



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

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**UPDATE: February 23, 2017**

**AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR:** On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, DPAA announced the identification of **Capt Robert R. Barnett, USAF**, listed as KIA/BNR on April 7, 1966 while piloting a B-57B over Laos. His remains were recovered June 18, 2015 and IDd August 16, 2016. Earlier this year, a Marine Corps Reserve officer, **1<sup>st</sup> Lt William C. Ryan**, was the first person since June of 2016 announced as accounted for from the Vietnam War. He was listed KIA/BNR May 11, 1969, after the Phantom F4B in which he was the Radar Intercept Officer was hit while on a bombing pass over Savannakhet Province, Laos. He failed to respond to the pilot's repeated calls for his ejection after the aircraft was hit by enemy fire; however, the pilot ejected before the aircraft crashed and others observed only one parachute leave the aircraft. The number still missing and otherwise unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War is now 1,616. Let's hope these two IDs are the first of many in 2017.

The total accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now **967**. 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 **1,030**. Of the 1,616 still missing (POW/MIA) and unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR), 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,261 (VN-463, VS-798); Laos-299; Cambodia-49; PRC territorial waters-7. These country-specific numbers can and do fluctuate when investigations result in changes to loss locations. 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.

**JOINT FIELD RECOVERY IN CAMBODIA CANCELED/RESCHEDULED:** The New Year started off with news that the only DPAA-planned Joint Field Activity (JFA) scheduled for Cambodia in Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) had been canceled due to lack of funding. Initially contacted by a League member notified of this cancellation, a recovery operation that included her missing brother's case, the League quickly followed up to learn that DPAA had decided to proceed, but had postponed the start-date until March and reduced the scope of the planned recovery's in-country time from 60 to 30 days.

**VIETNAM JFA DRAMATICALLY CUT BACK:** The unwelcome Cambodia-related news led to a further discovery that, also due to a funding shortage, DPAA had drastically cut the Vietnam JFA that began this month. With initial plans to conduct multiple recovery operations and investigations, DPAA deployed only one Investigation Team (IT) and one Recovery Team (RT), as well as a team to handle a Field Forensic Review (FFR) and a Joint Forensic Review (JFR). Thankfully, the Vietnamese provided one Unilateral Recovery Team (URT) and one Research Investigation Team (RIT).

After being assured by Acting DPAA Director Fern Sumpter Winbush that funding was secured, though at a lower level, but adequate to sustain operations until April 28th, this information was a serious blow to confidence in DPAA's commitment to pursue Vietnam War accounting as a continuing priority. The JFA in Laos was also postponed by three weeks due to an aircraft breakdown and delay in Guam; however, the trilateral investigation reportedly began as scheduled on January 9th and the three Recovery Teams and one Investigation Team began three weeks late, and cannot recover the time, due to US budget constraints, NOT any opposition from the Lao Government.

**DPAA BUDGET REQUIREMENTS NOT MET:** It now appears DPAA will NOT have the funding in FY17 required to "increase the pace and scope of operations," as has repeatedly been requested by Vietnam. Despite continuing internal dysfunction, DPAA had been proceeding well since becoming fully operational in January of 2016. Now, however, the damage is mounting.

The plus-up of \$20 million to reach the necessary FY17 budget total of \$132 million for planned operational requirements was not requested. Apparently, the ability to utilize those funds, if approved, would come too late for use in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters of FY17. DPAA has not yet provided clarification on any of the budget-related questions, but it is anticipated that the full explanation will be provided on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, during the DPAA-hosted Conference Call.

**YOUR HELP IS URGENTLY NEEDED!** WRITE TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS TO REGISTER STRONG OBJECTION TO THE LACK OF ADEQUATE FUNDING TO MEET REQUIREMENTS FOR OPERATIONAL NEEDS IN FY17. ALSO, ASK FOR EXEMPTION OF DPAA FUNDING FROM ANY/ALL REDUCTIONS. Funding for veterans care is rightfully protected by exempting Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) budgets from across-the-board reductions and/or sequestration. America's UNRETURNED Veterans, our missing and unaccounted for men and their families, deserve equal protection by Congress. That means fully funding efforts to achieve the fullest possible accounting.

**DPAA DIRECTOR SELECTION PROCESS:** A qualified individual to serve in this crucial position has yet to be announced. The selecting official, former Acting Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Brian McKeon, apparently didn't share our sense of urgency to replace retired Army LTG Mike Linnington who abruptly resigned eight months ago. Hopefully, this means that the Trump Administration will carefully consider recommendations provided by the League, Special Operations Association (SOA), Special Forces Association (SFA) and others. Up to now, there has been no indication that serious qualifications - experience, character, commitment and dedication to the mission – were given any consideration, nor crucial factors such as having earned the trust and respect of affected families, veterans and foreign officials whose willingness to authorize necessary cooperation is critical to success. Of note, the Republican Platform for 2016 included the following: *“Our improved relations with Vietnam – including arms sales – must advance efforts to obtain an accounting for, and repatriation of the remains of, Americans who gave their lives in the cause of Vietnamese freedom.”*

**ATTEND DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES:** The remainder of the 2017 calendar for DPAA-hosted Family Updates is February 25<sup>th</sup>, Charleston, SC; March 25<sup>th</sup>, New Orleans, LA, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, Kansas City, MO, May 20<sup>th</sup>, Syracuse, NY, during the League's 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting June 21-25<sup>th</sup>, and September 9<sup>th</sup>, Detroit, MI. You may have noticed postings on the DPAA website indicating 1,276 family members had attended these updates in 2016. What is unstated, therefore unclear, is that only roughly 20% of that number are Vietnam War families.

This is for two primary reasons: 1) There are “only” 1,616 US personnel still missing and otherwise unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War, but over 7,700 unaccounted-for from the Korean War and over 73,000 from WWII; obviously, the affected family member total from these two wars is MUCH greater than those impacted by the Vietnam War. 2) The vast majority of active Vietnam War family members are those whose missing loved one was original status POW or MIA. KIA/BNR families were ineligible to be League members until those listed as POW and MIA were systematically presumed dead in the late 1970s, and the League bylaws were changed at that time.

**ATTEND DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES TO SHOW YOU ARE ENGAGED AND EXPECT PRIORITY EFFORTS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF ADDRESSING THE MOST RECENT WAR FIRST AND THE URGENT ISSUE OF PURSUING ANSWERS ON LAST KNOWN ALIVE CASES.**

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW FOR JUNE 21-25, 2017:** The League's 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting will again be held at the Hilton Crystal City Hotel, as it has been the last several years.