



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

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**AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR:** The most recent DPAA release on **Vietnam War** accounting was July 26, 2019, with the identification of **Major Neal C. Ward, USAF**. Listed as MIA in Laos on 6/13/69, his remains were recovered on 12/13/17, and identified on 7/19/19. On 6/11/19, DPAA announced that **Air Force Colonel Roy A. Knight, Jr**, listed as MIA on 5/19/67 over Laos, is now accounted for. His remains were recovered on 2/28/19, and ID'd on 6/4/19. Prior to that, DPAA announced on 2/25/19 that **Navy Reserve Journalist 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Raul A. Guerra, USN**, listed as MIA on 10/8/67, was accounted for. His remains were recovered on 8/15/05 and identified on 2/20/19. On January 15, 2019, DPAA posted 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** 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.

**The number missing (POW/MIA) and otherwise unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR) from the Vietnam War is still 1,587.** Of that number, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia or Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,246 (VN-443, VS-803); Laos-286; 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 **996**. A breakdown by country of these 996 Americans is: Vietnam – 672, Laos – 279, 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 1,059. 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 287 have been accounted for from Laos, 727 from Vietnam, 42 from Cambodia and 3 from the PRC.

**“SALUTE TO AMERICA” OFFERED PROMISE:** The President's support for US Armed Forces and veterans can be interpreted to include sustained priority on the accounting mission, but the League is seeking clarification. The President can and should confirm continuing and expanded priority, focus and attention to pursuing answers about America's UNRETURNED VETERANS. Supported by the major national veteran organizations, the League is working to ensure that accounting for Vietnam War missing, as pledged by DPAA Director Kelly McKeague at the League's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Meeting, June 20, 2019, truly is a policy priority, supported on an interagency basis. Achieving factually-based, realistic accounting goals IS doable if we all reinforce our determination to do more, whether donating funds or by actively engaging in building public interest and support, via social media.

The League's 50-year quest for answers to end the uncertainty of Vietnam War POW/MIA families has vastly expanded. Now included are remains recoveries from North Korea (DPRK), China (PRC), countries which comprised the former Soviet Union (USSR), worldwide efforts to recover many thousands killed during the Cold War, Korean War and World War II, as well as disinter and identify the remains of thousands buried as unknowns in US cemeteries in Europe, Asia and here in the US. The differences in pursuing answers in these varied countries are complex and demanding, but standing strongly with and behind those who serve our country may finally resume 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 adequate 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.

**50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL MEETING:** This year's annual meeting was truly a celebration of all the League has achieved for POW/MIA families, initially Vietnam War only now extended to wars and conflicts further past, as the lasting impact on our nation and the world. Opening Session formalities on June 20<sup>th</sup> were led by Elko, Pocatello, Boise Valley and Magic Valley POW/MIA associations. A brief *"In Memory and Honor"* ceremony, led by Vice Chairman of the Board Mark Stephensen, recognized the very few US personnel accounted for since the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, highlighted by a beautiful rendition of *"Amazing Grace,"* sung by **MG Arnold M. Fields, USMC (Ret)**, representing DoD's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Vietnam War Commission. There followed a very informed, welcome policy message by **Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Patrick Murphy**, now confirmed by the US Senate and serving as US Ambassador to Cambodia. The DPAA-designed poster to commemorate National POW/MIA Recognition Day was unveiled by then **VFW Director for Public Affairs Joe Davis** and the League Chairman. (Posters were provided to all at the conclusion of Opening Session.)

A key feature of the Opening Session was the **Retrospective** of the difficult early years, 1981-89, during which President Reagan made clear the priority he placed on accounting as fully as possible for our Vietnam War POW/MIAs, later amended to include original status KIA/BNRs. For the first time, the postwar build-up of US efforts to pursue bilateral cooperation with Vietnam. Laos and Cambodia was provided in succinct, accurate presentations. The priority with which accounting objectives were pursued and sustained in later years brought the accounting effort to where it is today. More than most Americans, Vietnam War POW/MIA families and veterans recognize the validity of what was accomplished by utilizing Vietnam's self-described *"bridge to normalization of relations"* with the US that brought about the US-constructed *"Roadmap to Normalization"* of relations, through which 996 Americans have been accounted for since the actual end of the Vietnam War in 1975.

