



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

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PRESIDENT TRUMP MEETS WITH VIETNAMESE COUNTERPART IN HANOI: Following the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) meeting in Da Nang, President Trump and his party went to Hanoi. While there, he and Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang held a Joint Press Conference during which President Trump referred to the POW/MIA accounting mission. President Trump made a clearer statement at the Hyatt Regency in Da Nang, while participating in a "Meet and Greet" with American veterans, stating, *"Our accountability efforts in Vietnam are very, very important to all of us. We will not rest until all of the 1,253 missing veterans are returned home. I want to thank the government of Vietnam for their assistance in our efforts."* (**Chairman's Comment:** Ignore the number used (1,253), provided in error by staff too new to the POW/MIA accounting mission to be fully aware of the fact that of the 1,602 still missing from the Vietnam War, 294 are unaccounted-for in Laos, 48 in Cambodia and 7 in the PRC, 90% of them lost in areas controlled by Vietnamese forces during the war.)

In addition, the White House issued a "Joint Statement between the United States of America and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam." In that official document, citing President Quang's invitation to President Trump for a "state visit to Hanoi," the following statement pertains:

"7. Both leaders reaffirmed the importance of continued cooperation to address the legacies of war. In this regard, President Quang expressed appreciation for the contribution of the United States to the successful dioxin remediation at Da Nang Airport, and welcomed the United States commitment to contribute to remediation at Bien Hoa Airport. He welcomed further United States assistance for persons with disabilities. President Trump expressed his appreciation for Vietnam's full and continued cooperation in accounting for United States personnel still missing from the war, and pledged to cooperate with Vietnam in its efforts to locate its missing soldiers. The two leaders committed to cooperation in the removal of remnants of explosives from the war."

Chairman's Comment: President Trump's trip to Vietnam brought the first inclusion of POW/MIA accounting on the agenda as a priority of the new Administration and the first known mention by our President concerning priority on accounting for our unreturned veterans, America's POW/MIAs. It is reassuring that Trump Administration officials are now willing to listen and learn about the mission which the League has officially pursued since May 28, 1970, and for many POW/MIA families, for over 50 years. Communication, transparency and integrity are key factors in restoring shattered credibility to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), but with support from the White House, Secretary of State Tillerson, Secretary of Defense Mattis, our supportive US Ambassadors to Vietnam (Kritenbrink), Laos (Bitter), Cambodia (Heidt), the Russian Federation (Huntsman) and the People's Republic of China (Branstad), plus the intelligence agencies and Members of Congress, there is reason for cautious optimism, but time is short. The opportunity resulting from many years of effort incrementally supporting increased military and political ties in response to ever-improving accounting cooperation is now reaching the point where achieving the fullest possible accounting is doable. There are many political factors that can cause implosions, but the opportunity is real!

AMERICANS RECENTLY ACCOUNTED FOR: The most recent change in DPAA's Statistics on September 11th, cited the accounting for **CAPT James. R. Bauder, USN**, of CA, listed as MIA 9/21/66 in North Vietnam, recovered 6/11/17, and ID'd 8-28-17. DPAA previously announced the accounting for **CMSgt Donald J. Hall, USAF**, listed as MIA 2/6/67 in North Vietnam, recovered 4/3/17, and ID'd 8/18/17. Previously, DPAA's 8/15/17 Statistics cited **Col Martin R. Scott, USAF**, of OK, listed as MIA 3/15/66 in North Vietnam, recovered 12/12/15 and ID'd 6/15/17, and **1st Lt David T. Dinan, III, USAF**, of NJ, listed as KIA/BNR in Laos on 3/17/69, recovered 4/8/14, and ID'd 8/7/17.

The number still missing and otherwise unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War is 1,602. Hopefully, there will yet be many accounted for during the rest of 2017. Of the **1,602 still missing (POW/MIA) and unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR)**, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia or Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,253 (VN-458, VS-795); Laos-294; Cambodia-48; PRC territorial waters-7. (Country-specific numbers 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 the missing, and repatriation of all recoverable remains. The total accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is **981**. A breakdown by country of the 981 Americans accounted for since the April 30, 1975 end of the Vietnam War: Vietnam – 665, Laos – 271, Cambodia – 42, and the PRC – 3. In addition, 63 Americans were accounted for between 1973 and 1975, for a grand total of 1,044. These 63 Americans, accounted for by US-only efforts in areas where access was possible, were not due to cooperation by post-war governments in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. Combined, a total of 279 have been accounted for from Laos, 720 from Vietnam, 42 from Cambodia and 3 from the PRC.

