



## NATIONAL LEAGUE OF POW/MIA FAMILIES

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### UPDATE: November 5, 2019

**AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR:** On 7/26/19, DPAA posted the identification of **Major Neal C. Ward, USAF**. Listed as MIA in Laos on 6/13/69, his remains were recovered on 12/13/17, and identified on 7/19/19. On 6/11/19, DPAA announced that **Air Force Colonel Roy A. Knight, Jr**, listed as MIA on 5/19/67 over Laos, is now accounted for. His remains were recovered on 2/28/19, and ID'd on 6/4/19. Prior to that, DPAA announced on 2/25/19 that **Navy Reserve Journalist 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Raul A. Guerra, USN**, listed as MIA on 10/8/67, was accounted for. His remains were recovered on 8/15/05 and identified on 2/20/19. On January 15, DPAA posted the accounting for **Roy F. Townley** and **Edward J. Weissenback, Air America**, listed as missing on 12/27/71, in Laos. The DPAA release on accounting for **George L Ritter, Air America** from the same incident, indicated his recovery on 12/13/17, and ID on 9/25/18. Both Townley and Weissenback were recovered mid-2018, and their families were notified just before Christmas, 2018.

**The number still missing (POW/MIA) and otherwise unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR) from the Vietnam War is still 1,587.** Of that number, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia or Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,246 (VN-443, VS-803); Laos-286; 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 **996**. A breakdown by country of these 996 Americans is: Vietnam – 672, Laos – 279, 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 1,059. These 63 Americans, were accounted for by US-only efforts in accessible areas, not due to cooperation by post-war governments in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. A total of 287 have been accounted for from Laos, 727 from Vietnam, 42 from Cambodia and 3 from the PRC. **NO IDs have been announced since July 29<sup>th</sup>.**

**LEAGUE'S 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL MEETING:** Although a full report is now out, it is noted that this year's meeting was the largest, most significant in years. That's not surprising; it was a year-long effort to plan and schedule speakers to maximize effectiveness. The following key factors applied:

- 1) Members who had not attended in years didn't want to miss the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemoration;
- 2) A great deal of emphasis was placed on a Retrospective that featured key participants who outlined the very difficult challenges that were met throughout the 1980s, building on President Reagan's commitment and priority;
- 3) There was high level, very interesting participation by Army Chief of Staff General Mark Milley, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Lieutenant General Robert Ashley, USA, and Ambassadors Ha Kim Ngoc of Vietnam, Khamphan Anlavan of Laos and Chum Sounry of Cambodia;
- 4) DPAA Director Kelly McKeague again pledged five years of operational priority on Vietnam War accounting. DPAA Leaders and specialists, as well as DIA's Stony Beach Team of POW/MIA investigators, briefed on current operations and approach.
- 5) DPAA provided Facebook live streaming of all sessions.

Despite many challenges, including continuing dysfunction within DPAA, there is reason for measured optimism. With sustained support from the families and our nation's veterans, the League is determined to press for priority and answers on Vietnam War accounting, as pledged by DPAA Director McKeague. The League also supports investigation and recovery of unaccounted-for WWII, Korean War and Cold War personnel over disinterment and ID of remains of the known dead, so long as Vietnam War accounting efforts remain DPAA's operational priority.

**VIETNAM WAR ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS:** Outgoing **DPAA Director of Operations RDML Jon C. Kreitz, USN**, recently led annual POW/MIA Technical Talks in Hanoi and Phnom Penh and consultations with the Lao in Hawaii. In all instances, the talks were described as positive, helpful and productive; DIA Stony Beach intelligence specialists were included in all sessions. RDML Kreitz retired on Friday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, and has been replaced by **RDML Darius Binaji, USN**, working out of DPAA-Hawaii headquarters. Best wishes are extended to RDML Kreitz for the next step in his future, with gratitude for his service to the POW/MIA accounting mission. We also wish RDML Binaji every success as he assumes the significant responsibilities inherent with his new position, as he learns about the mission.

Due to DPAA's near-total lack of transparency about ongoing Vietnam War-related field investigations and recoveries, there is very little to report, other than DPAA photos on the DoD news distribution system taken during field operations in Vietnam in late October and an August recovery effort in Houaphan Province, Laos. Clearly, there have been several field operations in Vietnam and Laos this past Fiscal Year that also included DIA's Stony Beach specialists, the ONLY team of DoD officials devoted solely to accounting for missing personnel from the Vietnam War.

**TALKS STILL ON HOLD REGARDING KOREAN WAR REMAINS RECOVERIES.** Though there still is no clarity on when/whether agreement to restore remains recovery operations in North Korea will occur, there is ongoing speculation. As both leaders agree that accounting efforts should be pursued on a separate humanitarian basis, regardless of political and/or policy differences, the subject is reportedly high on the agenda. In this instance, no news is NOT good news. It is hoped that working level talks to determine specific requirements for in-country cooperation can resume soon and the work proceed before the frozen ground precludes such field recoveries.

**IDENTIFICATION STATISTICS:** It should also be noted that nearly 40 IDs have been made on remains that came out of North Korea in the 55 flag-draped transfer cases. In addition, DPAA leaders stated publicly that the DNA on as many as 150 US personnel, plus approximately 100 indigenous personnel, may be represented by remains that were turned over. DNA reference samples are available on 92% of the unaccounted-for from the Korean War. As a result, the count of IDs of Korean War KIA/BNRs – disinterred from “the Punchbowl” in HI, from unilateral DPRK turnover of the K-208 (representing as many as 500-600 individuals) and the K-55, the prospect is high in the near term for many more Korean War personnel being ID'd and returned to their families for honorable burial. Korean War IDs for Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) reached 73; the WWII total is even higher, standing at 140 for FY19. **Only 5 Vietnam War personnel were accounted for during that same one-year period**, and a total of 218 IDs were announced by DPAA for FY19, a record number for the DPAA Lab.

**LEAGUE AND DPAA PARTICIPATE IN SOAR XLIII:** League Chairman of the Board/CEO Ann Mills-Griffiths, DPAA's Deputy Director for Outreach & Communications Johnie Webb, and DPAA's Policy/Plans Directorate Senior Policy Advisor on Vietnam War Jack Kull spoke at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Special Operations Association Reunion (SOAR XLIII), October 23<sup>rd</sup> in Las Vegas, NV. Also attending were DPAA Senior Vietnam War Intelligence Analyst Matt Kristoff and Family & Veteran Liaison Steve Thompson, both key players in working with members of SOA and SFA (Special Forces Association) who provide useful information related to US missing and unaccounted-for during the Vietnam War. Vice President of SOA and Chairman of the Joint SOA/SFA POW/MIA Committee LTC Mike Taylor, USA (Ret), planned and chaired the well-attended POW/MIA Forum. Both SOA and SFA focus priority on accounting for the 139 Military Assistance Command Vietnam-Special Operations Group (MACV-SOG) personnel who flew in support of or conducted highly dangerous special operations in Laos and Cambodia. During the Vietnam War, these volunteers suffered a much higher percentage of losses than others.

**NOTICE: THOSE OF YOU ON SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, TWITTER, INSTAGRAM, SNAPCHAT, LINKEDIN) CAN HAVE MAJOR IMPACT ON ACHIEVING ACCOUNTING OBJECTIVES! CHECK LEAGUE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTINGS AND WEBSITE, THEN MESSAGE ALL MEDIA OUTLETS TO COVER POW/MIA ACCOUNTING EFFORTS AND RESULTS, RESPONSIBLY!**

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