



## NATIONAL LEAGUE OF POW/MIA FAMILIES

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### UPDATE: June 1, 2019

Following excerpts are from the Defense Department's June 1, 2019 publication, pages 36-37 & 40:

#### **INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY REPORT**

PREPAREDNESS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND  
PROMOTING A NETWORKED REGION

##### **VIETNAM**

The Department is building a strategic partnership with Vietnam that is based on common interests and principles, including freedom of navigation, respect for a rules-based order in accordance with international law, and recognition of national sovereignty. The U.S.-Vietnam defense relationship has Commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Admiral Phil Davidson visits Nepal, January 11, 2019. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Robin Peak After nearly 50 years of service in the U.S. Coast Guard, the Hamilton-class cutter (WHEC-722) was officially transferred to the Vietnam Coast Guard under the name CSB-8020. A transfer ceremony took place at Coast Guard Base, Honolulu, May 25, 2017. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Melissa McKenzie Indo - Pacific Strategy Report 37 grown dramatically over the past several years, as symbolized by the historic March 2018 visit of a U.S. aircraft carrier for the first time since the Vietnam War.

The Department is working to improve Vietnam's defense capabilities by providing security assistance, including Scan Eagle Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, T-6 trainer aircraft, a former U.S. Coast Guard high endurance cutter, and small patrol boats and their associated training and maintenance facilities. The U.S. military also engages in numerous annual training exchanges and activities to enhance bilateral cooperation and interoperability with the Vietnam People's Army, Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard. Additionally, DoD has provided training and technical assistance to support Vietnam's 2018 deployment of a medical unit to the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan, and will continue to provide assistance to facilitate future deployments.

Our increasingly strong defense ties are based on a foundation of close cooperation to address legacy of war and humanitarian issues, which predates the restoration of diplomatic relations in 1995. As we look to celebrate 25 years of diplomatic relations in 2020, DoD remains committed to supporting U.S. efforts to clean up dioxin contamination and remove unexploded ordnance, and appreciates Vietnam's continued assistance to account for U.S. personnel missing from the Vietnam War.

##### **LAOS**

Strategically located in the geographic heart of ASEAN and the Mekong sub-region, Laos presents opportunities for deepening security, economic, and diplomatic engagement. China is increasingly focused on Laos, and Beijing continues efforts to expand its strategic footprint through large debt-fueled investments, especially in infrastructure and energy. However, Laos is wary of overdependence and is seeking to diversify its partners and options. At the same time, Laos is experiencing a significant demographic shift – with a large majority of its population under the age of 35 – which presents a unique opportunity to engage a new, outward looking generation. The Lao military prioritizes Vietnam, Russia, and to a lesser degree China as its primary security partners. At the same time, the Laotian military is slowly expanding its international engagement portfolio, first to ASEAN and to a lesser degree to countries in the region such as Japan, Australia, and India.

The United States supports activities that advance Laos' integration into ASEAN, such as defense modernization, interoperability, English language proficiency, and respect for a rules-based international order. In the meantime, we are working to move past war legacy issues related to the Vietnam War and aim to conclude Prisoner of War/Missing in Action recovery operations honorably, and by 2030 to make Laos substantially risk-free of U.S.-sourced unexploded ordnance.

## CAMBODIA

DoD seeks to build a productive military-to-military relationship with the Kingdom of Cambodia that protects its sovereignty, promotes military professionalism, and helps it become a responsible and capable contributor to regional security. In early 2017, Cambodia suspended all military-to-military exercises with the United States. We, however, continue to cooperate in peacekeeping operations, humanitarian mine action, medical research, and U.S. Missing in Action personnel accounting.

**AMG Comment:** It is very encouraging to see the POW/MIA accounting mission integrated into US policy priorities by release of this significant document in the very important Singapore Dialogue. Perhaps now we'll also see follow-through by senior officials throughout the interagency policy community to reinforce the importance of the accounting effort to the United States, the affected families, our nation's veterans and the American people. This specific report forms the basis for widespread implementation and will be extremely helpful so long as our expectations are reasonable and all aspects of official efforts are coordinated and fully integrated to maximize effectiveness and expand accounting results. CONGRATULATIONS AND SINCERE APPRECIATION TO ALL WHO WORKED TO BRING ABOUT THIS HOPEFUL RENEWAL OF SERIOUS EFFORTS!

**AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR:** On 2/25/19, DPAA announced that **Navy Reserve Journalist 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Raul A. Guerra, USN**, listed as missing 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 late last fall and their families were notified just before Christmas, 2018. Before that, no changes in the Vietnam War statistics had been posted since October 17<sup>th</sup> when DPAA posted the names of two Vietnam War personnel now accounted for, Ritter, noted above, and **LT Richard C. Lannom, USNR, TN**, listed MIA on 3/1/68, NVN, recovered 12/13/17 and ID'd on 9/25/18.

**The number still missing (POW/MIA) and otherwise unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR) from the Vietnam War is now 1,589.** Of that number, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia or Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,246 (VN-452, VS-794); Laos-288; 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 **994**. A breakdown by country of these 994 Americans is: Vietnam – 672, Laos – 277, 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 1,057. These 63 Americans, accounted for by US-only efforts in accessible areas, were not due to cooperation by post-war governments in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. Combined, a total of 285 have been accounted for from Laos, 727 from Vietnam, 42 from Cambodia and 3 from the PRC.

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