



STATUS OF THE POW/MIA ISSUE: April 28, 2023

1,579 Americans are now listed by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) as missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War: Vietnam - 1,241; Laos--285; Cambodia-48; Peoples Republic of China territorial waters--7. On March 23rd, DPAA posted the accounting for two USAF officers, Col Ernest DeSoto and Capt Frederick Hall. Listed as MIA in Vietnam on April 12, 1969, DPAA released their identities on April 7th.

These numbers fluctuate due to investigations resulting in changed locations of loss. The League seeks the fullest possible accounting for those still missing and repatriation of all recoverable remains. Highest priority is accounting for Americans last known alive. US intelligence indicates some Americans known to be in captivity in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were not returned at the end of the war. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, these Americans could still be alive. The US Government should not rule out that possibility and try to account for them as a matter of highest national priority.

Vietnam established comprehensive wartime and post-war processes to collect and retain information and remains. Thus, Vietnam's unilateral efforts still offer significant potential, especially when reinforced by December 12, 2022, pledges by H.E. Minister of Public Security To Lam to League Chairman Ann Mills Griffiths to look into all categories raised as needing unilateral SRV efforts. Until recently, **Vietnam** had taken unilateral actions that are welcome and appreciated, plus announced that there are no obstacles to full cooperation. Until the pandemic halted in-country operations, Vietnam had increased unilateral provision of long-sought archival records with relevant, case-related information. This was due in part to improved working-level efforts, but also to increased bilateral relations across the board. The January 2018 League Delegation brought commitments that offered real promise for increased success. Vietnamese officials were participating with greater seriousness and professionalism, including Unilateral Recovery Teams, led by Vietnamese, some of whom are US-trained. Unfortunately, budget reductions interfered with planning for FY2023, and initially only two small Joint Field Activities were scheduled. Recently, with a budget plus-up, two additional JFAs were scheduled. The earlier formula subverted efforts to "increase the pace and scope of field operations," as requested by Vietnam since 2009. Due to increased military-to-military cooperation, USN assets participated in underwater operations, as did DPAA partner Scripps Institute of Oceanography.

After a rough period, joint field operations in **Laos** increased productivity. Though more difficult than elsewhere, Laos is showing greater flexibility, again authorizing an increased number of US personnel in-country simultaneously, allowing ground transportation to accessible sites, and contracting a private company to provide reliable, smaller-participation, resulting in trilateral US-LPDR-SRV operations. Importantly, the Lao Government authorized two additional Lao officials to work year-round with DIA's Stony Beach POW/MIA specialist, assigned full time in-country. Lao officials also approved field investigations outside the confines of DPAA-scheduled US field operations, but recently, the Stony Beach specialist has been increasingly restricted. A border dispute with **Cambodia** impeded operations there but, with no DPAA detachment in Cambodia, Stony Beach-led DPAA partner field operations for FY 2023 have resumed and are encouraging.

DIA's Stony Beach Team: One Cambodia specialist works full time at the US Embassy in Phnom Penh, and research and field operations in Cambodia have received excellent support from US Ambassador Patrick Murphy and Cambodian officials. US Ambassador to Laos, Dr. Peter Haymond, is knowledgeable and supports full use of DIA's Stony Beach specialist. For years, two Stony Beach personnel have rotated on temporary duty in and out of Vietnam, collecting information via archival research and interviewing witnesses. The League and DIA have long sought Vietnam's agreement to permanently station a Vietnam specialist in Hanoi, a proposal to which Vietnam finally agreed. Now, the Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP) has indicated that DIA's Stony Beach Vietnam specialists will be restricted to operating in the field only during scheduled DPAA Joint Field Activities, an unacceptable restriction. Three Stony Beach specialists will participate in larger-scale field operations upcoming, but a permanent Stony Beach presence in Hanoi is still unfulfilled, thanks to failure to solve details.

Comment: The greatest obstacles to increased Vietnam War accounting are 1) too few qualified intelligence analysts; and 2) no current National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) to determine valid accounting expectations. Over 90% of unaccounted-for Vietnam War Veterans were lost in Vietnam and areas of Laos and Cambodia where Vietnamese forces operated. Vietnam's unilateral provision of helpful archival records, Stony Beach field investigations and interviews, plus timely DPAA analysis and feedback are critical to increasing accounting results.

POW/MIA STATISTICS

Statistics provided by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) cannot be verified!

Live Sightings: 1,996 first-hand live sighting reports have been received since 1975, none recently. 1,941 (97.24%) are resolved: 1,340 (67.13%) equated to Americans previously accounted for (i.e. returned POWs, missionaries or civilians detained for violating SRV codes); 45 (2.25%) correlated to wartime sightings of military personnel or pre-1975 sightings of civilians still unaccounted-for; 556 (27.86%) were determined to be fabrications. The remaining 55 (2.76%) unresolved first-hand reports are the focus of continuing analytical and collection efforts: 48 (2.40%) concern Americans reported in a captive environment; 7 (0.35%) are non-captive sightings. The unresolved 55 first hand sightings are listed below:

<u>Pre-1976</u>	<u>1976-1985</u>	<u>1986-1995</u>	<u>1996-2005</u>	<u>2006-2015</u>	<u>Total</u>
36	3	1	14	1	55

Accountability: As of today, the Department of Defense lists **1,579** Americans as missing and unaccounted-for, over 90% of them in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos where Vietnamese forces operated during the war. A breakdown by year of recovery for Americans accounted for from Vietnam War-related losses after the official end of the war on April 30, 1975 follows:

1965-1974	War years	2
1974-1975	Winding down USG effort	28
1976-1978	US/SRV normalization negotiations	47
1979-1980	US/SRV talks break down	1
1981-1985	1st Reagan Administration	23
1985-1989	2nd Reagan Administration	169
1989-1993	George H.W. Bush Administration	129
1993-1997	1st Clinton Administration	327
1997-2001	2nd Clinton Administration	57
2001-2004	1st George W. Bush Administration	64
2004-2008	2nd George W. Bush Administration	62
2008-2012	1 st Obama Administration	51
2012-2016	2 nd Obama Administration	27
2016-2020	Trump Administration	21
2020-2024	Biden Administration	5

According to the DPAA Lab, unilateral SRV repatriations of remains with scientific evidence of storage have accounted for less than 200 of the 729 from Vietnam; two were mistakenly listed as KIA/BNR in Vietnam in 1968, but remains were actually recovered at that time. All but nine of the 288 Americans accounted for in Laos since the end of the war have been the result of joint recoveries; nine were turned over by indigenous personnel to DIA Stony Beach specialists. In addition, three persons identified were recovered in Vietnam before the end of the war. There follows a breakdown by country of the 1,062 Americans reportedly accounted for since the official April 30, 1975, end of the Vietnam War: Vietnam, 729; Laos, 288, Cambodia, 42 and the PRC, 3.

An additional 63 US personnel were accounted for between 1973 and 1975, for a grand total of 1,125. Of the 63, 9 were from Laos, 53 from Vietnam, and 1 from Cambodia. These Americans were accounted for by unilateral US efforts in areas where access was possible, not due to cooperation with the post-war governments of Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. Added to results from government-to-government humanitarian cooperation post-war, a total of 297 have been recovered and identified from Laos, 782 from Vietnam, 43 from Cambodia and 3 from the PRC.

**For the latest information, call the League Office (703) 465-7432 or
check the League website: www.pow-miafamilies.org
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