The chronology laid out by League Senior Policy Advisor **Richard Childress**, having served eight years as Director of Asian Affairs on the Reagan National Security Council Staff, provided the accurate background of efforts during these difficult years in which **Ann Mills-Griffiths** participated as a full member of the US Government's POW/MIA Interagency Group (IAG). Other key participants were former Deputy Secretary of State and Assistant Secretary of Defense/Asian & Pacific Affairs **Rich Armitage**, former Deputy Secretary of Defense **Rudy de Leon**, and former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Assistant Secretary of State/Asian & Pacific Affairs **Paul Wolfowitz** (also later US Ambassador to Indonesia and President of the World Bank), League Policy Advisor, US Ambassador to Thailand and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State/Asian & Pacific Affairs **David Lambertson**, League Policy Advisor and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State/Asian & Pacific Affairs **Matt Daley**, and Ambassadors **Charlie Salmon**, Laos, and **Charlie Twining**, Cambodia. (The presentations of these distinguished gentlemen, all ranking US officials, were covered by Facebook live; Richard Childress' remarks can be found on the League's website and are available from the League office by request.)

Following a break for lunch, **DPAA Director Kelly K. McKeague** presented remarks about *"DPAA's Vietnam War Accounting Roadmap"* and **reaffirmed his pledge to maintain operational priority on achieving the fullest possible accounting for Vietnam War missing.** Immediately following and well-received were brief commitments from supportive Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) who have long supported the League and US Government efforts. Carrying messages from their respective organizations were American Legion National Vice Commander John Milburn, DAV Executive Director Randy Reese, JWV Executive Director Herb Rosenbleeth, SOA Vice President/Chairman of the Joint SOA/SFA POW/MIA Committee Mike Taylor, VVA National POW/MIA Chairman Grant Coates and VFW Director of Communications & Public Affairs Joe Davis.

**Ambassadors Ha Kim Ngoc of Vietnam, Khamphan Anlavan of Laos and Chum Sounry of Cambodia** gave very interesting, impactful remarks on *"Impressions from Hanoi, Vientiane & Phnom Penh."* Presenting first, Vietnamese Ambassador Ngoc presented a series of three personal stories, including the tragic helicopter crash in April 2001 during joint field operations. The loss of seven Americans and nine Vietnamese included Ambassador Ngoc's best friend, also a Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, serving in the Americas Bureau. Upon conclusion, Ambassador Ngoc was given a standing ovation, as were all at the end of this very special segment of the program.

The **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Meeting Dinner and Candlelight Ceremony** was made even more special this year by the remarks of then **Army Chief of Staff GEN Mark Milley**, now confirmed by the Senate as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS). His message made clear his full support for the accounting mission and the League's responsible role over the last 50 years in pursuing answers. Former League staff member, now DPAA Disinterment Director, Wendy Coble sang a beautiful rendition of "*Climb Every Mountain*."

For the first time, and in commemoration of the League's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, a **Lifetime Achievement Award** was presented to **Senior Policy Advisor Richard T. Childress**, and a **Lifetime Service Award** was presented to **Central Region Coordinator Liz Flick**. These two awards are unlikely ever again to be presented. Previously, the highest League award was the **Distinguished Service Award**, presented only 12 times since inception. This year, that very prestigious award was presented to former **Deputy Secretary of Defense Rudy de Leon** for his dedication to the accounting mission since 1982. Finally, the **League Award** was presented to **BG Steven Redmann, USAF (Ret)**, then Deputy Chief of Staff to Army Chief of Staff General Milley. As the only Air Force officer to ever lead accounting operations, in this instance Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA), his reliable, quiet support for the League and the mission were and are recognized as notable and very meaningful.

On Friday morning, the presentation by **LTG Robert Ashley, USA, Director of DIA** (Defense Intelligence Agency), again had the audience's full, undivided attention. LTG Ashley noted his personal and professional determination to specifically contribute to League and USG efforts to account for our Vietnam War missing. He made clear his unwavering commitment to the mission and full support for DIA's team of skilled POW/MIA investigators, known as the **Stony Beach Team**, the only element of the US Government devoted solely to Vietnam War accounting efforts. These highly trained POW/MIA intelligence collectors briefed on current operations and approach.

