



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

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AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR: There are still 1,642 personnel listed by the Department of Defense (DoD) as missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War, a number that had not changed since October of last year until early March, and it has since remained the same. Most recently, the name of **Captain Douglas Ferguson, USAF**, listed as MIA in Laos on December 30, 1969, was released. Captain Ferguson's remains were recovered April 13, 2013, and identified February 14, 2014. The number of Americans announced by DoD as returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now 941. 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 1,004. Of the 1,642 unaccounted-for personnel, 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-307; Cambodia-53; PRC territorial waters-7. Over-water losses on DoD's list of No Further Pursuit cases number well over 600.

ONGOING REORGANIZATION ACTION: Senior DoD civilian, Alisa Stack, was appointed to head a transition team, the Personnel Accounting Consolidation Task Force (PACT) that, 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, 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 PACT members have been actively interviewing interested people, in and out of government, plus appear to be focused on ensuring that a wide variety of voices are heard, responsible and irresponsible, rational and irrational, so the outcome will be interesting.

An outside firm, The Clearing, was contracted to branch out to obtain input from family members from all wars on their personal experiences in dealing with the various accounting community organizations. In addition to DPMO, JPAC and LSEL (specifically named in the restructure directive and by Congress), these include the Service Casualty Offices, AFDIL, and individuals within the various organizations. The Clearing is seeking the views of all who are willing to talk with them and can be reached via the Internet by emailing voiceofthefamilies@theclearing.com. Family members from all wars are urged to provide their views and, in view of the comparatively small number of Vietnam War family members affected, 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 is still a significant factor for the families, much more so than remains recoveries of known dead from earlier wars and conflicts. The League supports accounting for losses in WWII, Korean War and Cold War, but in addition to focusing priority on Vietnam War accounting, not to its detriment.

Following review and approval by newly confirmed Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (USD-P) Christine Wormuth, the PACT recommendations will be provided to Deputy Secretary of Defense (DepSecDef) Robert Work. That presentation is anticipated for mid-August and, once he has approved, the final recommendations will go to Secretary Hagel. In the interim, ASD/SOLIC Lumpkin has been invited to testify before the House Armed Services Committee's (HASC's) Subcommittee on Military Personnel on July 15th, as has the newly named head of DoD's CAPE, Dr. Jamie Morin. Reportedly, he will report on CAPE's findings from their 12 months investigation, and ASD Lumpkin will testify about ongoing efforts to restructure the accounting community.

FIELD OPERATIONS: JPAC had planned to conduct a Joint Field Activity (JFA) in Laos January 14th to February 17th, but it was cancelled due to complications related to receipt of timely funding. Three Recovery Teams (RTs) had been scheduled, along with one Investigation Team (IT), augmented by the DIA Stony Beach specialist. A longer JFA began March 4th and concluded April 14th, though only one RT and one IT were deployed. The next JFA in Laos started May 9th and concluded June 22nd, with only two RTs, again far below the cap of 53 US personnel operating simultaneously in Laos. JPAC will host bi-annual POW/MIA Consultations with Laos on August 26th in Hawaii.

Cambodia: Operations in Cambodia by one RT and one Underwater Recovery Team (URT), postponed twice in 2013, finally took place January 28th - April 2nd, 2014. Since the Stony Beach specialist is permanently in-country and conducts investigations when and where needed, ITs are not routinely scheduled in conjunction with JPAC Cambodia operations. There are no identified sites currently awaiting excavation/recovery; therefore, no JFAs are scheduled in Cambodia until early 2015. The 2013 cancellations had little to do with funding shortages and much to do with internal mishandling of contractual authorities by some in JPAC with no mission-related experience in SEA. Objections were posed to the payment authorization process that had been in place for over 20 years. As a result, all operations were halted while a solution was found, satisfactory to the puzzled Cambodians leaders, as well as the US Ambassador and his staff. The solution was establishing an "Order for Services" document, then convincing Cambodian officials that it was acceptable, though they regularly accommodate all US requests and concerns. For the first time in over 20 years, technical level talks will not be held with the Cambodians in FY2014, but plans are being made for senior level discussions with Cambodia's POW/MIA Committee leadership in late October or early November.

Vietnam: Four RTs conducted operations in Vietnam February 28th - March 27th. Two ITs also deployed on that JFA, plus the RIT (Research Investigation Team) and a Field Forensic Review (FFR) at the end of the JFA. Only three RTs were deployed to Vietnam for the May 20th - June 22nd JFA, plus two ITs. An underwater operation previously scheduled along the coast of northern Vietnam was cancelled, again reportedly due to lack of available funding. There will be another JFA in Vietnam before the end of FY2014, August 5th to September 7th, involving four RTs, one Vietnamese Recovery Team (VRT) and one IT, plus the RIT will again conduct interviews and investigations on LKA cases. JPAC will host the annual Technical Talks with the Vietnamese on September 23rd in Hawaii.

Worldwide: While Vietnam War-related accounting missions slowed, six RT's worked in Germany from April 1st to May 18th on WWII recoveries. In addition to returning to Germany May 10th - June 21st, and an overlapping team June 15th to July 23rd working on the same two large WWII bomber sites, there was one IT in Burma from April 28th to May 29th. A special RT has reportedly just concluded its work on a 1952 US loss being exposed by a melting glacier in Alaska. On this unusual site, there have already been 17 remains recovered and identified, and prospects for additional accountability are high. There will also be an underwater recovery in Botwood Bay, a harbor in Canada, of a WWII "flying boat" that crashed on take-off, and one RT in the Solomon Islands to recover WWII remains July 8th to August 6th.

Chairman's Comment: With the above record of on-again, off-again field operations, is it any wonder that Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are questioning US commitment to the accounting mission? The relatively well-developed working relationship that has evolved since the first joint recovery in Laos in 1984 should mean that field operations are conducted at the pace and scope necessary to achieve long-stated accounting objectives, but such is not the case. There are multiple reasons, initially from congressionally-imposed sequestration, required budget cuts that hit JPAC disproportionately, due to PACOM "borrowing" some of JPAC's funding for other uses. Cutbacks and cancellations are also due to an inadequate number of deployable JPAC forensic anthropologists, weather restrictions in specific areas that then complicate obtaining specialists needed for specific recoveries, and the list goes on. Of immediate concern is the need to change existing policy concerning deployable scientific personnel for field operations. If not changed, there will continue to be sporadic reductions in Vietnam War accounting operations, due to competing attention to WWII recoveries in the congressionally-mandated quest for higher numbers of IDs.