



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

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**AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR:** There was recently an unannounced change to the list of missing and unaccounted-for US personnel, now numbering **1,626**. For various reasons, including wishes of the family, DoD announcements are often delayed far beyond the ID dates and sometimes not even made, as was the case with the most recent change, though not a recent ID, but reportedly in 2012. Several of those named this year were examples of how remains repatriated many years ago can now be identified using scientific technology and processes that weren't available in earlier years. The number of Americans now listed by DoD as returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is 957. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and identified before the end of the war, bring the total of US personnel accounted for from the Vietnam War to 1,020. Of the 1,626 still missing and unaccounted-for, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,268 (VN-467, VS-801); Laos-302; Cambodia-49; PRC territorial waters-7. These country-specific numbers can and do fluctuate due to investigations resulting in changed locations of loss. Since formation in 1970, the League has sought the return of all POWs, the fullest possible accounting for those still missing, and repatriation of all recoverable remains.

**SEPTEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup> WAS NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY:** The national ceremony, always impressive due to troops marching in formation on the Pentagon parade field, was hosted by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey, USA. The principal speaker was Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter who stated in part, "*....we continue to improve our personnel accounting program and find new ways to meet one of our oldest and most sacred obligations..... Just as the lessons we learned in our 20th century wars helped us improve how we have cared for the wounded, the fallen, and their families during our recent wars...we're using 21<sup>st</sup> century methods to meet our commitments to those who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Cold War, and remain missing.....We're looking to expand our work and expand our partnerships. Our work with the nonprofits History Flight and BentProp are two examples of our collaboration with private organizations and individuals. We are also working with academic and other foreign partners to help account for our missing.....We're also harnessing new technology. Investments and advances in forensic science will allow us to identify the previously unidentifiable remains of some of the fallen. And we recently opened a state-of-the art facility in Hawaii to help us take advantage of these new methods. And that's why we're using new communication channels to keep in touch with the families of the missing. We're developing a password-protected, cloud-based website that will allow our families to be informed around the clock.*" The League appreciates Secretary Carter's commitment to expand the accounting process utilizing the latest concepts, technologies and capabilities to expedite answers for the families, as we do the uncountable number of events, runs and ceremonies held nationwide and around the world.

**PRESIDENT'S POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMITMENT:** On July 21, 2015, at the 116<sup>th</sup> National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW), the President stated in part: "*As communities across our country continue to mark 50 years since the Vietnam War, we say once more, welcome to all our Vietnam vets. As I think you heard this morning, we have a new POW/MIA agency, new leadership. We're building stronger partnerships with veterans' groups like the VFW. Because bringing home Americans taken prisoner or who've gone missing is a sacred mission, and we are stepping up our efforts for all wars, to never leave a fallen comrade behind — ever.*" The League deeply appreciates the VFW's consistently strong support and welcomes the President's reiteration of national commitment.

**DPAA DIRECTOR MOVING FORWARD!** LTG (Ret) Mike Linnington, USA, was named the first Director, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), and sworn in as a civilian in the Senior Executive Service (SES) just before the League's 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, June 24-27<sup>th</sup>. While always cautious to not overstate support for people named to positions of responsibility in the POW/MIA accounting mission, it is no overstatement to recognize his outstanding, varied background.

Important now are the several steps he has taken that clearly reveal he is moving energetically to follow the directive issued by former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel to "completely reorganize" the POW/MIA accounting community. Recognizing that structural change is always rife with turmoil and uncertainty, Mr. Linnington inherited reorganizational plans proposed by an interim leadership no longer involved; thus structural changes are still evolving. Dramatic changes are being made and, reportedly are focused on adhering to Secretary Hagel's directive to "build on the existing strengths" of the accounting process. As a result, and hopefully, the Director appears to be moving toward a complex structure geared to meet longstanding expectations, though without the transparency anticipated.

Confirmed earlier is that former JPAC Detachments in Thailand, Vietnam and Laos will continue to be Detachments 1, 2 and 3, in Bangkok, Hanoi and Vientiane, respectively. They will be reporting to the DPAA Deputy Director, recently announced as BG Mark Spindler, USA, replacing Maj Gen Kelly McKeague, former JPAC Commander, and DPAA Deputy Commander since January of this year. He will be sorely missed. The League is thankful that long-serving civilian specialists in these Detachments, widely recognized as indispensable, are being extended in their positions and will continue to serve. Personnel deployed to support operations in Europe will reportedly continue as a Liaison Office, likely under the supervision of the new Europe & Mediterranean Regional Director COL Christopher Forbes, USA. The Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD) is included in the Europe/Mediterranean Region. Due to its requirement to support the US-Russia Joint Commission (USRJC) on POW/MIA Affairs, with its presidentially named Chairman, General Robert "Doc" Foglesong, USAF (Ret), JCSD has a unique, dual-hatted status. The Asia & Pacific Regional Director is Col Mike Gann, USMC, responsible for all operations in Asia and the Pacific, including the Vietnam War, Korean War and the vast majority of recoverable WWII losses.

There is also a very high priority being placed on the success of what was labeled the Public Private Partnership (P3) Initiative, now renamed Strategic Partnership Initiative. DPAA is looking at the broad areas in which potential partnerships (public/private, public/public, tripartite, etc.) could be formed as a means to augment official assets and resources that have focused primarily on Vietnam War accounting over the years. Strategic partnerships can and likely will offer significant opportunities to expand the overall accounting effort and produce results more rapidly. Areas under consideration include applying volunteer and paid contractor efforts to archival research, investigations and recoveries pertaining mostly to WWII, Korean War (disinterment and IDs) and Cold War loss incidents. In the future, DNA comparisons now done exclusively by AFDIL could also be expanded by retaining the assistance of private DNA laboratories, if needed.

