



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

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## Newsletter: December 19, 2013

**AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR:** There are now **1,643** personnel listed by the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) as missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. Since the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in June, DPMO has posted the following identifications:

**Major Howard V. Andre, Jr., USAF, TN, KIA/BNR, LA, 7/8/69, RR 6/1/10**  
**Specialist 5<sup>th</sup> Class John L. Burgess, USA, MI, KIA/BNR, SVN, 6/30/70, RR 4/10/12**  
**Major Luis F. Guillerman, USAFR, PA, MIA, LA, 4/30/68, RR 2/14/06**  
**Hospital Corpsman 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Michael B. Judd, USN, OH, KIA/BNR, SVN, 6/30/67, RR 6/25/12**  
**Colonel Francis J. McGouldrick, Jr., USAF, CT, MIA, LA, 12/13/68, RR 5/22/12**  
**Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Pietsch, USAF, OH, MIA, LA, 4/30/68, RR 8/2/06**  
**Major James E. Sizemore, USAF, CA, KIA/BNR, LA, 7/8/69, RR 6/1/10**  
**Staff Sergeant Lawrence Woods, USA/SF, TN, KIA/BNR, SVN, 10/24/64, RR 4/13/10**

The number of Americans announced by DPMO as returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now 940. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and identified before the end of the war, bring the official total of US personnel accounted for from the Vietnam War to 1,003. Of the 1,643 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-308; Cambodia-53; PRC territorial waters-7; over-water losses on DPMO's list of No Further Pursuit cases number well over 600.

**LEAGUE CHAIRMAN MEETS WITH SECRETARY OF DEFENSE:** Chairman of the Board Ann Mills-Griffiths met on December 4<sup>th</sup> with Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel to discuss the way ahead for the entire accounting community. The Secretary pledged to carefully review the background memo and proposed reorganization that Mills-Griffiths provided, and the Secretary promised to respond to the League. The discussion was direct and intense, based on shared history on the issue, and demonstrated the Secretary's awareness of many challenges that require his attention.

**Chairman's Comment:** Recognizing the growing negative impact on Vietnam War accounting caused by the US bureaucracy's internal dysfunction and bias in pursuing accounting objectives, the League leadership determined the need to develop a cohesive structure to reorganize the entire effort. Critical hearings held on August 1<sup>st</sup> in the House and Senate reinforced the urgency of moving quickly due to investigations and assessments demanded by Congress. Hearings are the usual outcome of lawmakers' frustrations in seeking answers to questions. Sadly, some interest is based on unverified, misleading accusations from biased, relatively uninformed individuals. Whether or not helpful to the accounting mission, further hearings will be held after the first of the year.

Rather than awaiting results from ongoing internal investigations and assessments, and based on decades of experience dealing with successive organizations and administrations, suggestions were sought from former and current US officials known to be firmly committed to the mission. The task was made more critical by negative media focused on the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), the operational core of the mission that, with its predecessor organizations, has overcome countless obstacles, foreign and domestic, to achieve the success recorded above. Other than the League and officials in the Reagan Administration, few thought possible that accountability would be obtained on so many of our missing men, once again proving that success can be achieved with unified determination. We now await the Secretary's decision on reorganization.

**SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF CHAIRMAN PLEDGE SUPPORT:** On September 20<sup>th</sup>, in remarks at the Pentagon's ceremony commemorating National POW/MIA Recognition day, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, stated in part, "*Words and promises cannot make the lingering uncertainty, the headache, and the heartache go away. But I hope it provides comfort to know that as long as members of our Armed Forces remain unaccounted for, the Department of Defense will do everything – whatever we can to find them and bring them home....we will not rest until we fulfill this pledge – no matter how long it takes.....Today, as the POW/MIA flag is raised in communities across America, we pledge to live by its creed, 'You are not Forgotten.'*"

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Martin Dempsey, USA, speaking at the Pentagon, stated in part, “.....a special welcome to the families of those still missing in action and all who remain dedicated to bringing them home. It’s a great honor to share this day with you... I am also inspired by the efforts of the countless individuals .....who continue the search for those missing in action....Their efforts reach deep into the four corners of the globe, into foreign lands far from home..... Today, as we fly the familiar black and white flag across our country, it’s not only a symbol to remember the POW and MIA community, it’s a charge – to keep faith with every prisoner of war, those still missing in action, their families, and our military community ... to remain undaunted by time and undeterred by challenges... wherever our missing lie, wherever a prisoner waits, we will remain committed to freeing them.....to not rest.... to not call our mission complete ... not until our family is whole again.”

