



**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](http://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 9<sup>th</sup>. 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.

**PRESIDENT RAISES COMMITMENT TO POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AT DAV NATIONAL CONVENTION:** Speaking at the recent Disabled American Veterans (DAV) 95<sup>th</sup> National Convention, President Obama stated, *"We've stood together at the Wall and remembered the lessons of Vietnam – that even when Americans may disagree about a war, we have to stand united in support of our troops. And that for mothers like Sara [Frances] Shay, who honored her missing son for more than 40 years, we will never stop working to bring home our prisoners of war and our missing in action. We leave nobody behind. No one."*

**PRESIDENT VISITS LAOS FOR ASEAN LEADERS CONFERENCE:** On September 6<sup>th</sup>, 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."*

Leading to this first visit to Laos by a sitting President of the United States, advance discussions were held in July between senior Lao and US officials, including **Ben Rhodes, Deputy National Security (NSC) Advisor for Strategic Communications**. Also in Vientiane in July was **Secretary of State John Kerry** who, with **US Ambassador to Laos Dan Clune**, raised the need for positive Lao responses to specific requests to facilitate Joint Field Activities (JFAs). The two points related to seeking approval 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 – when needed – in the number of personnel allowed in-country simultaneously. Both are valid requests to help meet current budget requirements to do more with less in terms of funding and effectiveness, meaning results.

**US-LAO CONSULTATIONS HELD IN HAWAII:** A Lao Delegation was in Hawaii August 3-4<sup>th</sup>, meeting with DPAA and DIA officials related to future operations, including responses on the above requests. 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. Leading into the President's visit in early September, the League was hopeful that the Lao Government would be receptive and responsive to the two requests that had been raised bilaterally at the highest levels, and interim reports indicate they were.

**US-VIETNAM & US-CAMBODIA POW/MIA TALKS BEING HELD:** DPAA Deputy Commander BG Spindler is now in Vietnam for technical talks with Vietnamese counterparts aimed at generating greater accounting results with few, if any, additional funds or personnel. Col Mike Gann, USMC, Director for Asia Pacific Region, and Jack Kull, long time Southeast Asia Policy Officer, are accompanying BG Spindler for the talks in Hanoi, as well as the talks in Phnom Penh.

**JOINT FIELD OPERATIONS:** The Joint Field Activity (JFA) just 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 are also about 100 deployed on WWII accounting operations in PNG, France, Germany, Kwajalein (just concluded) and Hawaii, most of them recovery teams for roughly 6-7 weeks each. In addition, History Flight is continuing recoveries in Tarawa, and universities are engaged through Strategic Partnerships in the Philippines and France.