



NATIONAL LEAGUE OF POW/MIA FAMILIES

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www.pow-miafamilies.org

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THE LEAGUE OFFICE IS TELEWORKING UNTIL RESTRICTIONS ARE EASED.

AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR: The number missing (POW/MIA) and otherwise unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR) from the Vietnam War is still **1,585**. A September 24, 2020, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) release stated that **Air Force Maj. Paul A. Avolese** was a radar navigator assigned to the 4133rd Bombardment Wing. That day, he was part of the crew of a B-52D Stratofortress bomber conducting a bombing mission from Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, to a target in Vietnam. During a maneuver over the South China Sea, Avolese's bomber collided with another B-52, causing both aircraft to fall into the sea. Four of the crew members from his aircraft were rescued, but Avolese was never recovered. He was presumed dead on July 24, 1967. There was no mention when remains were recovered or by whom, but interment services are pending. In a July 14, 2020 release, DPAA announced that **1st Lt. Alva R. Krogman, USAF, KIA/BNR**, was accounted for on July 7, 2020. Lt. Krogman was flying an O1-F Birdog aircraft on a visual reconnaissance mission over Savannakhet Province, Laos, on January 17, 1967, when his aircraft was hit and went down. Search and Rescue (SAR) operations were initiated immediately, but were shut down within a few hours after one of the SAR aircraft was also shot down. In February, 2020, a US team of unexploded ordnance removal specialists initially recovered remains while clearing the site in preparation for an April joint recovery mission. **This was only the second identification of a previously unaccounted-for Vietnam War Veteran to be announced since July 26, 2019.**

Of the 1,585, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia or Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,245 (VN-442, VS-803); Laos-285; 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 now **998**. A breakdown by country of these 998 Americans is: Vietnam – 673, Laos – 280, 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 1,061. These 63 Americans, were accounted for by US-only efforts in accessible areas, not with cooperation of post-war governments in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. A total of 288 have been accounted for from Laos, 728–Vietnam, 42–Cambodia, and 3 – PRC.

ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS/EVENTS CANCELED; UNILATERAL SRV RECOVERIES CONTINUED:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Defense (DoD) banned all DoD travel, initially until May 15, 2020, then extended until June 30th and travel is still limited, but DoD has begun the process of incrementally lifting restrictions. The DPAA pulled teams from the field, returned them to the US and cancelled all field operations until further notice; however, Vietnam agreed to conduct unilateral recoveries in several provinces. Reportedly, there have been three such periods, with multiple recovery teams, and one reported repatriation ceremony, plus another period of unilateral SRV recoveries involving three teams was fielded more recently in northern provinces. Further details will be provided when available.

IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY ALSO LOST DUE TO COVID-19 CORONA VIRUS:

In addition to field operations in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam being put on hold, the **US-ASEAN Special Summit**, scheduled to be held in Las Vegas on March 14, 2020, was cancelled. League Chairman/CEO Ann Mills-Griffiths was scheduled to meet with **Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen** on March 13th, and was awaiting confirmation from the Lao and Vietnamese Prime Ministers, when the Summit cancellation was announced. More recently, it was learned that the Prime Ministers of Vietnam and Laos also planned to meet with the League Chairman/CEO.

DPAA & DIA SIGN FORMAL MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU): On September 17, 2020, DPAA Director Kelly McKeague and Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Director LTG Bob Ashley, USA, signed an MOU to formally solidify integration of DIA's Stony Beach Team of specialists into Vietnam War accounting operations. Formed in 1986, before the accounting mission broadened to include efforts to recover and identify personnel unaccounted-for from the Korean War, Cold War and World War II, Stony Beach's sole mission was and is Vietnam War accounting, with focused priority on Last Known Alive (LKA) cases of US personnel initially listed as POW/MIA. Unfortunately, fully integrating this small, highly trained team of intelligence specialists ran into obstacles, initially convincing foreign governments that their mission was singularly focused on the humanitarian mission of obtaining answers for the families about our Vietnam War missing. More recently, as the accounting effort expanded, obstacles grew from unwarranted bureaucratic concerns over control, and a separate chain of command and reporting requirements, rather than finding a viable means to fully utilize them for the value they add.

Chairman's Comment: This MOU was much too long in reaching completion. The League deeply appreciates the efforts made by LTG Ashley and his DIA staff, as well as DPAA's Policy & Plans Director Brian Pearl and Deputy Director Jennifer Nasarenko, with the full support of DPAA Director McKeague. Now, for greater implementation without unnecessary delay, and that may take additional persuasion of Vietnam's leadership. Stony Beach has long been the established US lead on accounting efforts in **Cambodia**, due to the transfer to Bangkok years ago of the Operational Detachment then in Phnom Penh. Also, Stony Beach has long had a permanent specialist in **Laos**. At DPAA's request during earlier bilateral talks, the Lao agreed to designate two Lao counterparts to work directly with the Stony Beach Lao specialist, and joint Stony Beach/Lao investigations were conducted during the last week of September, 2020, as travel restrictions eased. Stony Beach specialists have rotated in and out of **Vietnam** for far too long, and efforts are underway to confirm at least one permanent Stony Beach position permanently authorized and assigned to US Embassy-Hanoi. Stony Beach personnel cooperate closely with DPAA.

