



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

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THIS FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18TH, IS NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY, intended primarily as a time to renew our nation's commitment to accounting for Americans still missing. Ceremonies are being held throughout the country. Look for one near you to show your support!

AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR: There has been no published change to the number missing and unaccounted-for US personnel since the April 10th Update. For various reasons, including wishes of the family, DoD announcements are often delayed far beyond the ID dates, meaning other related IDs may be pending. Several of those named this year were examples of how remains repatriated many years ago can now be identified using contemporary science that wasn't available in earlier years. The number of Americans listed by DoD as returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is 956. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and identified before the end of the war, bring the total of US personnel accounted for from the Vietnam War to 1,019. Of the **1,627** still missing and unaccounted-for, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,269 (VN-467, VS-802); Laos-302; Cambodia-49; PRC territorial waters-7. These country-specific numbers can and do fluctuate due to investigations resulting in changed locations of loss. 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.

PRESIDENT'S POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMITMENT: On July 21, 2015, at the 116th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW), the President stated in part: *"As we mark the 70th anniversary of the second end of the — or the end of the Second World War, I want to offer a special salute to all of our World War II veterans. As communities across our country continue to mark 50 years since the Vietnam War, we say once more, welcome to all our Vietnam vets. As I think you heard this morning, we have a new POW/MIA agency, new leadership. We're building stronger partnerships with veterans' groups like the VFW. Because bringing home Americans taken prisoner or who've gone missing is a sacred mission, and we are stepping up our efforts for all wars, to never leave a fallen comrade behind — ever."* The League deeply appreciates the VFW's consistently strong support and welcomes the President's reiteration of national commitment.

DPAA DIRECTOR MOVING FORWARD! LTG (Ret) Mike Linnington, USA, was named the first Director, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), and sworn in as a civilian in the Senior Executive Service (SES) just before the League's 46th Annual Meeting, June 24-27th. While always cautious to not overstate support for people named to positions of responsibility in the POW/MIA accounting mission, it is no overstatement to recognize his outstanding, varied background.

Important now are the several steps he has taken that clearly reveal he is moving energetically to follow the directive issued by former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel to "completely reorganize" the POW/MIA accounting community. While structural change is always rife with turmoil and uncertainty, Mr. Linnington's restructure plans, though still evolving, appear to be dramatically moving the mission forward and, importantly, seem focused on adhering to Secretary Hagel's directive to "build on the existing strengths" of the accounting process. As a result, the Director appears to be moving toward a comprehensive organization structured to meet longstanding expectations.

Confirmed earlier is that former JPAC Detachments in Thailand, Vietnam and Laos will continue to be Detachments 1, 2 and 3, respectively. They will be reporting to the DPAA Deputy Director, very recently announced as BG Mark Spindler, USA, replacing Maj Gen Kelly McKeague, former JPAC Commander, and DPAA Deputy Commander since January of this year. He will be sorely missed. We are thankful that long-serving civilian specialists in the SEA Detachments, widely recognized as indispensable, will not be lost to the mission and are being extended in their positions. Personnel deployed to support operations in Europe will reportedly continue as a Liaison Office, possibly reporting to new Europe & Mediterranean Regional Director COL Christopher Forbes, USA. The Asia & Pacific Regional Director is Col Mike Gann, USMC, responsible for all operations, all wars, in Asia and the Pacific, including the Vietnam War, Korean War and the vast majority of recoverable WWII losses. Placement in the new structure of the Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD) is not yet known. Due to its requirement to support the US-Russia Joint Commission (USRJC) on POW/MIA Affairs, with a presidentially named Chairman, General Robert "Doc" Foglesong, USAF (Ret), JCSD has a unique status.

There is also a very high priority being placed on the success of what was labeled the Public Private Partnership (P3) initiative, now renamed Strategic Partnerships initiative. DPAA is looking at the broad areas in which potential partnerships (public/private, public/public, tripartite, etc.) could be formed as a means to augment official assets and resources that have focused primarily on Vietnam War accounting over the years. Strategic Partnerships can and will offer significant opportunities to expand the overall accounting effort and produce results more rapidly. Areas under consideration include applying volunteer and paid contractor efforts to archival research, investigations and recoveries pertaining mostly to WWII, Korean War (disinterment and IDs) and Cold War loss incidents. In the future, DNA comparisons now done exclusively by AFDIL could also be expanded by retaining the assistance of private DNA laboratories, if needed.

There was an internal DPAA leadership symposium July 28-30th to provide an opportunity for DPAA leaders, including interim-appointed Directors and Deputies, to utilize the evolving restructure as the basis for helping to determine a viable sub-structure, moving tasks and numbers of personnel as required, but getting to a close-to-finalized structure. Final decisions have not yet been made, but Mr. Linnington anticipates that full operational capacity will be reached by the end of this year or by January, 2016. Having said that, the Director has also stated his expectation that there will be in-process reviews, assessments and, potentially, adjustments as implementation occurs, pledging that the process will be fully transparent.

