



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

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**SPECIAL MINI-NEWSLETTER
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AMERICANS RECENTLY ACCOUNTED FOR: On March 7th, DPAA released an announcement that **Captain Daniel W. Thomas, USAFR**, listed as MIA on July 6, 1971 in South Vietnam, had been accounted for. Remains were recovered by a Vietnamese Unilateral Recovery Team (URT) in August, 2014, that were identified in August, 2015, as those of **Major Donald G. Carr, USA**, the other person in the OV-10A piloted by Capt Thomas. Subsequent recovery efforts by the URT and repatriation of additional remains and material in April, 2016, brought the more recent ID of Capt Thomas. DPAA also listed on its website, under Statistics, the accounting for **Colonel William E. Campbell, USAF**, listed as MIA in Laos January 29, 1969. His remains were recovered April 17, 2014, identified August 29, 2016, and placed on the DPAA website this past week. On February 22nd, DPAA announced the ID of **Capt Robert R. Barnett, USAF**, listed as KIA/BNR on April 7, 1966 while piloting a B-57B over Laos. His remains were recovered June 18, 2015 and identified August 16, 2016. Earlier this year, a Marine Corps Reserve officer, **1st Lt William C. Ryan**, was the first person since June of 2016 announced as accounted for from the Vietnam War. 1st Lt Ryan was listed KIA/BNR in Laos on May 11, 1969. His remains were recovered January 27, 2016, and identified December 7, 2016. The number still missing and otherwise unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War is now 1,614. Let's hope these four IDs are the first of many announced in 2017.

Of the 1,614 still missing (POW/MIA) and unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR), 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,260 (VN-463, VS-797); Laos-298; Cambodia-49; PRC territorial waters-7. These country-specific numbers can and do fluctuate when investigations result in changes to loss locations. Since formation in 1970, the League has sought the return of all POWs, the fullest possible accounting for those still missing, and repatriation of all recoverable remains.

The total accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now **969**. There follows a breakdown by country of the 969 Americans accounted for since the April 30, 1975 end of the Vietnam War: Vietnam – 658, Laos – 268, Cambodia – 40, and the PRC, 3. In addition, 63 US personnel were accounted for between 1973 and 1975, for a grand total of 1,032. Of the 63, 9 were from Laos, 53 from Vietnam, and 1 from Cambodia. These Americans were accounted for by unilateral US effort in areas where access was possible, not due to cooperation with the post-war governments of Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. Added together, a total of 277 have been recovered and identified from Laos, 711 from Vietnam, and 41 from Cambodia.

DPAA FIELD OPERATIONS: There are currently 48 personnel deployed to three countries conducting investigation and recovery operations. DPAA currently has one Recovery Team (RT) conducting excavation operations in central Vietnam. Also, an Investigation Team (IT) is performing investigation operations with the assistance of several US Vietnam Veterans. The Research Investigation Team (RIT) will resume investigations on March 22. Three Recovery Teams (RTs) and additional support personnel departed Hawaii on March 2nd for the third Joint Field Activity (JFA) of this fiscal year in Laos. The RTs will excavate several sites in an attempt to account for five US servicemen. Another RT left Hawaii on March 2nd for Cambodia after being postponed from January and cut from 60 days to only 30 days. This team will attempt to account for two US servicemen from an aircraft crash site in northern Cambodia. A former US Special Forces soldier who visited the site shortly after the incident is accompanying the teams to assist in the recovery.

VIETNAM WAR ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS REDUCED: DPAA drastically cut the Vietnam JFA that began this month. With initial plans to conduct multiple recovery operations and investigations, DPAA deployed only one Investigation Team (IT) and one Recovery Team (RT), as well as a team to handle a Field Forensic Review (FFR) and a Joint Forensic Review (JFR). Thankfully, Vietnam provided one Unilateral Recovery Team (URT) and one Research Investigation Team (RIT).

After being assured by Acting DPAA Director Fern Sumpter Winbush that funding was secured, though at a lower level, but adequate to sustain operations until April 28th, this news was a serious blow to confidence in DPAA's commitment to pursue Vietnam War accounting as a continuing priority. The earlier JFA in Laos was also postponed by three weeks due to an aircraft breakdown and delay in Guam; however, the trilateral investigation reportedly began as scheduled on January 9th and the three RTs and one IT began three weeks late. The lost time was due to US budget constraints, NOT any obstruction from the Lao, and could not be recovered.

Of Note: Symbolic of how far the accounting mission has come: During January 8-11th trilateral defense-related talks in Da Nang that included Laos, Vietnamese Defense Minister General Ngo Xuan Lich thanked the Cambodian Government for supporting Vietnam's "search for and repatriation of the remains of Vietnamese volunteer soldiers and experts who'd sacrificed their lives in Cambodia" and agreed with Cambodian Defense Minister Tea Banh to continue this cooperation.)

