



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

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AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR: Although no formal DPAA announcement has yet been published, statistical data on the DPAA website, dated 1/15/19, reported the accounting for **Roy F. Townley** and **Edward J. Weissenback, Air America**, listed as missing on 12/27/71, in Laos. The DPAA release on accounting for **George L Ritter, Air America, PA**, from the same incident, indicated his recovery on 12/13/17, and ID on 9/25/18. Both Townley and Weissenback were recovered late last fall and their families were notified just before Christmas, 2018, and the formal release is expected soon. Before that, no changes in the Vietnam War statistics had been posted since October 17th when DPAA posted the names of two Vietnam War personnel now accounted for, Ritter, noted above, and **LT Richard C. Lannom, USNR, TN**, listed MIA on 3/1/68, NVN, recovered 12/13/17 and ID'd on 9/25/18.

The number still missing (POW/MIA) and otherwise unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR) from the Vietnam War is now 1,590. Of that number, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia or Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,247 (VN-452, VS-795); Laos-288; Cambodia-48; PRC territorial waters-7.

Since chartered in 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 **993**. A breakdown by country of these 993 Americans is: Vietnam – 671, Laos – 277, Cambodia – 42, and the PRC – 3. In addition, 63 US personnel were accounted for between 1973 and 1975, the formal end of the Vietnam War, for a grand total of 1,056. These 63 Americans, accounted for by US-only efforts in accessible areas, were not due to cooperation by post-war governments in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. Combined, a total of 285 have been accounted for from Laos, 726 from Vietnam, 42 from Cambodia and 3 from the PRC.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS: DEFENSE SECRETARY MATTIS' RESIGNATION: Thanks to the President's support for our Armed Forces and Veterans, **sustained** priority on the accounting mission is assumed, but the League will seek confirmation of continuing, even expanded priority, focus and attention to pursuing answers. At this time, while it is difficult to imagine "replacing" General Mattis, the accounting mission has weathered political ups and downs for nearly five decades. The League has no intention of abandoning the accounting mission precisely when the Vietnam War end-game can actually be visualized. I strongly urge reinforcing your own determination to contribute more toward accomplishing our accounting objectives, whether monetarily or by volunteering to more actively engage in building public interest and support.

The quest for answers to end the uncertainty of Vietnam War POW/MIA families has vastly expanded. It now includes remains recoveries from the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea (DPRK), the People's Republic of China (PRC), countries of the former Soviet Union (USSR) and worldwide efforts to recover many thousands killed during the Cold War, Korean War and World War II buried as unknowns in US cemeteries in Europe, Asia and here in the US, such as the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as the Punchbowl, in Honolulu, HI.

The differences in pursuing answers in these varied countries are complex and demanding, but standing behind those who serve our country has finally resumed the national priority President Reagan established in the early 1980s. It is now our responsibility to ensure Members of Congress, on a bipartisan basis, understand the need to provide sufficient funding, personnel and resources to accomplish the expanded mission outlined above. We must also ensure the Trump Administration recognizes the need to return home as many of these UNRETURNED VETERANS as possible.

US/VIETNAM COOPERATION: Joint investigations and recoveries resume later this month, and the pace and scope of cooperation continues to expand. In early December, another repatriation ceremony was held in Da Nang to conclude the latest Joint Field Activity (JFA), consisting of several investigation and recovery teams, culminating with a US-Vietnam commemoration to celebrate 30 years of sustained joint field operations.

Chairman's Comment: The League deeply appreciates efforts by the government and people of Vietnam to work constructively and effectively to achieve the fullest possible accounting. Vietnam's initial on-again, off-again cooperation has improved and steadily expanded over the last 40 years and can be described today as forward leaning, proposing initiatives and providing increased opportunities for success. In recent Vietnam News Agency (VNA) coverage of Vietnam-Laos-Cambodia border talks in Kon Tum, the article noted pledges of continued friendship and cooperation among the three countries and specifically noted their support of the Kon Tum Province K53 Group's success in locating and repatriating *"1,259 sets of remains of soldiers, including 872 in Laos and the remaining in Cambodia."* Such cooperative remains recoveries have regularized over the years, prompted by pressure from local Vietnamese.