Announcement is anticipated shortly of a senior civilian Deputy Director whose office will be in DC. Presumably, this person will have responsibility for managing and administering the DC-based headquarters. That may also mean inclusion of several directorates – Outreach & Communications (public affairs, public diplomacy, outreach, congressional relations and liaison, etc.), Policy, Plans & Strategy (international relations, domestic and international training and education programs and coordination), Strategic Partnerships (boundaries have yet to be set, but are likely inclusive), Macro Archival Research & Analysis, and many administrative and oversight functions.

DPAA Facility Opens: A "Blessing & Dedication Ceremony" was held on July 27th to officially open the new Senator Daniel K. Inouye Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency Center of Excellence. League Chairman of the Board Ann Mills-Griffiths represented the POW/MIA families by helping to cut the traditional lei. Following the formal raising and posting of the permanently-lighted US, POW/MIA and State of Hawaii flags, and the Navy Chaplain's invocation, Director Linnington spoke briefly. The late Senator Inouye's long-time Chief of Staff, Jennifer Sabas, provided the inspirational keynote address. Prayers and blessings by a native Hawaiian clergyman concluded with the PACOM Band playing the Military Service Songs, after which a reception was held in the front foyer of the new, incredible DPAA building.

The League extends special appreciation to long-time civilian Johnie Webb for his roughly 14 years of dedicated effort to shepherd the new facility through to completion, fully supported by the League. Mr. Webb is a retired Army LTC, former Commander of the Central Identification Laboratory-Hawaii (CILHI), previously Deputy to the JPAC Commander, and currently serves as DPAA's Interim Deputy Director of what was External Communications, but now appears to be evolving into the Outreach & Communications Directorate.

Chairman's Comment: The League's vision for DPAA is to develop and carry out a viable process to more effectively and efficiently pursue increased accounting objectives for missing US personnel and their families. From January – June of this year, Mike Linnington and I had talked many times in his advisory role to Under Secretary Wormuth about the “complete reorganization” of the entire community. Mr. Linnington knows he has a very challenging road ahead to earn the trust of a dedicated, talented civilian workforce, as well as add the kind of people he wants and can depend on to move DPAA forward. He is moving NOW and already has learned far more than one would expect after such a very short time in the position.

At the League's 46th Annual Meeting, he pledged he is in for the long haul and knows it will take time, but asked for support, assistance and patience as he tackles the challenges. I'm confident that Mike Linnington IS the right guy, and this IS the right time, because these are the best circumstances we, the POW/MIA families, have seen since 1992 to obtain answers we have worked to achieve since the League was formed in 1970.

I attended LTG Linnington's retirement on June 17th and can personally attest to the esteem in which he is held by a broad cross-section of military and civilian personnel. From the lowest ranking to the highest, all seem to genuinely like and admire him. It is my hope, prayer and expectation that he will work to achieve the objectives we share, and do so with honor, integrity, humility, dedication, energy, genuine caring and determination. That is all we can ask. All we should expect is his very best effort, and we do!

He will also need our prayers, our full support and the loyalty and confidence of all POW/MIA-related personnel, especially the former JPAC, DPMO and LSEL workforce now adjusting to being part of one new DoD agency. We urge all dedicated accounting community personnel – especially the experienced civilian core – to set aside justifiable frustrations and obstacles endured for far too many years and focus on what is now possible with our new DPAA and its leadership.

In my judgment, right now truly IS the accounting mission's last real chance to move forward with the priority required, fully supported by State and DoD policy and resourced with funding and personnel required. If this ongoing effort does not succeed, I envision no future such opportunities, precisely the reason we must ensure that Mike Linnington gets all the support and assistance he needs from honest, caring, determined people in the accounting community.

The League is grateful to Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Christine Wormuth for selecting Mike Linnington who is self-confident, but not a know-it-all, who isn't afraid to ask questions and be seen as learning, which he is doing rapidly. Yes, he has much to learn, and dangers persist, but many are trying in every possible way to help him gain solid, objective insights.

I sincerely believe DPAA truly can become the central accounting force we all have sorely missed since 1992 – with cohesive, interagency US Government priority that will, with the support of all, achieve the fullest possible accounting. This longstanding, entirely reasonable League objective is defined as 1) the missing man returned alive; or 2) his remains recovered and identified; or 3) convincing evidence as to why neither is possible, in which case he will remain forever as unrecovered and all information that relates or may relate will be provided to the next-of-kin who will then have the certainty of knowing the US Government did its very best to bring him home to his family and our Nation.