**US-RUSSIA JOINT COMMISSION ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS (USRJC) FINALLY POISED FOR ACTION:** On December 11<sup>th</sup>, US Co-Chairman of the USRJC called a meeting of US Commissioners and staff to update the Commissioners and discuss the way ahead. VFW Executive Director Bob Wallace, former USRJC Executive Secretary, now League Advisor on Russia and the former USSR, Norm Kass, and League Chairman of the Board Ann Mills-Griffiths were also invited to attend. This was the first USRJC meeting in over two years, and the first since US Co-Chairman General Robert “Doc” Foglesong, USAF (Ret), was formally re-named by the President and reinforced in his position by the Secretary of Defense, who also designated him a special employee of the Defense Department, primarily for logistical support.

The newly named, long overdue replacement for former Senate Democrat, now Secretary of State, John Kerry, is a very welcome addition; however, the Honorable Joe Manchin (D-WV) was unable to get away from Senate business, despite the USRJC session being held in the Russell Senate Office Building. Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) and Representative Tim Walz (D-NE) were present and contributed significantly; however the Honorable Sam Johnson (R-TX), a returned Vietnam War POW, was unable to make it due to hearing conflicts. The State Department’s Commissioner, Ambassador Paul W. Jones, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, was present and promises to be actively engaged. He has prior service at US Embassy Moscow, as well as in Southeast Asia, most recently serving as US Ambassador to Malaysia. The night before the meeting, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) Montague Winfield was formally named a DoD Commissioner, as was the Defense Intelligence Agency’s Mark Handy. Dr. Tim Nenner, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), will continue serving as a Commissioner, another positive.

Mr. Stephen Aldridge, National Security Staff, and Acting USRJC Executive Secretary Dr. James Connell, DPMO, put things together, with active support and assistance of congressional staff, additional DPMO staff and the Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD), now cut to only four positions in DPMO, led by Rich Lyda, previously Deputy Chief of JCSD-Moscow. The current Moscow Chief is Major Rob Patterson, USA, ably assisted by four Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs). The very talented linguist and capable Foreign Affairs Specialist, Svetlana Shevchenko, was illogically removed from her JCSD position by DASD Winfield and assigned to DPMO’s External Affairs Directorate, focusing on liaison with Congress, family members and veterans, a move reminiscent of the illogical and damaging transfer of Senior Vietnam War Analyst Gary Sydow that resulted in his resignation.

As to future USRJC direction, the immediate need is for Russian President Vladimir Putin to name a Russian Co-Chairman as counterpart to General Foglesong. Reportedly, President Putin intends to name someone soon and the delay is simply bureaucratic; however, that remains to be seen. The US and Russia have serious and substantive differences at present; however, this issue is one on which both countries should be able to work together toward achieving humanitarian objectives despite other political challenges. It is hoped that all senior US officials will note to their Russian counterparts that it is time to resume this humanitarian channel for cooperation.

**Chairman’s Comment:** We commend General Foglesong for his extraordinary patience over the last few years, during which little action occurred. The League is hopeful that, at long last, the USRJC will resume its important mission. Other USRJC Congressional members who have shown extraordinary patience are Representatives Sam Johnson (R-TX) and Tim Walz (D-MN) and Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA). The League appreciates the patience these Commissioners have shown and is grateful for their tenacity and determination to help and looks forward to Senator Manchin’s contributions.

If President Putin can quickly name a Russian Co-Chair, and with the significant addition of Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV), the USRJC may finally be sufficiently restored to contribute as intended. Sadly, that will be without skilled, principled former officials who spent years supporting and fighting for the USRJC’s mission, dedicated professionals such as Norm Kass, Roger Schumaker and Dave Martin – all forced out of their JCSD positions by a former DPMO Director.