**Under Secretary of Defense for Policy John Rood**, the only senior DoD Policy Official to attend, also spoke on Friday, June 21<sup>st</sup>. Briefings were given by DPAA Deputy Director for Operations **RDML Jon Kreitz**, Director for Partnerships and Innovations (focused on scientific advances) **Dr. Tom Holland**, Deputy Director for Outreach & Communications **Johnie Webb**, Europe-Med and Indo-Pacific Regional Directors, **COL Brian Pearl, USA**, and **Col Brian Peterson, USMC**, Det. 2 Commander **LTC Adam Points, USA**, and DPAA Underwater Archaeologist **Rich Wills**, longtime, dedicated civilian specialist.

**Chairman's Comment:** There was much more to this year's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemoration, and we appreciate DPAA's having supported coverage by streaming Facebook live, as well as posting links on the DPAA website to go back and watch/listen at your convenience. Especially appreciated was DPAA Director Kelly McKeague's pledge of five years of operational priority on Vietnam War accounting.

Despite continuing dysfunction within DPAA resulting in disappointment, there is reason for cautious optimism. With sustained support from the families and our nation's veterans, the League is determined to press for answers on Vietnam War missing. So long as Vietnam War accounting efforts remain DPAA's operational priority, we also support investigations and recoveries on cases of unaccounted-for WWII, Korean War and Cold War personnel over disinterment and ID of remains of the known dead. We also recognize that DPAA is pursuing numbers to satisfy Congressional expectations and the least expensive, most effective means to raise the ID count is disinterment of Korean War and WWII personnel, known dead and buried in US cemeteries around the world, and not individually identified. DPAA's primary mission is to account as fully as possible for missing US personnel, not "just" mortuary duties to disinter and identify the known dead, meaningful as that is to their families.

I wish all of you could have been with us; we've come a long, long way, yet we have much to do to meet ongoing challenges. Your support and direct engagement, especially through social media, are strongly encouraged. This year's annual meeting was the largest, most significant in years. That isn't especially surprising since it was a year-long effort to plan and schedule speakers to maximize effectiveness. Members who had not attended in years didn't want to miss this 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemoration!

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION, 2019-2021:** The League's bylaws require an election every other year, and 2019 was an election year. Results were announced at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Meeting. Re-elected were all sitting members of the Board – Pam Cain, Karoni Forrester, Ann Mills-Griffiths, Sue Scott, Mark Stephensen and Cindy Stonebraker – with the exception of Eldon Robinson, MIA brother, who was again serving as League Treasurer. Sadly, Eldon fell critically ill, was unable to stand for re-election and passed away just before the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Meeting. CA State Coordinator Bruce Hallberg, having been elected, was selected by the Board to serve as Treasurer. Selected to again serve in the positions of Chairman/CEO, Vice Chairman and Secretary were Ann Mills-Griffiths, Mark Stephensen and Cindy Stonebraker, respectively. Sadly, Cindy recently resigned due to family obligations, and MIA Son Joseph Stuart, the candidate with the next highest votes, assumed her Board position. Pam Cain was then elected as Secretary of the Board for 2019-2021, a position she previously held some years ago. We are grateful to her for stepping up to serve again.

**HOPE FOR TALKS TO RESUME ON KOREAN WAR REMAINS RECOVERIES.** Though there still is no clarity on when/whether agreement to resume remains recovery operations in North Korea will occur, there is ongoing speculation, as well as effort. The subject is reportedly high on the agenda, as it is something both leaders agree should be pursued on a separate humanitarian basis, regardless of political and/or policy differences. In this instance, no news is NOT good news, and it is hoped that working level talks to sort through specific issues related to in-country cooperation can resume in the spring, once the frozen ground allows such field recoveries.

