

## UPDATE: August 26, 2013

**AMERICANS ACCOUNTED-FOR:** There are still **1,645** personnel listed by the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) as missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. Over a month ago, DPMO posted the name of **Lt Colonel Robert Pietsch, USAF**, from OH, listed as missing in Laos on April 30, 1968, as now accounted-for, with remains recovered August 2, 2006 and identified May 7, 2013. **Major Luis F. Guillerman, USAFR**, from PA, listed as MIA on April 30, 1968, in Laos, with remains returned on February 14, 2006, was identified on May 13, 2013. The number of Americans announced by DPMO as returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is still 938. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and ID'd before the end of the war, bring the official total of remains repatriated from the Vietnam War to 1,001. Of the 1,645 unaccounted-for personnel, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,276 (VN-469, VS-807); Laos-309; Cambodia-53; PRC territorial waters-7; 600+ over-water losses are on DPMO's list as No Further Pursuit. **OPERATIONS IN LAOS:** US-LAO Bilateral POW/MIA Consultations, led by JPAC Commander Maj Gen Kelly McKeague, USAF, with Embassy-Vientiane and DPMO representatives participating, were held in Vientiane, Laos, on August 16<sup>th</sup>, the most productive such discussions in quite some time. At long last, the Lao Government agreed to allow the Defense Intelligence Agency's Stony Beach POW/MIA specialist to pursue field investigations year-round, on an as-needed basis, obviously accompanied by a Lao counterpart. This important step, in keeping with the improved political, economic and military relationship, was long overdue, but is most welcome, as was their earlier decision to renew a business license for Helicopters New Zealand, the company JPAC previously contracted to provide smaller, certified-safe helicopter support for remote site access. The Lao agreement-in-principle to permit base-camping at/near incident sites will be tested during the upcoming JFA that will consist of "drive-to" sites, another welcome development. If current plans hold and funds are available, use of the smaller helicopters is scheduled to occur after the first of the year. The League deeply appreciates Laos' responsiveness to specific appeals for the favorable decisions on Stony Beach participation, helicopter contracting and base-camping and looks forward to a renewed pace of operations. Ambassador-Designate Dan Clune, recently confirmed by the US Senate, will replace Ambassador Karen Stewart, who has departed for a new position. On her third assignment in Laos, Ambassador Stewart's knowledge of and commitment to the POW/MIA accounting will be sorely missed. The League Chairman of the Board met with Ambassador-Designate Clune and will be attending his formal swearing-in ceremony at the State Department on August 27<sup>th</sup>. **VIETNAM OPERATIONS:** Another month-long JPAC mission, involving six Recovery Teams (RTs) and two Investigation Teams (ITs), began August 5<sup>th</sup> and is scheduled to conclude on September 7<sup>th</sup>. US-Vietnam POW/MIA Consultations will again be held in late September, led by JPAC Commander Maj Gen McKeague. **CAMBODIA FIELD OPERATIONS POSTPONED:** Unfortunately, JPAC postponed field operations scheduled in Cambodia last February that were to include two RTs and one Underwater Recovery Team (URT). Despite serious efforts by Commander JPAC, recently imposed US legal requirements were not met in time to proceed. Legal hurdles, never before obstacles to cooperation, are requirements under new regulations, but now appear to have been resolved. Thus, the long-delayed JFA is scheduled for early September. US Ambassador to Cambodia William Todd visited JPAC Headquarters earlier this summer and held a "round-table" with senior JPAC staff. It is hoped the obstacles raised by the US bureaucracy will not

recur to pose further difficulties for the JPAC teams and counterpart Cambodian officials who, though puzzled, have been most patient. **COMMISSION CHARTER:** At long last, the White House approved the official charter of the **US-Russia Joint Commission (USRJC) on POW/MIAs. Nothing further has been heard since the public announcement at the VFW National Convention in Louisville, KY, in July.** Since Secretary of State John Kerry was confirmed months ago, his position on the USRJC as the Senate Democrat has been vacant, but the League is hopeful that Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) will name another Senate Democrat willing to be actively engaged. Then, perhaps, action will finally occur. The other USRJC Congressional members are Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), and Representatives Sam Johnson (R-TX) and Tim Walz (D-MN). We appreciate the patience that these Commissioners and US Chairman General Robert “Doc” Foglesong, USAF (Ret) have shown throughout the unwarranted delay, and we continue to hope for results, soon. **GAO FINDS ACCOUNTING COMMUNITY TO BE 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 wish, the outcome was objective, with some recommendations that warrant attention and corrective action. Unfortunately, there was over-reaction at the highest levels in DoD, including the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, USA, who cited the accusations as “discouraging” and moving rapidly toward “disgraceful.” 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 Service Committee (HASC) staff, then to AP journalist Bob Burns, timed to coincide with release of the GAO report. The resulting clamor brought about hearings in the 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. It was clear from both Senators that they are focused sharply on the GAO recommendations, chief among them the recommendation for a reorganization that will ensure a single chain of command, streamlined and with one commander at the top. It was also made clear 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 clearly no patience for the infighting and dysfunction that has long plagued the POW/MIA issue and prevented a unified effort to develop the capability and capacity to increase the level of remains identifications to at least 200 per year, as called for in the 2010 Defense Authorization Bill. The dissension stems in large part from DPMO’s inability or unwillingness since formed in 1992 to fulfill its assigned role - policy control and oversight of the POW/MIA accounting mission, opting instead to become operational. As requested by Chairman McCaskill, League Chairman Ann Mills-Griffiths provided a Statement for Record. 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 renounced in its entirety by former JPAC Commander MG Stephen Tom, USA. Just after the leak to AP, the League posted the following statement on our 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.”* **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. for two years until the next election is held for the House of Representatives. **Comment:** The League strongly opposes H. Res. 231, due to past experience about the detrimental impact that would likely occur. In a worst-case scenario, the League would consider supporting such a proposal, but only as a last resort. **OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS:** Also introduced by Rep. Michelle Bachman, H.R. 2091 would “*amend Title 36, United States Code, to require that the POW/MIA flag be displayed on all days that the flag of the United States is displayed on certain Federal property.*” Introduction of this measure is appreciated, but chances of passage are almost nil due to the scope and financial impact of adoption.