**PRESIDENT OBAMA REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT:** At Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day, the President made remarks, after laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns, affirming his commitment by stating in part .....*“And that’s why, on this day, we remember our sacred obligation to those who laid down their lives so we could live ours: to finish the job these men and women started by keeping our promise to those who wear America’s uniform – to give our troops the resources they need; to keep faith with our veterans and their families, now and always; to never stop searching for those who have gone missing or who are held as prisoners of war.”*

**VIETNAM:** In a very important development, **Vietnamese President Sang** led a large delegation to Washington in mid-July, during which Presidents Sang and Obama met at the White House. Senior Vietnamese leaders met with counterpart officials at the Departments of Defense, State, Commerce and Veterans Affairs, and with Members of Congress. Secretary of State John Kerry hosted a luncheon at the State Department in honor of President Sang and his delegation, and the League Chairman of the Board attended that function, as well as a meeting of Vietnamese and US veterans. **Vice Foreign Minister Ha Kim Ngoc**, former Director of the Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP), recently led another Vietnamese delegation to DC for bilateral Policy Security Defense Dialogue (PSDD) talks, another step in the rapidly expanding bilateral relationship.

In another important development, **Vietnamese Deputy Minister of National Defense LTG Nguyen Chi Vinh** was again in Washington, DC, for October 29<sup>th</sup> bilateral Defense Policy Dialogue. In response to a League request, Minister Vinh and his delegation agreed to meet with **Chairman of the Board Ann Mills-Griffiths** on Sunday, October 27<sup>th</sup>. After thanking Minister Vinh for taking the time to meet and for significant improvements in cooperation, particularly since 2009, including increased provision of archival documents, access to previously restricted areas, and improved quality and professionalism of SRV participants working with US counterparts, Mills-Griffiths highlighted two areas on which support was needed: 1) agreement for the US to field additional teams in the central highlands where most of the remaining losses occurred, and 2) agreement for the two DIA Stony Beach POW/MIA investigation specialists to be permanently assigned at the US Embassy.

Minister Vinh stated 1) he had brought more documents sought by the US to turn over to DoD officials, 2) agreed to additional US personnel operating in the central provinces, and 3) that he saw no problem with permanent stationing of the two DIA specialists, providing their mission was clear, i.e. focused solely on POW/MIA-related information, indicating it should simply be handled as other assignments to the US Embassy. Minister Vinh asked for additional US emphasis on, and support for, addressing “war legacy issues,” including de-mining and humanitarian assistance for the disabled and their families, and for information that might help locate Vietnamese who died and whose remains are not yet recovered. He suggested that bilateral US-Vietnam cooperation on the humanitarian accounting mission should serve as an example to the world of what can be accomplished by working together on such matters. In a post-DoD meeting wrap-up, observers reported that Minister Vinh indicated there were no barriers to his government’s willingness to assist and again suggested publicizing the success of bilateral US-Vietnam cooperation on the humanitarian accounting mission.

**Chairman’s Comments:** There was noticeable warmth and responsiveness during discussions with the Deputy Defense Minister, a willingness to cooperate that has been evident to the League since 2009 and, along with the improved level of cooperation, there has also been a significant increase in the capability and capacity of working level officials, clearly having received authorization and encouragement from their leadership. These welcome developments, especially pledges of unfettered cooperation by a senior MND official like LTG Nguyen Chi Vinh, bode well for achieving greater success on Vietnam War accounting, so long as the US Congress provides funding to sustain scheduled operations and long-established commitments. Of course, Vietnam also needs to fulfill pledges and continue to work toward increasing results.

**DPMO Director Visits Southeast Asia:** In mid-May, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs Montague Winfield visited Vietnam (including a field recovery site), Laos and Cambodia for talks with senior officials in each country. Assuming that points raised in each country were those prepared in advance, DASD Winfield’s visit was useful in reinforcing the importance that US officials, in particular the POW/MIA accounting community and the American people, attach to achieving longstanding League accounting objectives. DASD Winfield stopped briefly at JPAC Headquarters in Hawaii en route home.

**US-Vietnam POW/MIA Consultations** took place September 26<sup>th</sup>, led by Major General Kelly McKeague, USAF, JPAC Commander, with DPMO, DIA’s Stony Beach and Embassy-Hanoi participation. A special commemorative dinner was held the night before to celebrate twenty-five years of steadily improving, regularized and expanding POW/MIA cooperation. Although invited to attend, the League’s Chairman of the Board regretted and sent a letter that was read aloud and, according to the JPAC Commander, well received.