DPAA BUDGET REQUIREMENTS NOT MET: It now appears DPAA will NOT have the funding in Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) required to "increase the pace and scope of operations," as has repeatedly been requested by Vietnam. Despite continuing internal dysfunction, DPAA had been proceeding well since becoming fully operational in January of 2016. Now, due to inadequate funding, the damage is increasingly clear. The plus-up of \$20 million to reach the necessary FY17 budget total of \$132 million for planned operational requirements was not requested, reportedly due to it already being too late to contract and utilize those funds, if approved, for use in the 3rd and 4th quarters of FY17.

YOUR HELP IS URGENTLY NEEDED! Write your elected officials to object to the lack of funding for DPAA to meet FY17 operational requirements and ask for additional funding and exemption of DPAA funding from any/all reductions. Funding for veterans care is rightfully protected by exempting VA budgets from across-the-board reductions and/or sequestration. Our UNRETURNED Veterans, US POW/MIAs, deserve that protection and adequate funds to achieve the fullest possible accounting.

DPAA DIRECTOR SELECTION PROCESS: As of this date, a new DPAA Director has not been selected; however, an announcement seeking applicants for this crucial position has been distributed. The responsible official now "Acting in the capacity of" Undersecretary of Defense for Policy is Ms. Theresa Whelan, a career DoD official. It is doubtful that a new person to permanently fill the position will be confirmed and in place by the time necessary to make the selection; hopefully, new Secretary of Defense General James Mattis will ensure serious consideration of recommendations provided by the League, Special Operations Association (SOA), Special Forces Association (SFA) and others. Up to now, there has been no indication that important qualifications - experience, character, commitment and dedication to the mission - were given consideration, nor crucial factors such as having earned the trust and respect of affected families, veterans and foreign officials whose willingness to authorize necessary cooperation is critical to success.

ATTEND DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES: The remainder of the 2017 calendar for DPAA-hosted Family Updates is March 25th, New Orleans, LA; April 22nd, Kansas City, MO; May 20th, Syracuse, NY; during the League's 48th Annual Meeting June 21-25th; and September 9th, Detroit, MI. You may have noticed postings on the DPAA website indicating 1,276 family members had attended these updates in 2016. What is unstated, therefore unclear, is that only roughly 20% of that number are Vietnam War family members. **ATTEND DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES TO SHOW YOU ARE ENGAGED AND EXPECT PRIORITY EFFORTS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF ADDRESSING THE MOST RECENT WAR.**

48TH ANNUAL MEETING IS CRUCIAL: The League's **48th Annual Meeting, June 21-25th**, will again be held at the Hilton Crystal City Hotel, as it has been the last several years. This national convention will be the first opportunity to hear from senior Trump Administration officials. Since the Department of Defense (DoD) is responsible for the accounting mission and the Military Services play such key roles, **Secretary of Defense General James Mattis** and **General Joseph F. Dunford, USMC, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff**, are both invited to this year's meeting.

Also importantly, and for the first time, **Russian Co-Chairman of the US-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs General-Colonel Valeriy A. Vostrotni**, recently confirmed participation.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT ALL MEMBERS ATTEND! Funding, personnel and leadership changes and challenges within the POW/MIA community ensure information provided during this year's briefings and panels will be critical and will affect every family member.

There will be two full days of presentations by current and former US officials and noted private experts, as well as official briefings from analytic personnel, field operators, scientists and guest presenters on the complete range of issue-related policy and operational matters. The **48th Annual Dinner & Candlelight Ceremony** will be held the evening of June 22nd. This year's program includes two workshops on Friday, June 23rd, immediately following the **Service-hosted Luncheons**. That evening, there will be a special **Interfaith Service & Concert** in the **Hall of Heroes**, at the Pentagon, followed by a tour of the newly opened **Vietnam War Exhibit**. Saturday morning, June 24th, a three-hour **Q&A Session** will be held with working-level officials from DPAA. DIA's Stony Beach Team, AFDIL and the Service Casualty Offices, followed by the **League Business Session** and a closing **League-hosted Farewell Reception**.

MAKE TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS TO DEPART ON SUNDAY, JUNE 25TH, TO ENSURE PARTICIPATION AT THE Q & A SESSION AND THE BUSINESS MEETING IN PREPARATION FOR VOTING ON POLICY RESOLUTIONS GEARED TOWARD DEVELOPING LEAGUE POSITIONS ON THE WAY FORWARD TO ACHIEVE OUR SHARED ACCOUNTING MISSION. AND, PAY YOUR DUES TO BE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE!