US/CAMBODIAN COOPERATION: On October 12th, long-serving Prime Minister Hun Sen announced in a letter to Washington State Senator Doug Erickson and Washington State Representative Vincent Buys that he has lifted the suspension on POW/MIA cooperation with DPAA, despite the ongoing US sanctions. Throughout the suspension, DIA's Stony Beach Cambodia specialist, Eric Phillips, continued to conduct case investigations.

Chairman's Comment: The League is grateful that Prime Minister Hun Sen has lifted the suspension, and looks forward to resuming longstanding cooperation with his full support for this important humanitarian issue. We are also grateful to Senator Ericksen and Representative Buys for their work in advocating resumption of POW/MIA operations in Cambodia. Coming just in time for the dry season, it means that DPAA will be able to proceed with their important field operations working alongside their thoughtful, capable Cambodian counterparts.

US/LAO COOPERATION: DPAA and SB personnel are now undertaking field investigation and recovery operations on cases of US personnel missing in Laos. Field recoveries in northern Laos also concluded with a repatriation ceremony conducted at the Luang Prabang Airport on August 14th. US-Lao consultations were held September 7th in Vientiane, led by RDML Kreitz. Significant agreement was reached to expand support for year-round DIA/SB investigations, and Joint Field Activities (JFAs) resumed, including successful completion of the Air America site in NW Laos as noted earlier.

Chairman's Comment: The League looks forward to positive results from these efforts, recognizing and applauding several significant developments in POW/MIA cooperation that the Lao leadership has authorized in recent months. These include base-camping at remote locations, increasing the number of US participants on a case-by-case basis, and extensions of time on field recovery sites when justified.

Despite often difficult conditions, including advance destruction of unexploded ordnance, conditions for humanitarian cooperation to account for US personnel continue to improve, for which all Americans are grateful. Hopefully, further **Department of Homeland Security (DHS) sanctions against Laos** for failing to accept Lao nationals who long ago immigrated to the US, were since convicted of criminal acts and are now scheduled for legal deportation back to Laos, will not negatively impact humanitarian POW/MIA cooperation.

US-RUSSIA JOINT COMMISSION (USRJC) ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS HOLDS PLENUM: US Chairman General “Doc” Foglesong, USAF (Ret), and Russian Co-Chairman General Colonel Vostrotin agreed to hold Plenary talks on Wednesday, November 28th, in Washington, DC at the National Archives. Several commemorative and social events took place over a three-day period, November 27-29th, including the customary break-out sessions focused separately on the Vietnam War, Korean War/Cold War and World War II. DPAA Director Kelly McKeague again chaired the Vietnam War Working Group. Prior to the Plenum, VFW Executive Director Bob Wallace and League Chairman of the Board/CEO Ann Mills-Griffiths both accepted invitations to serve as Special Advisors to the USRJC.

50th ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL MEETING TO BE HELD JUNE 19-23, 2019: This year’s annual meeting marks five decades of League efforts to account as fully as possible for America’s Vietnam War POW/MIAs and other unreturned veterans. Don’t miss being a part of this historic event, June 19-23, 2019. In addition to the always outstanding and informative speakers, panel discussions, and presentations, special guests and special events are being planned, including a Welcome Reception Wednesday evening, June 19th, during Registration. Stay tuned for more details!

The League’s central role is recognized as key to having sustained priority, established by President Reagan when he assumed office in 1982, and expanding the mission to include efforts to recover and identify Americans unreturned from wars and conflicts back to WWII. In addition to the brief Remembrance Ceremony honoring those accounted for since the 49th Annual Meeting, **Opening Session** will feature the League’s five decades of commitment and dedication to standing behind those who serve our country. Prominent officials from years past – both US and foreign – are expected to participate in a multimedia retrospective.