**The Joint Field Activity (JFA) in Vietnam, scheduled for November, was initially postponed due to the lack of funding.** Once agreement was reached on a Continuing Resolution to temporarily fund the government, the Vietnam JFA was back on, though significantly reduced in scope. JPAC's Detachment Two did the best they could with the situation and just completed their final joint field operations in Vietnam for this year.

**CAMBODIA:** Consultations were held September 30<sup>th</sup> in Phnom Penh, also led by the JPAC Commander, with DPMO, DIA's Stony Beach and Embassy-Phnom Penh participation. Hopefully, the legal obstacles raised by the US bureaucracy will not recur to pose further difficulties for JPAC teams and counterpart Cambodian officials who, though puzzled, have been most patient. **The long-delayed JFA in Cambodia was scheduled to take place from October 23 – December 6<sup>th</sup> but was again postponed.** Field operations in Cambodia by two Recovery Teams (RTs) and one Underwater Recovery Team (URT) were postponed twice this year.

**LAOS:** On August 16<sup>th</sup>, US-Lao Bilateral POW/MIA Consultations, led by the JPAC Commander, with Embassy-Vientiane and DPMO representatives participating, were held in Vientiane, Laos. The talks were the most productive such discussions in quite some time. At long last, the Lao Government agreed to allow the Defense Intelligence Agency's (DIA's) Stony Beach POW/MIA specialist to pursue field investigations year-round, on an as-needed basis. Details are now being worked out between officials of the two governments. Lao Government responsiveness to specific appeals, including on Stony Beach, contracting the use of smaller helicopters and on-site base-camping, are in keeping with the improved political, economic and military relationship. **This latter agreement was to have been tested during the October 16 – November 19<sup>th</sup> JFA that was postponed due to the lack of funding.** The first JFA for FY2014 has been rescheduled for January 14<sup>th</sup> – February 17<sup>th</sup>, now that Congress has passed a budget, and providing PACOM doesn't again "borrow" JPAC funds. If current plans hold and funds are available, the smaller helicopters are scheduled to be used. **US Ambassador to Laos Dan Clune**, previously confirmed by the US Senate, was formally sworn in at the State Department on August 27<sup>th</sup>, a ceremony attended by League Chairman of the Board Ann Mills-Griffiths.

**Chairman's Comments:** The League deeply appreciates Laos' responsiveness to specific appeals for the favorable decisions on Stony Beach participation, though there are challenges yet to be overcome, helicopter contracting, and on-site base-camping, and we look forward to a renewed pace of operations, now that US funding is available and can be sustained. Ambassador Clune has hard shoes to fill replacing Ambassador Karen Stewart, who was serving her third assignment in Laos. Her knowledge of, and commitment to, the POW/MIA accounting mission was most helpful and will be sorely missed. Ambassador Clune is an experienced, impressive career Foreign Service Officer who has already demonstrated his commitment to serving our country, and I look forward to working closely with him.

**WORLDWIDE OPERATIONS:** JPAC regularly deploys teams worldwide and continues to expand into more countries, seeking to recover remains of US personnel who served and sacrificed for our country during WWII, the Korean War and the Cold War. JPAC's permanent team in South Korea meets regularly with South Korean counterparts and conducts operations in the South, though access is still denied into North Korea. Operations took place in Germany and Burma/Myanmar; cooperation in planning for the latter mission was reportedly outstanding, including good public reaction to a "hot line" set up for source reporting. JPAC teams also deployed to the Philippines, Solomon Islands, other European countries, Palau and Papua New Guinea (PNG). Phase Two Testing (P2T) in India, also on WWII sites, was scheduled May 8<sup>th</sup> – June 7<sup>th</sup>, but postponed by the Government of India. JPAC also hosted a team of Chinese archivists from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) on May 21-22<sup>nd</sup>, and a team will resume work in PNG February 2 – March 18<sup>th</sup>. The League is proud and grateful that our work since 1970 has helped bring about the enormous effort now ongoing and strongly supports such efforts, so long as the fullest possible accounting for Vietnam War missing personnel is not reduced or jeopardized.

