



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

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**UPDATE: October 17, 2018**

**AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR:** On October 17<sup>th</sup>, DPAA posted the names of two Vietnam War personnel as now accounted for. **LT Richard C. Lannom, USNR**, TN, listed MIA on 3/1/68, NVN, was recovered 12/13/17 and ID'd on 9/25/18. **Mr. George L. Ritter, Air America**, PA, listed MIA on 12/27/71, Laos, was recovered 12/13/17 and ID'd on 9/25/18. Prior to that, DPAA announced on 8/24/18 that **CDR James B. Mills, USNR**, CA, was accounted for on 8/20/18. Listed as MIA on 9/21/66, NVN, his remains were recovered in June, 2018. Earlier in the month, DPAA announced that **Col Richard A. Kibbey, USAF**, NY, was accounted for on 8/6/18. Listed as MIA on 2/6/67, NVN, his remains were noted as returned on April 13, 2017. Prior to that, and dated 7/17/18, DPAA released the name of **Col Frederick M. Mellor, USAF**, listed as MIA, NVN, on 8/13/65. Prior to this posting, the most recent Vietnam War accounted-related release was on May 31<sup>st</sup> when DPAA posted the name of **LCDR Larry R. Kilpatrick, USN**, of GA, though he actually was accounted for on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Listed as MIA on 6/18/72 in North Vietnam, remains were recovered 12/14/2015. **The number still missing (POW/MIA) and otherwise unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR) from the Vietnam War is 1,592.** Of that number, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia or Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,247 (VN-452, VS-795); Laos-290; Cambodia-48; PRC territorial waters-7.

Since chartered in 1970, the League has sought the return of all POWs, the fullest possible accounting for the missing, and repatriation of all recoverable remains. The total accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is **991**. A breakdown by country of these 991 Americans is: Vietnam – 671, Laos – 275, Cambodia – 42, and the PRC – 3. In addition, 63 US personnel were accounted for between 1973 and 1975, the formal end of the Vietnam War, for a grand total of 1,054. These 63 Americans, accounted for by US-only efforts in accessible areas, were not due to cooperation by post-war governments in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. Combined, a total of 283 have been accounted for from Laos, 726 from Vietnam, 42 from Cambodia and 3 from the PRC.

**NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY:** Secretary of Defense General James N. Mattis, USMC (Ret), delivered inspirational, encouraging messages that signal solid US commitment to the accounting mission. In part he stated:

*“As we honored those who returned after enduring our enemy’s worst, we also remember those still missing in action, those still awaiting their return. And we thank their families for their unrelenting courage and faith, as we strive to bring them home – some of these families honor us by their presence here today.*”

*We are grateful to the men and women of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, Veteran Service Organizations and other advocates for their fierce resolve and tireless commitment to realize this mission. You give today’s warriors great courage and confidence as they launch into harm’s way knowing that no matter what destiny has in store for them, they will never be forgotten and that their fellow citizens will go to the ends of the earth to bring them home.”*

*As examples of family members present, the Secretary stated...“the family of Army Sergeant Edward Saunders, a soldier in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division who was killed following his capture in Korea by Chinese forces in 1951. Also the family of CDR James B. Mills, a radar intercept officer shot down over the Gulf of Tonkin in 1966. His sister, Ann Mills-Griffiths, has carried his memory in her advocacy for this community ever since. And we are so grateful that he’s home now.*”

*In August, your community and our entire military family received an infusion of hope in the repatriation and homecoming to Hawaii of 55 cases of remains from the Korean War. President Trump made this a priority in his meetings with Chairman Kim. Because of it, we can welcome home two long lost heroes, Army Private First Class William H. Jones of Nash County, North Carolina and Army Master Sergeant Charles H. McDaniel of Vernon, Indiana. Two beloved sons of America, finally home on our soil.*

*Our POWs, our missing in action, their families, they have met the most terrible challenges undeterred, with the highest fortitude, honoring a nation that loves them for what they call out in each of us. And for that, we owe an irredeemable debt of gratitude.”*