**IDENTIFICATION STATISTICS:** It should also be noted that as many as 35 IDs have been made on remains that came out of North Korea in the 55 flag-draped transfer cases. In addition, DPAA leaders stated publicly that the DNA on as many as 150 US personnel, plus approximately 100 indigenous personnel, may be represented by remains that were turned over in the 55 transfer cases. With the very high percentage of DNA reference samples that Korean War families have ensured are available, the count of IDs of Korean War KIA/BNRs, both disinterred from US cemeteries and from the earlier unilateral DPRK turnover of the K-208 (representing as many as 500-600 individuals), the prospect is high for many more Korean War personnel being ID'd and returned to their families for honorable burial in the near term. Korean War IDs for Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) reached 73. The WWII total is even higher, standing at 140 for FY19. Only 5 Vietnam War personnel were accounted for during that same time, for a total of 218 IDs announced by DPAA for FY19, a record for the DPAA Lab.

### **INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY REPORT PREPAREDNESS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND PROMOTING A NETWORKED REGION**

Following excerpts are from the Defense Department's June 1, 2019 publication, pages 36-37 & 40, all very relevant to Vietnam War accounting and, for those interested in better understanding the broader policy implications and opportunities, the full report would be of significant interest.

**VIETNAM:** *The Department is building a strategic partnership with Vietnam that is based on common interests and principles, including freedom of navigation, respect for a rules-based order in accordance with international law, and recognition of national sovereignty. The U.S.-Vietnam defense relationship has grown dramatically over the past several years, as symbolized by the historic March 2018 visit of a U.S. aircraft carrier for the first time since the Vietnam War.*

*The Department is working to improve Vietnam's defense capabilities by providing security assistance, including Scan Eagle Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, T-6 trainer aircraft, a former U.S. Coast Guard high endurance cutter, and small patrol boats and their associated training and maintenance facilities. The U.S. military also engages in numerous annual training exchanges and activities to enhance bilateral cooperation and interoperability with the Vietnam People's Army, Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard. Additionally, DoD has provided training and technical assistance to support Vietnam's 2018 deployment of a medical unit to the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan, and will continue to provide assistance to facilitate future deployments.*

*Our increasingly strong defense ties are based on a foundation of close cooperation to address legacy of war and humanitarian issues, which predates the restoration of diplomatic relations in 1995. As we look to celebrate 25 years of diplomatic relations in 2020, DoD remains committed to supporting U.S. efforts to clean up dioxin contamination and remove unexploded ordnance, and appreciates Vietnam's continued assistance to account for U.S. personnel missing from the Vietnam War.*

**LAOS:** *Strategically located in the geographic heart of ASEAN and the Mekong sub-region, Laos presents opportunities for deepening security, economic, and diplomatic engagement. China is increasingly focused on Laos, and Beijing continues efforts to expand its strategic footprint through large debt-fueled investments, especially in infrastructure and energy. However, Laos is wary of overdependence and is seeking to diversify its partners and options.*

*At the same time, Laos is experiencing a significant demographic shift – with a large majority of its population under the age of 35 – which presents a unique opportunity to engage a new, outward looking generation. The Lao military prioritizes Vietnam, Russia, and to a lesser degree China as its primary security partners. At the same time, the Laotian military is slowly expanding its international engagement portfolio, first to ASEAN and to a lesser degree to countries in the region such as Japan, Australia, and India.*

*The United States supports activities that advance Laos' integration into ASEAN, such as defense modernization, interoperability, English language proficiency, and respect for a rules-based international order. In the meantime, we are working to move past war legacy issues related to the Vietnam War and aim to conclude Prisoner of War/Missing in Action recovery operations honorably, and by 2030 to make Laos substantially risk-free of U.S.-sourced unexploded ordnance.*

**CAMBODIA:** *DoD seeks to build a productive military-to-military relationship with the Kingdom of Cambodia that protects its sovereignty, promotes military professionalism, and helps it become a responsible and capable contributor to regional security. In early 2017, Cambodia suspended all military-to-military exercises with the United States. We, however, continue to cooperate in peacekeeping operations, humanitarian mine action, medical research, and U.S. Missing in Action personnel accounting.*

**Chairman's Comment:** It is very encouraging to see the POW/MIA accounting mission integrated into US policy priorities by release of this significant document during the very important Singapore Dialogue. Perhaps now we'll also see follow-through by senior officials throughout the interagency policy community to reinforce the importance of the accounting effort to the United States, the affected families, our nation's veterans and the American people. This specific report forms the basis for widespread implementation and will be extremely helpful so long as our expectations are reasonable and all aspects of official efforts are coordinated and fully integrated to maximize effectiveness and expand accounting results.