**GAO REPORT: ACCOUNTING COMMUNITY DYSFUNCTIONAL:** The congressionally mandated study by the General Accountability Office (GAO) completed its year-long investigation into all aspects of the accounting community. Though not as in-depth and penetrating as some might have hoped, the outcome was objective, with some recommendations that warrant attention and corrective action. To complicate matters, an internal draft study by a temporary ORISE (Oak Ridge Institute for Science & Education) fellow, **Dr. Paul Cole**, hired by JPAC's Lab leadership, was earlier leaked to House Armed Services Committee (HASC) staff, then to AP journalist Bob Burns, timed to coincide with release of the GAO Report. Unfortunately, there was over-reaction at the highest levels in DoD, due to their distance from the issue and ignorance of its current status. The resulting clamor brought about hearings in the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) Subcommittee on Military Personnel and the Senate Homeland Security & Government Affairs Subcommittee on Financial Contracting and Oversight.

Senators Claire McCaskill (D-MO) and Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) heard testimony from DPMO Director/Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Montague Winfield, JPAC Commander Major General Kelly McKeague, USAF, and Chief of the Artifact Section, Life Science Equipment Laboratory (LSEL) John Goines. Both Senators made clear that they are focused sharply on the GAO recommendations, chief among them the recommendation for reorganization to ensure a single chain of command, streamlined and with one commander at the top. Also made clear was that if the accounting community could not agree on how to proceed, the Senate would provide its own solution to get the job done. There was no patience for the infighting and dysfunction that has plagued the POW/MIA accounting community since 1992 and prevented a unified effort to develop the capability and capacity to increase identifications to at least 200 per year, as called for in the FY2010 Defense Authorization Bill. (As requested by Chairman McCaskill, League Chairman Ann Mills-Griffiths provided a Statement for Record that is available on the League's website or by request to the League office.)

The HASC Subcommittee hearing called Dr. Cole and a GAO official to testify on the results of their respective assessments, though the Cole study, entitled "Information Value Chain," was much earlier denounced in its entirety by former JPAC Commander MG Stephen Tom, USA. Just after the leak to AP, the League posted the following statement on its website: *"Months ago, Chairman of the Board Ann Mills-Griffiths, and League Policy Advisor Richard Childress reviewed the report regarding JPAC that was authored by Paul Cole. The report and the assertions made in it reflect little more than a power-play within the organization. Recommendations made by Cole, if followed, would have set back efforts of the accounting community in a drastic way. The League continues to support the efforts to achieve the fullest possible accounting and the work being done by each of the agencies in support of that mission – including JPAC."*

**JPAC PUBLIC AFFAIRS PRACTICE:** Investigative NBC journalist Bill Dedman recently published a story on what he touts as JPAC's "fake" arrival ceremonies. JPAC's attempt to honor those recovered by re-enacting a formal arrival ceremony should be recognized as well-intentioned, rendering honor to Americans missing from our nation's past wars and conflicts, not as any malevolent attempt to deceive.

**Chairman's Comments:** JPAC's determination to keep the issue visible is based on several factors, including the need to sustain adequate funding and personnel levels, but practical considerations (such as cost) also impacted the decision process. In reality, JPAC was re-enacting what used to be real-time ceremonies, by transporting flag-draped transfer cases (caskets), returned at various times in preceding weeks/months (often in the middle of the night), then taken back to the tarmac, inviting the media and local veterans, and holding the "arrival ceremony" with all the tradition and formality earned by those being honored. The "sham" was that they had arrived earlier and the timing was staged. Was it smart? Not really! Was it well-intended? Yes, but it was also short-sighted and misled those attending. The current poisonous environment of unproven accusations, investigations, legal actions and EEO complaints further undercut JPAC, the command at the heart of the accounting process and the organization that the families strongly support.

It is sad, but this relative "hiccup" should not be allowed to destroy confidence in the quality of in-country investigations, interviews, surveys or analyses, nor the identification process, i.e. the end-result. Over-reactions by uninformed senior US officials and concerned citizens were unfortunate, but demonstrate why DoD needs to develop carefully thought out programs to educate currently serving military and civilian officials. Such programs should be available worldwide, throughout the US Government bureaucracy and the Services, to signal that America stands behind those who serve, including if captured or missing, with briefings on what is now taking place, and with which countries, to account for those who served our country and didn't return. As President Reagan said long ago, this truly IS a noble mission, and nations around the world are copying the US effort as their own citizens now demand.

