



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

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**AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR:** There are now **1,642** personnel listed by the Department of Defense (DoD) as missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War, a number that had not changed since October of last year. After five months, the name of **Captain Douglas Ferguson, USAF**, listed as MIA in Laos on December 30, 1969, will shortly be released. Captain Ferguson's remains were recovered April 13, 2013, and identified February 14, 2014. The number of Americans announced by DoD as returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now 941. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and ID'd before the end of the war, bring the official total of US personnel accounted for from the Vietnam War to 1,004. Of the 1,642 unaccounted-for personnel, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,275 (VN-469, VS-806); Laos-307; Cambodia-53; PRC territorial waters-7; over-water losses on DoD's list of No Further Pursuit cases number well over 600.

**SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DIRECTS ACTION:** Entitled "DoD Structure for Past Conflict Personnel Accounting," the signed February 20<sup>th</sup> directive was addressed to all senior officials in the Department of Defense, as follows: *"After intensive review, I have determined that the Department of Defense must change the way it manages accounting for personnel missing from past conflicts. I have directed the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to provide me, within 30 days, a plan for how to organize the Department most effectively to increase to the maximum extent possible the numbers of missing Service personnel accounted for annually while ensuring timely and accurate information is provided to their families.*

*This plan should address organizational and process changes required to consolidate all Departmental assets into a single, accountable entity that has oversight of all personnel accounting resources, research, and operations across the Department. It should propose methods to maximize the number of identifications, improve transparency for families, reduce duplicative functions, and establish a system for centralized, complete, fully accessible personnel case files for missing personnel. At a minimum, this plan should articulate recommendations for changes to the civilian and military personnel policies, contracting and acquisition policies, statutory and regulatory authorities, facilities, budgets, and procedures to ensure effective oversight of laboratory operations. This effort should be informed by past studies and reviews.*

*The Military Departments, Combatant Commands, and OSD Components shall provide the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy with all information and materials needed for this planning effort. This is a top priority for the Department.*

*I am deeply committed to the fullest extent possible the accounting for missing Servicemembers. Upon receipt of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy's plan, I am prepared to direct changes to use the Department's resources for this mission more effectively and efficiently."*

**League Chairman of the Board Comment:** Secretary Hagel's welcome action gives a short-term deadline to the senior official he selected to lead the POW/MIA accounting community reorganization effort – recently confirmed Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD/SOLIC) Michael Lumpkin, retired Naval officer and former SEAL Team Commander. Assistant Secretary Lumpkin, also then serving as Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD-P), must provide his recommendations to Secretary Hagel by March 20<sup>th</sup>. Before then, Secretary Lumpkin will hold an in-process review of where things stand with major national veteran organizations and the League as follow-up to the teleconference briefing he provided prior to Secretary Hagel's announced directive. The League looks forward to actions that will finally correct systemic dysfunction.

As previously reported, League Chairman of the Board Ann Mills-Griffiths met on December 4<sup>th</sup> with the Secretary of Defense to discuss the way ahead for the entire accounting community. Recognizing the growing negative impact on Vietnam War accounting caused by the US bureaucracy's internal dysfunction and the bias of some in pursuing accounting objectives, the League leadership determined the need to develop a cohesive structure to reorganize the entire effort.

Critical August 1<sup>st</sup> hearings in the House and Senate reinforced the urgency of moving quickly. The usual outcome of such hearings, held by lawmakers frustrated in seeking answers, is to require investigations and assessments; however, they are too often limited in scope and based on pursuing answers to unverified, misleading accusations from biased, relatively uninformed individuals.

Rather than awaiting results from further internal investigations and assessments, and based on decades of experience dealing with successive organizations and administrations, Mills-Griffiths sought suggestions from former and current US officials who are firmly committed to the mission. The task of generating a League reorganization proposal was made more critical by negative media focused almost solely and, in many instances, unfairly on the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC). The Secretary pledged to carefully review the League's background memo and proposed reorganization plan and respond.

The challenges are complex and so will be the solutions, as well as the impact from recommendations and resulting decisions. Many factors led to Secretary Hagel's February 20<sup>th</sup> Directive and, hopefully, he found helpful and instructive the background memorandum and reorganization the League provided on December 4<sup>th</sup>. There undoubtedly was a great deal of input from individuals, organizations and Congress; however, few have the experience and knowledge gained from over four decades of consistent dedication to the accounting mission. In reality, the League has the greatest direct investment in Secretary Lumpkin's recommendations and Secretary Hagel's resulting decisions, but many thousands will be affected by the ultimate outcome, including those serving our Nation today.

**LAOS & US HOLD POW/MIA CONSULTATIONS:** On February 28<sup>th</sup>, JPAC Commander Major General Kelly McKeague, USAF, led a US delegation for talks in Vientiane. Discussions reportedly went well and affirmed the significant maturity that has evolved over the decades, with real exchanges and dialogue, rather than the relatively stiff, formal presentations of old. In reality, less formal discussions have been ongoing at higher levels for many years, but due to complex technical questions and specific arrangements required for field operations, greater formality had continued at the technical level. General McKeague and his staff, as well as Lao Ambassador Southam and his staff, are to be commended for bringing this constructive dialogue into a more suitable, cordial atmosphere, in keeping with the broader bilateral relationship.

**Laos:** With budget agreement reached, JPAC conducted a Joint Field Activity (JFA) in Laos January 14<sup>th</sup> to February 17<sup>th</sup>. Three Recovery Teams (RTs) conducted operations and one Investigation Team (IT), augmented by the DIA Stony Beach specialist, conducted several investigations. A longer JFA in Laos began yesterday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, and is expected to conclude April 14<sup>th</sup>, though only one RT and one IT are scheduled. It also appears that the follow-on JFA in Laos is scheduling only one RT and one IT. If these reductions hold, it means an unsatisfactory, dramatic reduction in the scope of Vietnam War accounting operations.

**Cambodia:** Operations in Cambodia by one RT and one Underwater Recovery Team (URT), postponed twice this past year, are ongoing and have been since January 28<sup>th</sup>. They are expected to conclude on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. Since the Stony Beach specialist is permanently in-country and conducts investigations whenever needed, there are no investigations scheduled in conjunction with the JFA.

**Vietnam:** Four RTs began conducting operations in Vietnam on February 28<sup>th</sup> and expect to conclude on March 27<sup>th</sup>. Two ITs also deployed on this JFA.

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