



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

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**UPDATE: March 17, 2017**

**AMERICANS RECENTLY ACCOUNTED FOR:** On March 7<sup>th</sup>, DPAA released an announcement that **Captain Daniel W. Thomas, USAFR**, listed as MIA on July 6, 1971 in South Vietnam, had been accounted for. Remains were recovered by a Vietnamese Unilateral Recovery Team (URT) in August, 2014, and were identified in August, 2015, as those of **Major Donald G. Carr, USA**, the other person in the OV-10A piloted by Capt Thomas. Subsequent recovery efforts by the URT and repatriation of additional remains and material in April, 2016, brought the more recent ID of Capt Thomas. DPAA also listed on its website, under Statistics, the accounting for **Colonel William E. Campbell, USAF**, listed as MIA in Laos January 29, 1969. His remains were recovered April 17, 2014, identified August 29, 2016, and his name was placed on the DPAA website as accounted for on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, DPAA announced the ID of **Capt Robert R. Barnett, USAF**, listed as KIA/BNR on April 7, 1966 while piloting a B-57B over Laos. His remains were recovered June 18, 2015 and identified August 16, 2016. Earlier this year, a Marine Corps Reserve officer, **1<sup>st</sup> Lt William C. Ryan**, was the first person since June of 2016 announced as accounted for from the Vietnam War. 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Ryan was listed KIA/BNR in Laos on May 11, 1969. His remains were recovered January 27, 2016, and identified December 7, 2016. The number still missing and otherwise unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War is now 1,614. Let's hope these four IDs are the first of many announced in 2017.

Of the 1,614 still missing (POW/MIA) and unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR), 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,260 (VN-463, VS-797); Laos-298; Cambodia-49; PRC territorial waters-7. These country-specific numbers can and do 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 those still missing, and repatriation of all recoverable remains.

The total accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now **969**. There follows a breakdown by country of the 969 Americans accounted for since the April 30, 1975 end of the Vietnam War: Vietnam – 658, Laos – 268, Cambodia – 40, and the PRC – 3. In addition, 63 US personnel were accounted for between 1973 and 1975, for a grand total of 1,032. Of the 63, 9 were from Laos, 53 from Vietnam, and 1 from Cambodia. These Americans were accounted for by unilateral US effort in areas where access was possible, not due to cooperation with the post-war governments of Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. Added together, a total of 277 have been recovered and identified from Laos, 711 from Vietnam, and 41 from Cambodia.

**DPAA FIELD OPERATIONS:** There are currently 48 personnel deployed to conduct investigation and recovery operations. DPAA currently has one Recovery Team (RT) conducting excavation operations in central Vietnam. Also, per DPAA, an Investigation Team (IT) is performing investigation operations with the assistance of several US Vietnam Veterans. The Research Investigation Team (RIT) will resume investigations on March 22.

Three Recovery Teams (RTs) and additional support personnel departed Hawaii on March 2<sup>nd</sup> for the third Joint Field Activity (JFA) of this fiscal year in Laos. The RTs will excavate several sites in an attempt to account for five US servicemen.

Finally, another RT left Hawaii on March 2<sup>nd</sup> for Cambodia after being postponed from January and cut from 60 days to only 30 days. This team will attempt to account for two US servicemen from an aircraft crash site in northern Cambodia. A former US Special Forces soldier who visited the site shortly after the incident is accompanying the teams to assist in the recovery.

**VIETNAM WAR ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS REDUCED:** DPAA drastically cut the Vietnam JFA that began this month. With initial plans to conduct multiple recovery operations and investigations, DPAA deployed only one Investigation Team (IT) and one Recovery Team (RT), as well as a team to handle a Field Forensic Review (FFR) and a Joint Forensic Review (JFR). Thankfully, Vietnam provided one Unilateral Recovery Team (URT) and one Research Investigation Team (RIT).

After being assured by Acting DPAA Director Fern Sumpter Winbush that funding was secured, though at a lower level, but adequate to sustain operations until April 28th, this news was a serious blow to confidence in DPAA's commitment to pursue Vietnam War accounting as a continuing priority. The earlier JFA in Laos was also postponed by three weeks due to an aircraft breakdown and delay in Guam; however, the trilateral investigation reportedly began as scheduled on January 9th and the three RTs and one IT began three weeks late. The lost time was due to US budget constraints, NOT any obstruction from the Lao, and could not be recovered.

**Of Note:** Symbolic of how far the accounting mission has come: During January 8-11<sup>th</sup> trilateral defense-related talks in Da Nang that included Laos, Vietnamese Defense Minister General Ngo Xuan Lich thanked the Cambodian Government for supporting Vietnam's "*search for and repatriation of the remains of Vietnamese volunteer soldiers and experts who'd sacrificed their lives in Cambodia*" and agreed with Cambodian Defense Minister Tea Banh to continue this cooperation.)

**DPAA BUDGET REQUIREMENTS NOT MET:** It now appears DPAA will NOT have the funding in Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) required to "increase the pace and scope of operations," as has repeatedly been requested by Vietnam. Despite continuing internal dysfunction, DPAA had been proceeding well since becoming fully operational in January of 2016. Now, due to inadequate funding, the damage is increasingly clear. The plus-up of \$20 million to reach the necessary FY17 budget total of \$132 million for planned operational requirements was not requested, reportedly due to it already being too late to contract and utilize those funds, if approved, for use in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters of FY17.

**YOUR HELP IS URGENTLY NEEDED!** Write your elected officials to object to the lack of funding for DPAA to meet FY17 operational requirements and ask for additional funding and exemption of DPAA funding from any/all reductions. Funding for veterans care is rightfully protected by exempting VA budgets from across-the-board reductions and/or sequestration. Our UNRETURNED Veterans, US POW/MIAs, deserve that protection and adequate funds to achieve the fullest possible accounting.

**DPAA DIRECTOR SELECTION PROCESS:** As of this date, a new DPAA Director has not been selected; however, an announcement seeking applicants for this crucial position has been distributed. The responsible official now "Acting in the capacity of" Undersecretary of Defense for Policy is Ms. Theresa Whelan, a career DoD official. It is doubtful that a new person to permanently fill the position will be confirmed and in place by the time necessary to make the selection; hopefully, new Secretary of Defense General James Mattis will ensure serious consideration of recommendations provided by the League, Special Operations Association (SOA), Special Forces Association (SFA) and others. Up to now, there has been no indication that important qualifications - experience, character, commitment and dedication to the mission – were given consideration, nor crucial factors such as having earned the trust and respect of affected families, veterans and foreign officials whose willingness to authorize necessary cooperation is critical to success.

**ATTEND DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES:** The remainder of the 2017 calendar for DPAA-hosted Family Updates is March 25<sup>th</sup>, New Orleans, LA; April 22<sup>nd</sup>, Kansas City, MO; May 20<sup>th</sup>, Syracuse, NY; during the League's 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting June 21-25<sup>th</sup>; and September 9<sup>th</sup>, Detroit, MI. You may have noticed postings on the DPAA website indicating 1,276 family members had attended these updates in 2016. What is unstated, therefore unclear, is that only roughly 20% of that number are Vietnam War family members. **ATTEND DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES TO SHOW YOU ARE ENGAGED AND EXPECT PRIORITY EFFORTS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF FIRST ADDRESSING THE MOST RECENT WAR.**