**ANOTHER HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE PROPOSED:** Representative Michelle Bachman (R-MN), recently introduced **H. Resolution 231**, requiring "a select committee to be known as the Select Committee on POW and MIA Affairs" to be formed. This Select Committee would be charged to *"conduct a full investigation of all unresolved matters relating to any United States personnel unaccounted for from the Vietnam era, the Korean conflict, World War II, Cold War Missions, Persian Gulf War, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation Enduring Freedom, including MIAs and POWs missing and captured."* If formed, this select committee would be empowered to hold hearings, hire staff and conduct interviews for the remainder of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, i.e. until the next election is held for the House of Representatives in November 2014. The League continues to oppose formation of any select committee due to past experience and the likely detrimental impact and would consider supporting such a proposal only as a last resort. In reality, there are already too many ongoing investigations and another one would be absurd, so H. Resolution 231 is very unlikely to be brought to a vote and approved.

**LEAGUE 44<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING:** Although it has already been six months since the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting last June, some very significant events and actions occurred that League members need to know. Overall, the meeting was very positive for the issue, including special guest presentations by Deputy Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) David Shedd and Deputy PACOM Commander Lt Gen Thomas “Stash” Conant, USMC. Of special significance was the succinct, incisive critique of US efforts by League Senior Policy Advisor Richard T. Childress. The 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Dinner was headlined by Vietnam’s Ambassador to the United States H.E. Nguyen Quoc Cuong, who brought his government’s strong commitment of willingness to continue to increase cooperation with the US to achieve the League’s accounting objectives. This was the first time Vietnam’s senior representative in the United States had ever been invited to deliver remarks to the POW/MIA families, and the warmth of his reception was evident. The remarks of these four key participants are available on the League’s website or by request to the League office.

**Chairman’s Comments:** The decision to invite Vietnam’s Ambassador to the United States to be the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Dinner speaker was carefully considered, but all seemed to feel the time was right. It was! Not only had Vietnam taken steps to expand its cooperation but, since the 2009 League Delegation, had repeatedly offered to increase the pace and scope of field operations. Despite inadequate US responsiveness on POW/MIA matters, it was clear that Vietnam was reaching out and wanted to expand bilateral cooperation. The Ambassador’s remarks were sensitive, direct and compelling, and the audience was most attentive. The significant end-result was positive impact on the families present, as well as US officials, whether or not present to observe the remarks. The warm reception was a credit to the Ambassador, but even more to the families who symbolically recognized how far the mission has progressed since the difficult post-war years.

The critique of official US efforts provided by League Senior Advisor Richard T. Childress caused quite a stir. Unsurprisingly, his remarks were very direct, though spoken more in sorrow than in anger. Having served in the US Army for over 25 years, the last eight as Director of Asian Affairs at the National Security Council under President Reagan, it is disappointing to see the government he served not living up to expectations and standards long established. The distrust, dysfunction and internal destruction were all subjects he raised, and he did so with the humor and grace for which he is known, despite having to articulate such criticisms in public. For his steady vision, wisdom and support, the League is most grateful.

The panel discussions and briefings were again very high quality, informative and well-explained, though it was disappointing that no JPAC field operators were present to brief the families, for the first time ever! We were most fortunate to have a full complement of DIA’s Stony Beach specialists with us from each of the Vietnam War target countries. Theirs is a different mission, one of augmenting information-collection through interviews and archival research to integrate into the complex analytic process conducted by JPAC and DPMO analysts. The process is balanced to ensure the best possible outcome in terms of results, and all elements are needed to most effectively pursue shared accounting objectives. DIA’s Stony Beach Team is the ONLY element of the accounting process dedicated solely to the Vietnam War accounting mission as all are trained intelligence collectors and specialists trained in the language and culture of their target country.