DPAA DIRECTOR SELECTED: The Department of Defense (DoD) announced September 5th the long-overdue, welcome selection of Major General **Kelly K. McKeague**, USAF (Ret), as **Director, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency** (DPAA). This critical position had been vacant for over a year. Mr. McKeague was the last Commander, Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, (JPAC) and the first DPAA Deputy Director, a brief assignment just prior to his military retirement. During his last year on active duty, he was honored with the League Award and received the Special Operations Association (SOA) President's Award. His selection as DPAA Director had been endorsed by the League, the SOA, the Special Forces Association (SFA), Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) and others.

Comment: DoD could not have selected a finer, more qualified man for the job. The League looks forward to again working closely with him, pleased that Secretary of Defense Mattis ensured serious consideration of the need to select a person with experience, character, commitment and dedication to the mission and who had already earned the trust and respect of affected families and veterans, as well as foreign officials whose willingness to authorize necessary cooperation is critical to success. We wish Kelly McKeague the very best as he assumes responsibility to truly lead DPAA in accomplishing accounting objectives we all share. He brings to DPAA the integrity and respect necessary to regain credibility and overcome three fractious years during which leadership failures destroyed agency morale and confidence of the families and our nation's veterans.

US-RUSSIA JOINT COMMISSION (USRJC) ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS MET FOR 21ST PLENUM: On November 8th, the 21st Plenum of the USRJC met in Moscow, led by US Co-Chairman General Robert "Doc" Foglesong, USAF (Ret), and Russian Co-Chairman General Colonel Valery Vostrotnin. This was DPAA Director McKeague's first participation as a US Commissioner. He was joined on this occasion by two other US Commissioners, Mr. Tim Shea, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and Dr. Tim Nenner, National Archives & Records Administration (NARA). Invited to participate as Observers were VFW Executive Director Bob Wallace and League Chairman of the Board Ann Mills-Griffiths. DPAA European-Mediterranean Regional Director Colonel Chris Forbes, USA, and members of his Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD) staff also attended and have put in long, arduous hours in preparation, as has LTC Maxim Alexeyev, Chief of the Russian Commission Support Office, Russian Embassy in Washington, DC. This was a follow-on to earlier plenary sessions and the Russian Commission's participation in the League's 48th Annual Meeting in June, as well as the August DPAA-hosted Korean War/Cold War Annual Government Briefings, both held in the DC area.

The 21st Plenum was well worth the time, effort and expense to attend. Most important was to show unified League (family member) and veteran (VFW) support for the USRJC's work and have the opportunity to make a few points about what kind of assistance and support we need from the Russian Government. A highlight for me was the time spent (several hours) on November 7th at the Air Defense Museum, outside central Moscow. A dedicated historian, seemingly excited to share his extensive knowledge and quality displays, briefed the group on every era. It was very informative and, hopefully, useful in the future as well.

The 21st Plenum was held November 8th at the Ministry of National Defense in their External Affairs facility. I was pleased and proud of the content and presentation by DPAA Director Kelly McKeague, US Chairman of the Vietnam War Working Group, assisted by Svetlana Shevchenko, senior DPAA staff. Counterpart officials seem dedicated to assisting, but it is clear top level Russian Government authorization is still required to gain access (directly or contracted) to necessary archival records. (More detailed information should be released by DPAA when the official "minutes" of the Plenary and all working groups (including WWII, Korean War and Cold War) will be completed and posted on DPAA's website. That evening, US Ambassador to the Russian Federation Jon Huntsman and Mrs. Huntsman hosted a reception for the Russian and US Commissioners, observers and staff, at their lovely residence, Spaso House.

On November 9th, US Chairman General Foglesong, Bob Wallace (VFW Executive Director), Russian Chairman General Vostrotin and Chairman and CEO of the National League of POW/MIA Families placed beautiful wreaths at the newly constructed national military cemetery, their version of Arlington National Cemetery. Later that day, the entire US Delegation visited Patriot Park, heard briefings and observed the largest collection of military hardware imaginable, including WWI and WWII equipment from the US, France and Great Britain. Several hours were spent walking through the displays and listening to presentations, then all enjoyed a delicious farewell dinner at the military dining hall.

On November 10th, Mr. Wallace and Ms. Mills-Griffiths met with Ambassador Huntsman and his senior staff, accompanied by DPAA's longtime Russia specialist Dr. Jim Connell and Ms. Shevchenko. It is clear that Ambassador Huntsman and Embassy Moscow are and will be strong, informed supporters and advocates.

LEAGUE DELEGATION TO MOSCOW POSTPONED: The League's Board of Directors had earlier approved a League Delegation to Moscow, dependent on suitable arrangements to justify such a trip. League Chairman Mills-Griffiths was to lead a three-member delegation including Vice Chairman Mark Stephensen (MIA/RR Son) and Treasurer Eldon Robinson (KIA/BNR Brother). Both gentlemen, paying their own travel and expenses, were planning to take their wives, also at their own expense. In reality, and due in no small measure to the existing political tensions between the US and Russia, there was insufficient time to adequately plan for and execute a League Delegation to coincide with the USRJC Plenum. As a result, the three participants agreed to postpone the official League Delegation to Moscow until satisfactory arrangements could be made for calls on senior officials of the Russian Federation.