There was an internal DPAA leadership symposium July 28-30<sup>th</sup> to provide an opportunity for DPAA leaders, including interim-appointed Directors and Deputies, to utilize the evolving restructure as the basis for helping to determine a viable sub-structure, moving tasks and numbers of personnel as required, but getting to a close-to-finalized structure. Final decisions have not yet been made, but Mr. Linnington anticipates that full operational capacity will be reached by the end of this year or by January, 2016. Having said that, the Director has also stated that all personnel are not expected to be in place until June, 2016, and there will be in-process reviews, assessments and, potentially, adjustments as implementation occurs. He also pledged that the process will be fully transparent.

Announcement is anticipated shortly of a senior civilian Deputy Director whose office will be in DC. Presumably, this person will have responsibility for managing and administering the DC-based headquarters. Though unknown at this point, it is likely that DPAA-East may include several directorates – Outreach & Communications (public affairs, public diplomacy, outreach, congressional relations and family liaison, etc.), Policy, Plans & Strategy (international relations, domestic and international training and education programs and coordination), Strategic Partnerships (boundaries have yet to be set, but are likely inclusive), Macro Archival Research & Analysis, and many administrative and oversight functions. Again, this is evolving and unclear.

**DPAA Facility Opens:** A “Blessing & Dedication Ceremony” was held on July 27<sup>th</sup> to officially open the new Senator Daniel K. Inouye Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency Center of Excellence. League Chairman of the Board Ann Mills-Griffiths represented the POW/MIA families by helping to cut the traditional lei. Following the formal raising and posting of the permanently-lighted US, POW/MIA and State of Hawaii flags, and the Navy Chaplain’s invocation, Director Linnington spoke briefly. The late Senator Inouye’s long-time Chief of Staff, Jennifer Sabas, provided the inspirational keynote address. Prayers and blessings by a native Hawaiian clergyman concluded with the PACOM Band playing the Military Service Songs, after which a reception was held in the front foyer of the new, incredible DPAA building.

The League extends special appreciation to long-time civilian **Johnie Webb** for his roughly 14 years of dedicated effort to shepherd the new facility through to completion, fully supported by the League. Mr. Webb is a retired Army LTC, former Commander of the Central Identification Laboratory-Hawaii (CILHI), previously Deputy to the JPAC Commander, and currently serves as DPAA’s Interim Deputy Director of what was External Communications, but now is to be known as Outreach & Communications Directorate.

**Chairman’s Comment:** The League’s vision for DPAA is to develop and carry out a viable process to more effectively and efficiently pursue increased accounting objectives for missing US personnel and their families. From January – June of this year, Mike Linnington and I had talked many times in his advisory role to Under Secretary Wormuth about the “complete reorganization” of the entire community. Mr. Linnington knows he has a very challenging road ahead to earn the trust of a dedicated, talented civilian workforce, as well as add the kind of people he wants and can depend on to move DPAA forward. He is moving NOW and already has learned far more than one would expect after such a very short time (three months) in the position.

At the League’s 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, he pledged he is in for the long haul and knows it will take time, but asked for support, assistance and patience as he tackles the challenges. I’m confident that Mike Linnington IS the right guy, and this IS the right time. These are the best circumstances we, the POW/MIA families, have seen since 1992 to obtain answers we have worked to achieve since the League was formed in 1970.

I attended LTG Linnington’s retirement on June 17<sup>th</sup> and can personally attest to the esteem in which he is held by a broad cross-section of military and civilian personnel. From the lowest ranking to the highest, all seem to genuinely like and admire him. It is my hope, prayer and expectation that he will work to achieve the objectives we share, and do so with honor, integrity, humility, dedication, energy, genuine caring and determination. That is all we can ask. All we should expect is his very best effort, and we do!

He will also need our prayers, our full support and the loyalty and confidence of all POW/MIA-related personnel, especially the former JPAC, DPMO and LSEL workforce now adjusting to being part of one new DoD agency. We urge all dedicated accounting community personnel – especially the experienced civilian core – to set aside justifiable frustrations and obstacles endured for far too many years. Just as the families, they must focus on what is now possible with our new DPAA and its leadership, based on our shared experience and knowledge.

In my judgment, right now truly IS the accounting mission's last real chance to move forward with the priority required, fully supported by State and DoD policy and resourced with funding and personnel required. If this ongoing effort does not succeed, I envision no future such opportunities, precisely the reason we must ensure that DPAA Director Mike Linnington gets all the support and assistance he needs from honest, caring, determined people in the accounting community.

The League is grateful to Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Christine Wormuth for selecting Mr. Linnington who is self-confident, but not a know-it-all, and who asks questions, seemingly unafraid to be seen as learning, which he is doing rapidly. The accounting mission is complex, there is much to learn and dangers persist; however, many – in and out of the bureaucracy – are trying in every way possible to help him gain solid, objective insights.

I sincerely believe DPAA truly can become the central accounting force we all have sorely missed since 1992 – with cohesive, interagency US Government priority that will, with the support of all, achieve the fullest possible accounting. This longstanding, entirely reasonable League objective is defined as 1) the missing man returned alive; or 2) his remains recovered and identified; or 3) convincing evidence as to why neither is possible, in which case he will remain forever as unrecovered and all information that relates or may relate will be provided to the next-of-kin who will then have the certainty of knowing the US Government did its very best to bring him home to his family and our Nation.