



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

5673 Columbia Pike, Suite 100, Falls Church, VA 22041

PH ---703/465-7432

www.pow-miafamilies.org

FAX ---703/465-7433

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AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR: The number of US personnel missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War is still **1,618, unchanged since June 9th**. The total accounted since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is **965**. 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 **1,028**. Of the 1,618 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-1,261 (VN-463, VS-798); Laos-301; 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.

NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY – 2016: Countless ceremonies were held across the United States and around the world, including US Embassies in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. Many of the international commemorations were held under the auspices of the Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA) at military installations. The national ceremony was again held at the Pentagon, as has been the case since 1984 at the White House and 1988 at the US Capitol. The speakers this year were Senator John Cornyn (R-TX), Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Paul Selva, USAF, and Captain Gerald Coffee, USN, held as a POW in Vietnam for over seven years, until his release in February, 1973.

In his remarks, Secretary Carter stated in part, *"We gather here together today to recognize our nation's former prisoners of war and those still missing....and recommit ourselves to fulfilling our solemn pledge: to make every effort to bring all – all – our men and women home to their families."* He went on to say, *"And to all the families here today and around the world – whether you've been reunited or are still waiting for your loved one – thank you for your patriotism and courage in the face of uncertainty, and thank you for all you've given to this country."* In reference to DoD's efforts, and his own commitment, he stated, *"....we won't stop – I won't stop – until we achieve the fullest possible accounting for all our missing. And right now, far too many families still have to wonder about the fates of their fathers, grandfathers, their husbands and daughters, their brothers and sisters. We work hard to meet our commitment to yesterday's personnel to honor their service and their families. But there's another reason we do so: we know what it means to the men and women serving today, those who will serve in the future and their families. As they see everything we're doing to provide the fullest possible accounting of those who served before....they know we'll do the same for them."* He closed his remarks by noting, *"Committed family advocacy groups, veterans service organizations, and other non-governmental groups support our work. Friends and allies around the world serve as critical partners in helping us reach, account for, and bring home our fallen. And the men and women of DPAA – the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency – work day in and day out, in remote field sites and high-tech laboratories alike, across the United States and around the world to meet that promise and to give hope and solace to our families."*

Vice Chairman General Selva's remarks were inspirational, stating *"Your sacrifice is humbling and we thank you for your faith and your perseverance as we work to keep our promise to you. You are for us a beacon of hope. And welcome to the many of you who are committed to trying to bring every fallen American home from foreign shores. We are grateful for your continued determination."* He ended by stating, *"The motto on the POW/MA flag is one we have internalized to our very core. 'We will never forget.' It is emblazoned on our hearts as is the memory of every member we have lost in battle."* The impressive national ceremony concluded with the Missing Man Flyover of Cobra Gunships, symbolism appreciated by all present

PRESIDENT VISITS LAOS FOR ASEAN LEADERS CONFERENCE: On September 6th, President Obama met with Lao President Bounnhang Vorachit on the margins of the East Asia Summit. Laos is the 2016 Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and it is customary for leaders of nations to meet for bilateral discussions. In this instance, the portion of the lengthy *"Joint Declaration between the United States of America and the Lao People's Democratic Republic"* included one paragraph related specifically to the POW/MIA accounting mission. It stated, *"President Obama expressed his appreciation for the Lao P.D.R.'s continued cooperation in providing for the fullest possible accounting for U.S. personnel missing from the war, including its recent steps to increase the efficiency of joint search efforts. The two sides would continue to meet semi-annually for technical discussions on mission planning and strive to complete the mission in a timely and efficient manner."*

US-LAO CONSULTATIONS HELD IN HAWAII: A Lao Delegation was in Hawaii August 3-4th, meeting with DPAA and DIA officials on future operations. Deputy Director BG Mark S. Spindler, USA, led the US Delegation, and H. E. Khoanta Phalivong, Director General of Europe & Americas Department, Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led the Lao Delegation. The focus was to seek agreement for US teams to base-camp at incident site locations to reduce travel time and costs for helicopter support, primarily blade hours. This would maximize time in the field to conduct recovery efforts, as would an increase in the number of personnel allowed in-country simultaneously – from 53 to 65, when needed. The Lao agreed to the personnel increase and to consider base-camping at incident sites on a case-by-case basis. These decisions will help meet current budget requirements to do more with less in terms of funding and effectiveness, meaning results.

US-VIETNAM & US-CAMBODIA POW/MIA TALKS HELD: BG Spindler held talks earlier this month with counterpart officials in Vietnam, reportedly geared at generating greater accounting results with few, if any, additional funds or personnel. Col Mike Gann, USMC, DPAA Director for the Asia Pacific Region, and Jack Kull, long-time Southeast Asia policy officer, accompanied BG Spindler in Hanoi, as well as Phnom Penh. In the latter, discussions focused on resolving the purported border conflict that is preventing a recovery mission close to their shared border with Laos.

Chairman's Comment: Political issues, including disagreements over border delineation, should not be permitted to impede humanitarian cooperation, including the mission to account for missing US personnel. The League calls on Lao and Cambodian leaders to settle their differences or set them aside and cooperate constructively to allow the technical specialists to proceed.

JOINT FIELD OPERATIONS: A Joint Field Activity (JFA) recently concluded in Vietnam, wrapping up 45 days during which approximately 100 US personnel, comprised of 5-Recovery Teams (RTs), 2 Vietnamese RTs, and 1 Research Investigation Team (RIT), worked simultaneously. JFAs will resume in Laos in late October, after the beginning of FY17, and in Cambodia after the first of next year. There were also about 100 deployed on WWII accounting operations in PNG, France, Germany, Kwajalein (recently concluded) and Hawaii, most of them recovery teams for roughly six to seven weeks each. In addition, History Flight has continued recoveries in Tarawa, and universities are engaged through Strategic Partnerships in the Philippines and France.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW FOR JUNE 21-24, 2017: The League's 48th Annual Meeting will again be held at the Hilton Crystal City Hotel, as it has been the last several years. Anyone with suggestions for inclusion in the three-day program should email League Administrator Leslie Swindells, Leslie.Swindells@pow-miafamilies.org, or call the League office, 703-465-7432.