



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

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**AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR:** 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. He was listed KIA/BNR on May 11, 1969, after the Phantom F4B in which he was the Radar Intercept Officer was hit by enemy fire while on a bombing pass over Savannakhet Province, Laos. He failed to respond to the pilot's repeated calls for his ejection after the aircraft was hit by enemy fire; however, the pilot ejected before the aircraft crashed and others observed only one parachute leave the aircraft. This is the first Vietnam War ID announced since June of last year, so the number now still missing and otherwise unaccounted for from the Vietnam War is 1,617. Let's hope this ID is the first of many in 2017.

The total accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now 966. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and identified before the end of the war, bring the total of US personnel accounted for from the Vietnam War to 1,029. Of the 1,617 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-1,261 (VN-463, VS-798); Laos-300; 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 Vietnam War ID announcement came in the midst of six IDs from WWII and one from the Korean War. Of the six, five were recovered by History Flight, a non-government contractor with DPAA, and turned over to DPAA for ID in 2015, and one was the result of joint recovery. The Korean War ID came from disinterment of remains buried in a US cemetery. The League is happy for the families whose loved ones' remains were disinterred, individually identified and returned to them. Having said that, there was no uncertainty concerning their life or death, nor even about circumstances of loss.

**JOINT FIELD RECOVERY IN CAMBODIA CANCELLED/RESCHEDULED:** The New Year started off with news that the only DPAA-planned Joint Field Activity (JFA) scheduled for Cambodia in Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) had been cancelled due to lack of funding. Initially contacted by a League member notified of this cancellation, a recovery operation that included her missing brother's case, the League quickly followed up to learn that DPAA had decided to proceed, but postponed the start-date and reduced the scope of the planned recovery's in-country time from 60 to 30 days.

**VIETNAM JFA DRAMATICALLY CUT BACK:** The unwelcome Cambodia-related news led to a further discovery that, also due to a funding shortage, DPAA had drastically cut the Vietnam JFA due to begin in February. With initial plans to conduct multiple recovery operations and investigations, DPAA will now deploy 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). The Vietnamese will provide one Unilateral Recovery Team (URT) and one Research Investigation Team (RIT), and there will be a Trilateral Investigation. 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 information was a serious blow to confidence in DPAA's commitment to pursuing Vietnam War accounting as a continuing priority.

**LAOS OPERATIONS DELAYED:** The final negative since the New Year began is that the three RTs and 1 IT scheduled to conduct operations in Laos were held over in Guam due to problems

with the USAF transport plane. Instead of starting the JFA on January 9th, it began on January 20th, but will still end on February 16th. That means recoveries on only the three primary cases. DPAA BUDGET REQUIREMENTS STILL UNCERTAIN: At this point, DPAA will NOT have the funding in 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; however, the plus-up of \$20 million to reach the necessary FY17 budget total of \$132 million for planned operational requirements has not yet been approved. DPAA has not yet provided plans for the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2017, nor is it clear precisely how much additional funding is required. Clarification will be published as soon as available.

**YOUR HELP IS URGENTLY NEEDED! WRITE TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS TO REQUEST APPROVAL OF INCREASED FY17 DPAA FUNDING TO EXPAND FIELD OPERATIONS AS REQUESTED BY VIETNAM YEARS AGO. ALSO, REQUEST EXEMPTION OF DPAA FUNDING FROM ANY/ALL REDUCTIONS.** Funding for veterans care is rightfully protected by exempting Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) budgets from across-the-board reductions and/or sequestration. America’s UNRETURNED VETERANS, our missing and unaccounted for men and their families, deserve equal protection by Congress. That means fully funding efforts to achieve the fullest possible accounting.

**DPAA DIRECTOR SELECTION PROCESS:** As the New Year began, a qualified individual to serve as DPAA Director had not been selected. A hiring freeze was just announced for all except military and national defense matters. The impact is not yet clear, but will be provided as soon as available. Despite this, the prior selecting official is no longer a senior DoD official, and had notified the League and other organizations that the process would begin again, starting with another ad placement on USA-JOBS. That means Acting Director Fern Sumpter Winbush may be in charge for quite some time. Sadly, there also is no indication that serious qualifications - experience, character, commitment and dedication to the mission – were given high priority consideration, nor were 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 2017 calendar for Family Updates is January 28th, Phoenix, AZ; February 25th, Charleston, SC; March 25th, New Orleans, LA, April 22nd, Kansas City, MO, May 20th, Syracuse, NY, during the League’s 48th Annual Meeting June 21st-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 families. This is for two primary reasons: 1) There are “only” 1,617 US personnel still missing and otherwise unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War, but over 7,700 unaccounted-for from the Korean War and over 73,000 from WWII. That means the pool of family members is MUCH greater for Korean War and WWII NOK than those impacted by the Vietnam War. 2) The vast majority of active Vietnam War family members are those whose missing loved one was original status POW or MIA. KIA/BNR families were ineligible to be League members until those listed as POW and MIA were systematically presumed dead by the late 1970s, and the League bylaws were changed at that time. **ATTEND DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES TO SHOW VIETNAM WAR FAMILIES ARE ENGAGED AND EXPECT PRIORITY EFFORTS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF ADDRESSING THE MOST RECENT WAR FIRST AND THE URGENT NEED TO PURSUE ANSWERS ON LKA CASES.**

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW FOR JUNE 21-25, 2017:** The League’s 48th Annual Meeting will again be held at the Hilton Crystal City Hotel, as it has been the last several years. Anyone with suggestions for inclusion in the three-day program should email League Administrator Leslie Swindells, [Leslie.Swindells@pow-miafamilies.org](mailto:Leslie.Swindells@pow-miafamilies.org), or call the League office, 703-465-7432