SRV VICE MINISTER OF NAT'L DEFENSE MEETS WITH LEAGUE AND DOD OFFICIALS: On Sunday, October 15th, League Chairman Ann Mills-Griffiths met with Vietnam's Vice Minister of National Defense LTG Nguyen Chi Vinh for in-depth discussion prior to his participation in the October 17th session of the bilateral Defense Dialogue which we welcome. Mr. Joseph Felter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for South & Southeast Asia, led the US delegation for the talks that included Vietnam's Ambassador to Washington Pham Quang Vinh and other Vietnamese officials.

In the private meeting with Mills-Griffiths, Vice Minister Vinh was forthcoming, stating there were no longer any restrictions on the number of US personnel who could work in-country simultaneously, affirming flexibility in field operations and that there are no longer any areas restricted to US access to conduct them, including in previously sensitive areas along the northern coastal provinces. He noted the importance of continuing and increasing cooperation between the US and SRV navies and the SRV Coast Guard's increasing capability for mapping these sensitive, under-water coastline areas. He affirmed his country's appreciation for US humanitarian assistance to deal with dioxin remediation and unexploded ordnance.

Mills-Griffiths welcomed the positive news, indicating the specifics would be most welcome to all in the US, in particular the families, veterans, DPAA and the USG writ large. She also noted that his assurances were especially welcome in light of DPAA's hope to maximize the weather window to increase operations in the Central Provinces; thus, larger numbers of participants would be helpful.

Ms. Mills-Griffiths raised the importance of the SRV proposal at the August Technical Talks in Hawaii to form a new Last Known Alive (LKA) Investigation Team. She assured the Vice Minister that the concept for engaging one DIA Stony Beach specialist and one SRV investigator would be very effective and efficient, with positive results then pursued by joint or unilateral DPAA or SRV surveys and, hopefully, recoveries. She assured the Vice Minister that plans for a League Delegation in early January would definitely include calls on him and Minister of Public Security To Lam and, hopefully, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh, as well as others.

VIETNAMESE DELEGATION MEETS DPAA OFFICIALS IN HAWAII: As has long been the case, Vietnamese and US specialists met recently to discuss operational issues and exchange views. In earlier years, before joint field operations were the norm or unilateral Vietnamese field operations were even considered, such technical talks were quarterly, then semi-annually, now annually. A primary objective is to find ways to enhance the processes that have expanded dramatically over the years, thanks to improved cooperation by Vietnam.

Chairman’s Comment: Though a long time coming, and fraught with unpredictable US budget constraints, field operations in Vietnam have improved tremendously. Further improvements can and should occur to meet Vietnam’s 2009 proposal to the League to “increase the pace and scope of operations.” Funding for FY17 saw reductions in Vietnam War accounting efforts in both Vietnam and Cambodia, though operations in Laos were sustained. Now that Kelly McKeague is DPAA Director, the deep-seated, continuing internal dysfunction within DPAA should soon end, but some changes take time. Due to death of firsthand witnesses, destruction of remains due to acidic soil, and incident sites endangered by development projects, Vietnam War accounting efforts are on borrowed time. For FY18, the amount requested (\$132 million) is in the DoD budget and reportedly is sufficient to meet DPAA’s operational plans; however, the League cannot state with confidence that Vietnam War accounting continues to be the agency priority. Real transparency is required to rebuild trust and confidence. Now that DPAA’s new Director is in place, there is reason for confidence in that regard.

YOUR HELP IS URGENTLY NEEDED! Contact your elected officials to express appreciation for passing the DoD budget that includes \$132 million to fund DPAA’s FY2018 operational plans to handle worldwide accounting and recovery efforts. **MOST IMPORTANTLY**, urge an exemption of DPAA funding from any/all reductions. Funding for Veterans’ care has rightfully increased and is protected by exempting Department of Veterans Affairs budgets from across-the-board cuts and/or sequestration. America’s unreturned veterans, our POW/MIAs, deserve the same funding protection.

DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES: DPAA-hosted Family Member Updates (FMUs) are scheduled for 2018 and no longer restricted solely to family members. With advance arrangements, invited representatives of responsible VSOs are included, as are League and other NGO officials who are not family members. Also, the ** notation indicates that briefings are in conjunction with the League’s upcoming 49th Annual Meeting, June 21-24, 2018, obviously NOT hosted by DPAA.

2018 Family Update Schedule*	
Date	Location
January 20	San Diego, CA
February 24	Jacksonville, FL
March 24	El Paso, TX
April 21	Rapid City, SD
May 19	Louisville, KY
June 21-24	Washington, D.C.**