**League Awards:** Annually, there is careful consideration about whether awards are warranted and, if so, for whom. League awards are not easily earned and never given just for showing up, rather for extraordinary efforts in support of the accounting mission. This year, there three, one individual and two organizations, recognized with framed **Certificates of Appreciation**, each selected unanimously by the League’s Board of Directors:

**Help Bring Them Home**, a small non-profit organization, recently formed to initiate a petition campaign in support of the mission. Laurie Clay and Brian Floyd succeeded and did so with little encouragement or support from their former parent organization.

**Frank Plescia, Disabled American Veterans**, an individual veteran who doesn’t take no for an answer when fighting for what he believes is right, in this case, full and strong support for the accounting mission.

**Robins AFB POW/MIA Memorial Organization**, a phenomenal group of active-duty and retired military that never stops responsibly promoting awareness of the issue, a tremendous service within Georgia and nationally.

The League’s highest award is not presented each year, in fact only seven times since originated in 2000. This year, in view of his many years of determination, sacrifice and dedication to the Vietnam War accounting mission, the **Distinguished Service Award** was presented, in absentia, to **Mr. Gary Sydow**.

**Annual Business Session:** The annual business session resulted in four specific policy-related resolutions, as follows:

**Resolution #1:** Resolved, that the Department of Defense policy that defines fullest possible accounting should reflect previously long-standing elements as follows: the return of a live POW, his identifiable remains, or convincing evidence why neither is possible. Unanimously passed.

**Resolution #2:** Resolved, that a full spectrum of investigations, research, analysis and archival initiatives should continue at a vigorous pace, along with the surge in excavations, to ensure that the list of valid excavation sites continues to expand. Unanimously passed.

**Resolution #3:** Resolved, that the League welcomes the new JPAC Commander to the mission, appreciates his attendance at our 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, and urges continued, close consultation with the League. Passed, with one abstention.

**Resolution #4:** Resolved, that DPMO should ensure that, under the new organizational structure, the critical functions of research and analysis for Southeast Asia are reinforced with additional resources and personnel. Unanimously passed.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION:** The 2013-2015 Board of Directors election results were announced by National Coordinator Lacy Rourke, as was the outcome of the internal Board election of officers from among those elected: Chairman Ann Mills-Griffiths, Vice Chairman Karoni Forrester, Secretary Susie Stephens-Harvey, Treasurer Mark Stephensen, and members Sue Scott, Pam Cain and Eldon Robinson, replacing David Gray, returned POW, who retired after serving 20 years as an elected member of the Board.

**45<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING:** The 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting will be held **June 12-15, 2014**, again at the Hilton Crystal City Hotel, now beautifully renovated, but still working with the League to ensure the most reasonable cost for the Washington, DC, area. Start making plans now to reserve the dates, with travel on Wednesday, June 11<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, June 16<sup>th</sup>. We are confident that COIN Assist Transportation will again be available for those authorized. That means two family members per missing man, as designated by the Primary-Next-of-Kin (PNOK). Registration forms and detailed information will be in the February/March League Newsletter and on line at the League's web site, [www.pow-miafamilies.org](http://www.pow-miafamilies.org) or on Facebook.

**LEAGUE DUES ARE NOW PAYABLE:** Unless you have paid in advance for 2014, or you are a monthly contributor, it is now time to send in your \$25.00 dues for Family and Associate Members. While this isn't much, it helps in many ways, including showing evidence of specific interest. If you prefer, you can pay dues on line at our web site, via PayPal, but please add \$2.00 to cover fees required per transaction. And while you're at it, send in a donation in honor of your missing loved one or friend, or in memory of someone no longer with us. A donation in honor or in memory of another person is always acknowledged properly by letter. Your donation is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law; the League is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit, federal tax ID number 23-7071242.

**Chairman's Assessment:** This year's annual meeting was held amid significant dissension and turmoil that has expanded over the years since DPMO was formed in 1992 as the DoD organization with an assigned role – policy control and oversight of the POW/MIA accounting mission. Instead, DPMO has routinely opted to become operational, to provide policy guidance and oversight for the entire accounting community.

Successive DPMO Directors never seemed to fully grasp the importance of policy development and integration, much less providing cogent guidance to the operational community, and thereby lead the entire Accounting Community in cohesive, unified pursuit of the objective – accounting for our missing men. I'm sure most would agree this doesn't sound too hard or too complicated, but apparently it is.