KOREAN WAR ACCOUNTING CLARIFICATIONS: According to DPAA, of the 588 total Korean War IDs (FY1982-2020), 344 (59%) came from the unilateral turnover by the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK) known as the K208 and Joint Recovery Operation (JRO) accessions: 152 from the K208, 153 from JROs, and 39 K208/JRO commingled. Based on mtDNA sequence data, 700 individuals were initially represented in K208 and JRO remains recovered; of those, 500 were deemed US and 200 those of foreign nationals.

Of the K-55 turnover of remains that resulted from the Trump/Kim Jong Un Singapore Summit in August, 2018, 69 have thus far been identified as US personnel. There were roughly 250 total individual remains in the K55 turnover, approximately 170 of them believed to be US personnel, and 80 the remains of foreign nationals. There were many US-allied countries involved in the Korean War.

POW/MIA FLAG TO BE DISPLAYED YEAR-ROUND: On November 7, 2019, President Trump signed into law the "National POW/MIA Flag Act." The League-originated POW/MIA flag is now to be visibly displayed whenever the US flag is posted on Federal properties, including the White House, the US Capitol and all Senate and House Buildings, World War II Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial and the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial, every national cemetery, buildings containing the official offices of the Secretaries of State, Defense and Veterans Affairs, the Director of the Selective Service system, all major military installations, as directed by the Secretary of Defense, all VA medical centers, and all offices of the US Postal Service.

Chairman's Comment: The League is grateful for this tremendous support, a meaningful signal to counterpart nations from which cooperation is absolutely necessary. It also signals all nations that America stands behind and with those who serve – past, present and future – and, if captured or missing, all possible efforts will be made to recover and bring home our UNRETURNED Veterans.

FLAG DAY CONFUSION: Flag Day is one of the six days each year when previously existing laws required that our POW/MIA flag be flown, in addition to Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, National POW/MIA Recognition Day and Veterans Day. This year, on Flag Day, June 14, 2020, the POW/MIA Flag was removed from atop the White House and placed on a separate flag pole, under the US flag, but scarcely visible in a small cluster of trees outside the circular drive around the South Lawn and far removed from the White House and Old Executive Office Building. Strangely, this occurred only six months after President Trump had signed into law the separate bills passed by the House and Senate requiring visible display of the POW/MIA flag on “all days on which the flag of the United States is displayed.”

Chairman’s Comment: When this occurred, DPAA and the League were notified within minutes of each other, but given no reason, nor any indication as to who had made the decision to construct a new flagpole on the edge of the South Lawn and remove the POW/MIA flag from atop the White House, especially on Flag Day, June 14th, when and where it had proudly flown for decades. Even more bizarre, the POW/MIA flag was not in its rightful position on September 18, 2020, National POW/MIA Recognition Day. The way this was handled was truly bizarre and, to date, DPAA Director McKeague and League Chairman/CEO Ann Mills-Griffiths have not been provided the rationale. The League informed White House officials that removal of the POW/MIA flag from atop the White House would send conflicting signals domestically and internationally to counterpart governments which figure prominently in US efforts to achieve the fullest possible accounting, in particular for Vietnam War POW/MIAs. It was also noted that such an action could also be viewed as reducing the priority and seriousness of US intentions, including with the DPRK, as accounting for Americans lost during the Korean War was Point #4 of the 2018 Singapore Agreement. Clarification will be provided if/when available.

LEAGUE 51ST ANNUAL MEETING RESCHEDULED FOR JUNE 23-27, 2021: As previously announced, the 51st Annual Meeting did not take place June 24-28th this year, and has been rescheduled for June 23-27, 2021. The Hilton Crystal City Hotel is open on a limited basis, and we’re hoping for fewer restrictions and greater normalcy by mid-2021. **DPAA cancelled Family Member Updates** previously scheduled for March, April, May, August and September. **The DPAA-hosted Annual Government Briefings for Korean War/Cold War Families, previously planned for August, were also cancelled** A virtual ZOOM Family Member Update was recently held in Little Rock, AR. Due to the seriousness and unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic, DoD travel restrictions have been applied worldwide. In addition, DoD, DIA, State Department and other US agencies were largely teleworking, but are now alternating schedules to try to ensure greater in-person coverage.

SUPPORT THE LEAGUE: Facebook Birthday or Holiday Fundraisers: Opportunities include Christmas, Hanukkah, Date of Loss of Family Member or Friend, etc. The League needs funds!

You and your family, friends and colleagues can also support the League by shopping at **Amazon Smile**. It is simple and automatic, at no extra cost to you. Just visit <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7071242>, and you will find the exact same prices, vast selection and convenient shopping to which you may be increasingly accustomed. The added bonus? The **Amazon Smile Foundation** automatically donates 0.5% of the cost of your eligible purchases to the League.



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