**Chairman's Comment:** The League especially welcomes the strong commitments made by Secretary of Defense Mattis, recognizing the importance to the Trump Administration's interagency community. We also recognize the importance of DoD's continued support for longstanding US policy to pursue accounting objectives on a separate humanitarian basis, despite political or policy issues that divide the US and counterpart countries in which cooperation is imperative. The League was very pleased to learn that National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremonies were held in Bangkok, Hanoi and Vientiane. This year's POW/MIA Recognition Day undoubtedly hit an all-time record for the number of events held throughout the country and on military installations and some US Embassies around the world. The significant expansion is due to many factors, including social media, but was heightened by the Singapore Summit in June and agreement reached between President Trump and Chairman Kim to repatriate remains of US personnel killed during the Korean War.

**BREAKTHROUGH ON AMERICANS UNACCOUNTED-FOR FROM KOREAN WAR:** In a formal statement signed by President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un, the United States and North Korea agreed to the recovery and repatriation of Americans still unaccounted-for from the Korean War. This stunning agreement, a potential win-win-win scenario, affords the affected families from the US, South Korea and Japan, in particular, an unprecedented opportunity to obtain long awaited answers.

As pledged, on July 27<sup>th</sup>, North Korea turned over 55 transfer cases, draped with the United Nations flag under which they served during the Korean War. Though the actual number of remains is as yet unknown, they are being carefully analyzed at DPAA's laboratories in an effort to establish individual identification. In fact, the first two identifications were announced: Army PFC William H. Jones and MSGT Charles H. McDaniel.

On September 27<sup>th</sup>, at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, a formal ceremony was conducted to repatriate remains of some 64 Republic of Korea soldiers who were killed during the Korean War and recovered by the US from 1996 – 2005 in the DPRK. Scientists from both South Korea and the US worked together to ensure that the remains to be repatriated were those serving the Republic of Korea during the Korean War.

**Chairman's Comment:** Having sought the fullest possible accounting for decades, the League and all POW/MIA families welcome this encouraging development. The League can take pride in having led the way and laid the groundwork for all that is evolving nearly 50 years since officially formed on May 28, 1970.

In the early 1980s, the Reagan Administration took the initiative to raise intelligence priorities and obtain the evidence that is now publicly known and forms the basis for accounting expectations, not only for the Vietnam War, but also the Korean War. As the demand for expanding the accounting mission raised to a higher level in the early 1990s and the Korean War/Cold War POW/MIA families began organizing, the League fully supported efforts to recover and account for US personnel who didn't return from wars and conflicts further past, so long as the priority on Vietnam War POW/MIAs was not adversely impacted.

DPAA Director Kelly McKeague has pledged to sustain operational priority on accounting for as many as possible of our 1,592 unreturned veterans from the Vietnam War. The reality is that uncertainty is greater for Vietnam War families, and there are more immediate family members impacted by US accounting efforts. Worldwide efforts are already ongoing, both operationally and from disinterring remains known to be American, buried as unknowns in US cemeteries around the world. Their loved ones are known to have died decades ago, but their reaction to honoring and remembering their long-lost relatives is evident. Congress just approved additional funding for DPAA to expand operations into North Korea, and negotiations to accomplish that objective are ongoing.

**US/VIETNAM COOPERATION:** DPAA and Defense Intelligence Agency/Stony Beach (DIA/SB) field operations resumed in mid-August and concluded recently with another repatriation ceremony in Da Nang. US-SRV Technical Talks took place September 10<sup>th</sup> in Hanoi, led by DPAA Deputy Director Rear Admiral Jon Kreitz. As anticipated, Vietnam was responsive to US requests, other than a couple that are under discussion, and the pace and scope of cooperation continues to expand.