DPMO's inability to recognize and understand, much less accomplish, its mission was further complicated by increasing internal dysfunction since 2003, when JTF-FA and CIL were merged to form JPAC. At that time, when JPAC was formed with its new Commander, MG Montague Winfield, USA, the Lab leadership, previously operating under administrative and operational control of the CIL Deputy Commander, began to incrementally seek control over the entire accounting process.

Initial Lab intrusions into decision-making related to non-scientific matters went unopposed by MG Winfield and, little by little, each incoming JPAC Commander went along with the continued expansion of the Lab leadership's influence and control. It extended from case selection for excavation and investigation priority, to placing Lab personnel on investigation teams, replicating or trying to replicate functions of the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory (LSEL) and the list goes on, each time with the requirement for control, even participating in functions related to field operations to facilitate control of the reports that family members ultimately receive.

While my confidence in the identification process is thus far intact, the accounting process is much more involved and complex than just the final step, i.e. identification. Increasingly, it is the circumstantial evidence and other information, including in-depth analysis of investigation reports by DPMO and JPAC analysts, based on interviews conducted by JPAC and DIA/Stony Beach specialists, LSEL analysis of life support equipment and material evidence recovered in the field, mtDNA comparison of test-material against family member reference samples, all feeding into a circumstantial identification of remains. It is not often that the basis for an ID is forensic analysis of skeletal material which, in today's Vietnam War recoveries, is often too difficult or impossible to obtain. Bottom line is that credibility of the ID process is absolutely crucial, but in the absence of forensic skeletal analysis to produce a positive ID, **the reporting process must be one of checks and balances**, utilizing independently obtained evidence and information to compile an ID packet convincing to the families who must know all that is possible and, if no individual ID is achieved, that the US has done its best to account for their missing loved one.

I am gravely concerned about continuation of the accounting mission, more so than at any time since immediate post-war struggles, 1975 – 1980. Never have I seen such fear and suspicion on the part of DPMO and JPAC employees. Never before have I seen such distrust among US officials involved in the issue. I am not sanguine about the outcome of all the official investigations and assessments, including by the DoD Inspector General. There is no telling what their recommendations will be or whether they will be accepted by DoD leaders and/or Members of Congress. Rumors abound: DPMO is taking over JPAC; JPAC taking over DPMO; finally, all will be rolled into one mission-focused organization, to include LSEL, under a single commander.

The JPAC challenges have already been covered. As to DPMO, there is not a single person long involved and dedicated to the POW/MIA accounting mission who believes that DASD Winfield is focused on achieving Vietnam War accounting objectives. Not a single one! Of course, DPMO employees, of necessity, must also remain anonymous. Suffice to say that DASD Winfield managed to coerce the resignation of senior Vietnam War analyst/linguist/specialist Gary Sydow, replacing him with a newly assigned Air Force Colonel, a helicopter pilot with Afghanistan War credentials and likely an intelligent, qualified line officer. He then renamed the Research Analysis Directorate, naming it the Operations Directorate, slow-rolled support, until very recently, for General "Doc" Foglesong as US Chairman of the US-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs, replaced the long-time Director of Policy, herself a dedicated Vietnam War specialist, with a Navy Captain, again with no background or experience in the mission, but an intelligent capable line officer who will soon be moving on, and the list goes on, and on. DASD Winfield has taken, and continues to take, actions that reduce Vietnam War-related research and analysis expertise and capability.

Then you ask yourself, what IS General Winfield trying to accomplish? What IS his mission? JPAC may have its faults, and God knows they stem from the Lab's inherent quest for power and control, but at least JPAC shares our mission, even if diluted by the Lab's focus on WWII remains recoveries as the best means of reaching the congressionally mandated goal of 200 IDs per year by 2015. The DPMO Director has no credibility in suggesting that he and his current leadership in DPMO have a transparent plan for the way ahead that is supported, or even supportable. IF a serious plan exists, rather than the platitudes and hyperbole that consistently are published, it is unknown to the National League of POW/MIA Families.

Despite my less than positive assessment of where things stand at the end of 2013, I extend to each of you my very best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a New Year that is richly blessed with good health, great joy, and answers that bring an end to uncertainty.

Ann Mills-Griffiths  
Chairman of the Board