## **CONGRATULATIONS AND SINCERE APPRECIATION TO ALL WHO WORKED TO BRING ABOUT THIS HOPEFUL RENEWAL OF SERIOUS EFFORTS!**

**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: San Juan, Puerto Rico, November 2<sup>nd</sup>; Las Vegas, NV, January 25<sup>th</sup>; Portland, OR, February 22<sup>nd</sup>; Miami, FL, March 21<sup>st</sup>; Little Rock, AR, April 18<sup>th</sup>; Chicago, IL, May 16<sup>th</sup>; Washington, DC, \*June 24-27<sup>th</sup>; Washington, DC, \*\*August 6-7<sup>th</sup>; and Colorado Springs, CO, September 12<sup>th</sup>.

\*Held during the League's 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting

\*\*DPAA-hosted Korean War-Cold War Annual Government Briefings

**US-RUSSIA JOINT COMMISSION (USRJC) ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS:** The anticipated Plenary Session that originally was scheduled for later this year has been postponed at the request of the Russian Side, though Korean War and Cold War Working Group talks will be held later this year. The full Plenary Session is tentatively scheduled to take place in the Spring, in Moscow. By that time, it is anticipated that the Russian side of the USRJC will be fully appointed, authorized by President Putin and in place.

In the interim, the **Vietnam War Working Group** met during the League's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Meeting. The abbreviated session was co-chaired by **US Chairman and DPAA Director Kelly McKeague** and **Colonel Eduard Paderin, Chief Archival Service, Russian Ministry of Defense**. More recently, Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD) Senior Research Analyst supporting the Vietnam War Working Group Svetlana Shevchenko visited Ukraine to pursue relevant interviews with veterans who served during the Vietnam War as Air Defense advisors to and trainers of Vietnamese pilots. It was the Air Defense Museum that the USRJC visited during the Plenum in Moscow in 2017, and their archives related to communications emanating from their early Vietnam War service are of intense interest.

**CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY: VIETNAM WAR-RELATED PERSPECTIVE:** The numbers still missing and unaccounted-for in Vietnam War-related countries are spelled out on page one of this Newsletter. Beyond that, little specific information is available, other than that gleaned from a chart distributed at the DPAA-hosted Annual Government Briefings for the Korean War-Cold War families.

In relative terms, it is good news! The number of Vietnam War personnel assessed as "unrecoverable" has dropped from roughly 700-800 at the end of the war in 1975 to now under 500. This may be due to increased DPAA technical capacity to more rapidly screen and evaluate digitized e-Case Files. Reportedly, these contain initial case-related information and all subsequent information that relates or may relate to each missing individual, as required by law and successive Presidential Directives since they began post-war during the Reagan Administration.

As to specifics, useful information is seldom regularly or transparently distributed to the League, and presumably others, and is increasingly hard to discern, even if regularly checking the DPAA website. Statistical information that used to be readily available is now restricted, often under the ever-increasing requirement to ensure the safety and security of personnel deployed to undertake field investigations, research and recoveries.

As applied to advance release of field activities, the caution is understandable, but hard to defend after operations begin in Vietnam War-related counterpart countries. In Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, media attention is often drawn to POW/MIA accounting operations that proceed as separate, humanitarian endeavors, despite policy and political differences.

That is as it should be and as was established by President Reagan when he came into office in 1981, determined to pursue POW/MIA accounting as a matter of highest national priority. This pattern formed the basis on which the US and Vietnam moved forward in a spirit of humanitarian reciprocity that has served the mission well. The Trump Administration decided to utilize this same "separate, humanitarian" concept for the Singapore Summit in August, 2018.

**NOTICE: THOSE OF YOU ON SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, TWITTER, INSTAGRAM, SNAPCHAT, LINKEDIN) CAN HAVE MAJOR IMPACT ON ACHIEVING ACCOUNTING OBJECTIVES! CHECK LEAGUE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTINGS AND WEBSITE, THEN MESSAGE ALL MEDIA OUTLETS TO COVER POW/MIA ACCOUNTING EFFORTS AND RESULTS, RESPONSIBLY!**

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

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