**Chairman's Comment:** The League deeply appreciates efforts by the government and people of Vietnam to work constructively and effectively to achieve the fullest possible accounting. Vietnam's initially sporadic and frustrating cooperation has expanded steadily over the last 40 years and today can be described as forward leaning, proposing initiatives, and providing increased opportunities for success.

**US/LAO COOPERATION:** As field operations ended in Vietnam, DPAA and SB personnel began investigation and recovery operations on several cases of US personnel missing in Laos. These field recoveries also concluded with a repatriation ceremony conducted at the Luang Prabang Airport on August 14<sup>th</sup>. US-Lao consultations were held September 7<sup>th</sup> in Vientiane, led by RDML Kreitz. Significant agreement was reached to expand support for year-round DIA/SB investigations, and Joint Field Activities (JFAs) are scheduled to resume soon.

**Chairman's Comment:** The League looks forward to positive results from these efforts, recognizing and applauding several significant developments in POW/MIA cooperation that the Lao leadership has authorized in recent months. These include base-camping at remote locations, increasing the number of US participants on a case-by-case basis, and extensions of time on field recovery sites when justified. Despite often difficult conditions, including advance destruction of unexploded ordnance, conditions for humanitarian cooperation to account for US personnel continue to improve, for which all Americans are grateful. Hopefully, further **Department of Homeland Security (DHS) sanctions against Laos** for failing to accept Lao nationals who long ago immigrated to the US, were since convicted of criminal acts and are now scheduled for legal deportation back to Laos, will not negatively impact humanitarian POW/MIA cooperation.

**US/CAMBODIAN COOPERATION:** On October 12<sup>th</sup>, long-serving Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen announced in a letter to Washington State Senator Doug Erickson and Washington State Representative Vincent Buys that he has lifted the suspension on POW/MIA cooperation with DPAA, despite the ongoing US sanctions. Throughout the suspension, DIA's Stony Beach Cambodia specialist continued to work constructively on the mission.

**Chairman's Comment:** The League is thankful that Prime Minister Hun Sen has lifted the suspension, and we look forward to resuming our longstanding cooperation with him on this important humanitarian issue. We are also grateful to Senator Erickson and Representative Buys for their work in advocating for the resumption of POW/MIA operations in Cambodia. Coming just in time for the dry season, it means that DPAA will be able to proceed with their important field operations working alongside their thoughtful, capable Cambodian counterparts.

**HOUSE PASSES H. RES. 129:** On February 12, 2018 the House of Representatives passed this important resolution by a vote of 411 – 0, sending a unified message to the American people – including our Armed Forces serving today and our veterans, as well as foreign nations. Introduced by **Representative Sam Johnson (R-TX)**, former Vietnam War POW, on February 14, 2017, his strong message on the Floor of the House occurred almost precisely 45 years after he and his fellow POWs were released from many years of captivity. Passage of this resolution reflected true bipartisan, non-political support for the humanitarian accounting mission. It is the US Senate's turn to act.

The identical measure was simultaneously introduced in the US Senate by the late **Senator John S. McCain (R-AZ)** as **S. RES. 61**. Senate passage would further reinforce our country's support for achieving the fullest possible accounting for those who serve our nation – past, present and future. To date, there are only 13 co-sponsors in the Senate, the most recent being September 25<sup>th</sup>. Members of the US Senate should be ashamed.

## **CONTACT YOUR SENATORS TO URGE IMMEDIATE PASSAGE OF S. RES. 61**

On September 7, 2018, **Representatives Mike Bishop (R-MI), Timothy Walz (D-MN), and Sam Johnson (R-TX)** introduced **House Resolution 6734**, the **Full Military Honors Act of 2018** to allow enlisted Medal of Honor recipients and Prisoners of War (POW) who are eligible for burial at Arlington National Cemetery to receive a full military honors burial. Currently, full military honors are reserved for commissioned officers, warrant officers, and senior non-commissioned officers. There are now 69 House co-sponsors, the most recent being October 12, 2018.

## **CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES TO URGE PASSAGE OF H. RES. 6734.**

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