Registration: To register for the 48th Annual Meeting, use the separate page of this mailing. PLEASE COMPLETE BOTH SIDES and return the form to the League office with your check covering the cost of meeting registration and dinner (if you choose to attend). Credentials for the meeting will be available for pick-up **Wednesday, June 21st from 3:00 – 5:00 PM and 7:00 – 9:00 PM** in the Virginia Ballroom Foyer, Plaza Level. **Orientation for Newcomers** will be held that same day from 4:00 – 5:00 PM Patrick Henry Board Room, First Floor. Cost to **register for the meeting only is \$50.00**. As noted above, registration payment can be sent by check to the League office or paid online at www.pow-miafamilies.org, thus saving check-writing, stamps, and time, if so inclined

Special Events: The **46th Annual Dinner & Candlelight Ceremony** will be held on Thursday, June 22nd. For those inviting dinner guests, the additional cost will be \$55 per person. On Friday, June 23rd, there will be a special **Interfaith Service & Concert** in the **Hall of Heroes**, followed by a tour of the newly opened **Vietnam War Exhibit** at the Pentagon. Bus transportation will be available starting at 6:00 PM and will return to the Hilton between 8:30 – 9:00 PM. The final event will be a **League-hosted Farewell Reception**, 6:30 – 8:00 PM, Saturday, June 24th.

Reservations: This year, the hotel rate for rooms at the **Hilton Crystal City Hotel** is again **\$152.00** (plus tax), per room, per night – single or double, with a charge of \$20 per night for each additional adult in the room. To make reservations, call 800-HILTONS (800-445-8667), noting affiliation with the League's 48th Annual Meeting. You can also go to www.hilton.com and use the code **MIA**. **Deadline to secure the special rate is May 18th**. The room-block is limited; early reservations are encouraged. If you have any problems with reservations, please contact the national office.

Transportation: As required by law, the Secretary of Defense will again authorize transportation for two family members of each Vietnam War missing and unaccounted-for serviceman or civilian to attend. Service Casualty Officers will be sending information to the **Primary Next of Kin (PNOK)** about the 48th Annual Meeting, as well as forms to complete for requesting transportation (COIN Assist), case file reviews, and attendance at Service-hosted Luncheons.

In authorizing COIN Assist, original Congressional intent was to ensure that each missing American would be represented at the League's annual meetings at which official government briefings will be given. HELP SPREAD THE WORD: **All family members** are eligible to attend the League's annual meeting, though some League events are open only to those who register for the full League 48th Annual Meeting. If you have questions, call the national office, 703-465-7432.

Boutique: This will again be held in the **Old Dominion Executive Board Room, Plaza Level**. In view of the tremendous success in years past, the League is again seeking suitable items for display or purchase. Please be selective, and either bring the item(s) with you and deliver them to League officials at Registration or send them in advance to the League office, including an itemized list noting each item's value. If you are interested in learning more about suggested donations or items that have sold well in the past, request a list from the national office, 703-465-7432.

Commemorative Program: Each year, the League publishes a special program that includes individual and organizational tributes honoring missing US personnel, organizational messages with best wishes to the families gathered for the meeting, and announcements related to POW/MIA awareness, etc. The green flyer enclosed with this newsletter provides the 2017 Program Rates. The **deadline for receipt of such material is close of business on June 1st**. Email your camera-ready artwork to Betty Bartels Murphy, MIA101925@aol.com, or Office Administrator Leslie Swindells, leslie.swindells@pow-miafamilies.org, and mail a copy with payment to the national office.

Meet Your Congressman: It is more important than ever that elected Representatives and Senators know what POW/MIA family members, veterans and concerned citizens expect from Congress regarding support for the accounting mission. We urge you to call on your elected members of Congress to urge full funding and support for necessary personnel to accomplish our longstanding, reasonable objective: The fullest possible accounting for America's unreturned Vietnam Veterans, our missing POW/MIAs. Plan ahead and **make your appointment now** to participate in Congressional visits this year. You will need to arrive in Washington, DC, one day early, on Tuesday, June 20th, to be available on the morning of Wednesday, June 21st, to meet with League Board Members to obtain points to raise and materials with current information for your visits on Capitol Hill.

LEAGUE ANNUAL DUES - 2017: Each year, the League asks that all League Members to renew their membership by sending the small donation of \$25. If yours were not current, you recently received a postcard reminder. This not only supports the League, but also ensures your information on file is current in preparation for the Board Election coming soon. Send your check to the League's national office or use the League website: www.pow-miafamilies.org.

LEAGUE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION: The Application to be a candidate for the seven-member Board of Directors 2017 – 2019 Election is enclosed. All League family members in good standing (dues paid current) are eligible to stand as candidates, and all are encouraged to give serious thought to placing your name in consideration. Serving on the Board is voluntary, and all are expected to attend meetings called by the Chair, most often in the Washington, DC, area, including sessions held during each annual meeting. Please give serious consideration to your ability and willingness to serve. **Deadline for post-marking envelopes or receipt of applications by email is April 12, 2017.** Please mail to League Office Administrator Leslie Swindells or send by email to leslie.swindells@pow-miafamilies.org.