation Taskforce (PACT). The PACT reportedly includes government specialists in each area to be addressed, from structure of the new agency, to the number of personnel, budget requirements, interface with other departments and agencies, archival research, strategy and integration and communication with the families. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations & Low Intensity Conflict (ASD/SOLIC) Michael Lumpkin both stated that communication with the families must be a very high priority consideration in how the new agency performs. Since her appointment, Ms. Stack and other PACT members, aided by **The Clearing** (see below) have been interviewing people, in and out of government, and appear to be focused on ensuring that a wide variety of voices are heard, responsible and irresponsible, rational and irrational, so the outcome could be interesting.

The Clearing, an outside firm, was initially contracted for a reported \$2,000,000, and more recently, an added \$6,689,586 (yes, millions) to obtain input from family members from all wars on their experiences in dealing with various accounting community organizations. In addition to DPMO, JPAC and LSEL (specifically named in Secretary Hagel's restructure directive and by Congress), these include the Service Casualty Offices, AFDIL and DIA's Stony Beach POW/MIA team. The Clearing is reportedly also interviewing and receiving input from all US officials who wish to provide it concerning the overall mission and their own specific agency/organization. Apparently, the number of people willing to talk with The Clearing personnel is significant and, thus the need for additional funding to keep them engaged.

The Clearing can be reached by emailing [voiceofthefamilies@theclearing.com](mailto:voiceofthefamilies@theclearing.com) and is seeking views from all who are willing. Family members from all wars are urged to provide their views and, in light of the comparatively small number of Vietnam War family members, the League is hopeful that ALL Vietnam War families take this opportunity to remind members of PACT, The Clearing and senior DoD officials that uncertainty about Vietnam War missing men remains a significant factor for the families. The greatest uncertainty surrounds Vietnam War missing personnel, though the same can be said of a relatively small number of Korean War servicemen who were last known alive or in POW camps, but never returned; therefore, the need for concrete answers is paramount, more so than identifications from remains recoveries of known dead from earlier wars and conflicts. This is particularly relevant to disinterment of personnel buried as "unknowns" in American cemeteries. Their families know they perished, sadly. The League supports accounting for losses in WWII, Korean War and Cold War, as an important, though vastly different mission than ending uncertainty with answers.

Following review and approval by newly confirmed Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (USD-P) Christine Wormuth, PACT recommendations on implementation were provided to recently appointed and confirmed Deputy Secretary of Defense (DepSecDef) Robert Work. With his approval, implementation began and several timelines were announced. Incremental steps were set to begin, including naming of an **Interim Director** for the new Defense Personnel Accounting Agency sometime this fall. The first of many adjustments applies to the budget and to communications, with instructions to begin acting now as one agency, with the Interim Operational Capability (IOC) set for January 15, 2015. Full Operational Capability (FOC) is set to occur on January 15, 2016. Until the start-up date early next year, DPMO, JPAC and LSEL, plus all other active elements of the accounting community, have been directed to continue work uninterrupted by reorganization/transformation/consolidation plans and implementation.

Since Secretary of Defense Hagel personally directed the "complete reorganization" of the accounting community and offered assurance to the League of his personal engagement, it is to him the League will look for confirmation that he is satisfied with the prospects for success of the reorganized community. Several interim briefings have been given, though without details or specifics in which we have keen interest. Another conference call briefing was held September 26<sup>th</sup> with USD(P) Wormuth. Unfortunately, nothing new was learned; it was more or less an introductory session, lacking any specific details in which the League, other family members and the major national VSOs have great interest. Hopefully, the PACT will become more transparent and consult knowledgeable, responsible current and former officials, as well as the League and the major national veteran organizations, before plans are finalized. Valid input into the process can help assure acceptance by those most directly impacted, the Vietnam War POW/MIA families and family members of US personnel lost in earlier wars and conflicts.