

PDAS Marciel's Address to
the National League of POW/MIA Families Annual Meeting
June 12, 2014: 9:00-12:00

- I wish to thank Ann Mills-Griffiths, the Board, and the members of the National League of POW/MIA Families for your many decades of service to our nation to ensure that our servicemen and civilians still missing and unaccounted-for are never forgotten.
- To honor them and fulfill our commitments to them and to you, the Department of State works closely with our colleagues in the Pentagon and around the world to assure our best collective effort to achieve the fullest possible accounting for those who served and sacrificed for our country.
- It's amazing to consider that Ann and I have worked together on this issue since my days as a humble Lao desk officer more than a quarter century ago.
- When I first began at the State Department, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Burma were entirely closed to us. In fact, on one of my first assignments in Hanoi as a Foreign Service officer, I worked out of the Joint Task Force offices, as we did not have an embassy open at the time.
- The work of the Joint Task Force and the need to account for our missing service members led to bilateral discussions and initial steps that served opened doors that helped to normalize diplomatic relations with Vietnam. These efforts also provided the foundation for our eventual ties and, later, full relations with Cambodia, and helped restore and re-invigorate our relations with Laos.
- So not only are we working towards a full accounting of all missing servicemen, we're also achieving levels of cooperation that have supplemental benefits for our diplomatic relationships.
- I'd like to tell you a bit more about how the State Department assists in this process. As noted, we work closely with our colleagues at the League, the Pentagon, JPAC, and DPMO to open doors and ensure access. It is our responsibility to understand the environment in which this work takes place and win support of foreign governments for accounting activities .

- Cooperation on POW/MIA accounting continues to be a key component of our bilateral relationships throughout Southeast Asia, both to fulfill an obligation to those who went into harm's way and as a means to build confidence for our broader cooperation.
- There remain challenges in the region as the environment is more complex today than at any other time I can recall from my career.
- China's rise is particularly notable as it continues to realize prosperity from reforms instituted in early 1990s. With this growth, China's interests have, at times, conflicted with those of its neighbors, as we've seen recently in the South China Sea.
- One of our oldest allies in the region, Thailand is in the midst of political turmoil, from which we hope they'll emerge in the near future.
- Bilateral relations with Laos have improved markedly in recent years, as has U.S. and Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) cooperation with Laotian authorities.
- We have been able to locate and account for many of our personnel missing in Laos and we continue to work on improving accountability, operational flexibility, and safety there.
- Continued cooperation on POW/MIA issues remains one of the highlights of our bilateral relationship with Cambodia.
- With the dedicated and consistent assistance of the Cambodian government, the United States continues to identify and repatriate the remains of U.S. personnel previously missing in Cambodia. Roughly one third of those missing have been identified.
- We are also pleased with the increased level of cooperation the Government of Vietnam has provided to our joint humanitarian effort, including improved access to Vietnam's archival records and the lifting of restrictions on areas previously off-limits to our teams.

- Indonesia is working closely with the United States to provide access to U.S. research and forensics experts to begin the process of locating, identifying, and ultimately recovering the remains of the U.S. servicemen unaccounted-for from World War II.
- Our deepening relationship with Burma has enabled us to restart the investigation process and resume the search for U.S. servicemen.
- Our engagement has resulted in access to areas that previously were off limits to us in the north, so that we can work on identifying those lost during flights over the Hump from World War II.
- North Korea remains a daunting to challenge and, to be frank, is the glaring negative on our accounting efforts.
- The POW/MIA accounting mission will continue to be a key element of our engagement with the nations of Southeast Asia. These missions demonstrate that we stand together with the families who have experienced the heartache of not knowing their loved one's fate.
- You may be assured of the Department of State's firm commitment to the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel.
- I know that each of our Ambassadors and our country teams that are serving in the countries of interest, are committed to supporting this message.
- I wish you a successful meeting and thank you for inviting me to join you here today.