



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

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AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR: There are still **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 until early March, and it has since remained the same. Most recently, the name of **Captain Douglas Ferguson, USAF**, listed as MIA in Laos on December 30, 1969, was 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 20th 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 to 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 serving as Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD-P) conducted an in-process review of where things stand with major national veteran organizations and the League on April 3rd, as follow-up to the teleconference briefing he provided prior to Secretary Hagel's announced directive.

Since that time, Secretary Lumpkin appointed a senior DoD civilian, Alisa Stack, to head a transition team that, reportedly, will include government specialists in each area to be addressed, from structure of the new agency to the number of personnel, budget requirements, interface with other departments and agencies, and communication with the families. Both Secretary Hagel and Secretary Lumpkin have stated that communication with the families must be a very high priority consideration in how the new agency performs.

FIELD OPERATIONS: With budget agreement reached, one would think that field operations would be conducted on a sustainable pace and scope necessary to achieve long-stated accounting objectives, such is not the case. Despite the relatively sophisticated working environment that has evolved since the first joint recovery occurred in Laos, in 1984, too often it is the US causing cutbacks in joint cooperation. There are multiple reasons, ranging from congressional sequestration, or mandated budget cuts that hit JPAC disproportionately due to PACOM direction, or an inadequate number of deployable forensic anthropologists for in-country operations. If the policy concerning deployable scientific personnel for field operations is now changed, it means an unsatisfactory, dramatic reduction in the scope of Vietnam War accounting operations.

JPAC conducted a Joint Field Activity (JFA) in **Laos** January 14th to February 17th. 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 March 4th and concluded April 14th, though only one RT and one IT were scheduled. Unless the next US team is increased in size, the May 9-June 6th JFA will again be comprised of only 2 RTs, though the Lao Government long ago approved a cap of 53 personnel operating at one time in Laos.

Cambodia: Operations in Cambodia by one RT and one Underwater Recovery Team (URT), postponed twice in 2013, took place January 28-April 2, 2014. Since the Stony Beach specialist is permanently in-country and conducts investigations whenever needed, there are no ITs scheduled in conjunction with the JFA.

Vietnam: Four RTs conducted operations in Vietnam February 28-March 27th. Two ITs also deployed on this JFA, plus the RIT (Research Investigation Team) and a Field Forensic Review (FFR). Only four RTs are scheduled in Vietnam for the May 20-June 22nd JFA. An underwater operation previously scheduled along the coast of northern Vietnam was cancelled, reportedly due to lack of available funding.

Worldwide: There is a total of six RT's working in Germany on WWII recoveries from April 1-May 18th.

Check the League Website: www.pow-miafamilies.org