The **50th Anniversary Annual Meeting Dinner** will be held Thursday evening, June 20th, 7:00 – 9:00 PM. Invited guests will include senior US and foreign officials and Ambassadors from nations whose humanitarian cooperation with the US is necessary to accomplish the accounting mission. Seating will be limited, so early registration is encouraged to ensure seats are available. The dinner will be preceded by a no-host reception from 6:00 – 7:00 PM.

Business Sessions to update League members and guests will include senior US policy officials from the Departments of State and Defense, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, the US-Russia Joint Commission (USRJC) on POW/MIA Affairs, as well as accounting-specific briefings. As is customary and necessary in terms of initiatives now underway, there will be topic-focused briefings from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) Director and Deputy Director, Directors for Policy & Plans, Outreach & Communications, Regional Operations, Partnerships & Innovations, scientific advances being applied to recoveries and identifications, etc. These sessions will take place Thursday and Friday, plus a **Q&A Session** on Saturday morning, followed by a **League Business Session** on Saturday afternoon, prior to a League-hosted **Farewell Reception** that evening.

Registration: League Members – Family & Associate – should register early to ensure available seating for the dinner. The cost for League Members to register for the 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting & Dinner is \$100 per person. Those registered may purchase guest dinner tickets for \$55 per person. Non-League member registration to attend only the 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting sessions is \$65 per person.

Reservations at the Hilton Crystal City Hotel: A block of rooms has been contracted at a reduced rate of \$158.00 per room, per night, plus applicable taxes; there is an additional charge of \$20 per night per added person in a room. Both Double Queen and King Rooms are available, on a first come, first served basis. A larger than usual attendance is anticipated, so reservations should be made ASAP, meaning on receipt of this notice. Save the dates and book your room at the **Hilton Crystal City Hotel**, 2399 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, Virginia 22202. The group code is **MIA**. Book online through the Hilton Link:

<http://www.hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/D/DCANAHF-MIA-20190615/index.jhtml>.

You can also call 703-418-6800 or 800-774-1500 to make reservations. Though the League room block has been increased, attendance is expected to be high, so book early, or no later than May 16th, to reserve your room(s).

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION, 2019-2021: The League's bylaws require an election every other year, and 2019 is an election year. All candidates must be dues-current and may contact the League office to request an application or download one from the League website, www.pow-miafamilies.org. Applications must be completed, signed, scanned and sent by USPS to League Administrator Leslie Swindells at the League's national office (address on the letterhead) or emailed to leslie.swindells@pow-miafamilies.org, by April 5, 2019.

Chairman's Comment: Dedicated League Family Members are asked to consider serving on the League's elected Board of Directors. If you take seriously our shared quest for answers and have the good health, knowledge of the mission, financial means, time, and willingness to represent all of our missing men and their families, as well as your own missing loved one, please seriously consider placing your name on the ballot. At present, and for the last few years, the League has paid the cost of travel and accommodations for board members to attend quarterly meetings, though some voluntarily paid their own expenses as was required for many years. Costs vary, depending on location, and meals are not reimbursed nor is *per diem* paid as is standard for most such voluntary service by individuals. Continued payment of such expenses will be dependent on a decision by the board majority after assuming office following the 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting.

DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES: DPAA-hosted Family Member Updates (FMUs) are no longer restricted solely to family members. Responsible Veteran Service Organization (VSO) representatives can now be included, as are League and other Non-Government Organization (NGO) officials. Following are upcoming dates and locations: January 26th, **2019**, San Antonio, TX; February 23rd, San Jose, CA; March 23rd, Birmingham, AL; April 20th, Salt Lake City, UT, and May 18th, Omaha, NE.

The League is a tax-exempt, 501(c)3 humanitarian organization (IRS 23-7071242), eligible for donations through the Combined Federal Campaign, CFC #10218

Or, donate today at www.pow-miafamilies.org