



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

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AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR: The number of US personnel missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War is still **1,618**, unchanged since June 9th. The total accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is **965**. 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 **1,028**. Of the 1,618 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-301; 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.

DPAA DIRECTOR SELECTION PROCESS: As the New Year began, a qualified individual to serve in this crucial position has yet to be announced. The selecting official, Acting Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Brian McKeon, apparently doesn't share our sense of urgency to replace retired Army LTG Mike Linnington who abruptly resigned almost six months ago. Hopefully this means that Undersecretary McKeon is carefully considering recommendations provided by the League, Special Operations Association (SOA), Special Forces Association (SFA) and others asked to provide input. There is as yet no indication that serious qualifications, such as experience, character, commitment and dedication to the mission, are given high priority 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.

JOINT FIELD RECOVERY IN CAMBODIA CANCELLED: The New Year has started off with news that the only Joint Field Activity scheduled for Cambodia in Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) has been cancelled due to lack of funding. This tragic development occurred despite assurances that although under a Continuing Resolution (CR), there would be no negative impact and funds were adequate to carry operations through until April 28th. DPAA has not yet clarified the rationale that caused the reduction in Vietnam War accounting efforts but the explanation is anticipated and will be published as soon as it is available.

JOINT FIELD OPERATIONS: Joint Field Activities (JFAs) in Laos and Vietnam concluded in early December. In Laos, there were three Recovery Teams (RTs) that included on-site participation by the DIA Stony Beach Specialist from October 22 – December 8th. Five RTs and two Investigation Teams (ITs) conducted operations in three regions (north, central and south) of Vietnam from October 23 – December 9th. A Joint Forensic Review on December 7th resulted in repatriation of remains believed to be those of US personnel. There also was a unilateral underwater site survey, a small operation off the coast of Quang Tri, Vietnam, intended to identify aircraft wreckage that was discovered by local citizens. Before the end of FY 2016, September 30th, operations in Vietnam included a 45-day JFA during which approximately 100 US personnel, comprised of 5 RTs, 2 unilateral Vietnamese RTs, and 1 Research Investigation Team (RIT), worked simultaneously. In January, JFAs are scheduled to resume in Cambodia.

US Ambassadors to Vietnam and Laos, Ted Osius and Rena Bitter, respectively, accompanied by US Embassy staff members, visited field sites in both countries. Their active support provides positive reinforcement to the field teams and underscores the priority the United States attaches to the accounting mission.

During the fall, there were also about 100 DPAA personnel deployed on WWII accounting operations in Papua New Guinea, France, Germany, Kwajalein and Hawaii (all recently concluded), mostly recovery teams for roughly 6-7 weeks each. In addition, those engaged in public-private partnerships with DPAA – both paid and volunteer – are working around the world. History Flight is continuing recoveries of USMC personnel lost in Tarawa during WWII, and university-based archeologists are engaged in the Philippines and France.

TALKS HELD IN UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA: LTC Chris Forbes, USA, DPAA Director of Europe-Mediterranean Region, and Archival Research Specialist/Linguist Svetlana Shevchenko, just concluded a quick visit to the capitals of each country to pursue greater access to relevant archival documents and potential witnesses who served in the USSR forces during the early days of the Vietnam War. This is an encouraging initiative that the League fully supports.

DPAA OPERATIONAL BUDGET REQUIREMENTS STILL UNCERTAIN: It is still unclear whether DPAA will have the funds required to continue 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 this year; however, the plus-up of \$20 million to reach the necessary FY17 budget total of \$132 million for planned operational requirements must still be approved and, now, the JFA in Cambodia has been cancelled.

YOUR HELP IS URGENTLY NEEDED! WRITE TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS TO REQUEST APPROVAL OF INCREASED FY17 DPAA FUNDING FROM \$112 TO \$132 MILLION. ALSO, REQUEST EXEMPTION OF DPAA FUNDING FROM ANY REDUCTIONS. JUST AS VETERANS CARE FUNDING IS RIGHTFULLY PROTECTED BY EXEMPTING DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (DVA) BUDGETS FROM ACROSS-THE-BOARD AND/OR SEQUESTRATION REDUCTIONS, FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING FOR AMERICA'S UNRETURNED VETERANS, OUR MISSING MEN, DESERVES EQUAL PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW.

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 21-24th, 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” 1,618 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; obviously, the pool of family members is MUCH greater 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, as 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. That means Vietnam War POW/MIA family members who chose to be informed attended the League's annual meetings to receive current information on US Government efforts, or lack of same, to achieve the fullest possible accounting.

ATTEND DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES TO SHOW YOU ARE ENGAGED AND EXPECT PRIORITY EFFORTS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF ADDRESSING THE MOST RECENT WAR FIRST AND THE URGENT ISSUE OF PURSUING ANSWERS ON LAST KNOWN ALIVE 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, or call the League office, 703-465-7432.