

POW/MIA COMMITTEE REPORT VVA NJSC

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The following update is provided by the National League of Families:

December 2, 2019

AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR: The number still missing (POW/MIA) and otherwise unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR) from the Vietnam War is still 1,587. Of that number 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia or Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,246 (VN-443, VS-803); Laos-286; 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 **996**. A breakdown by country of these 996 Americans is: Vietnam – 672, Laos – 279, 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 1,059. These 63 Americans, were accounted for by US-only efforts in accessible areas, not due to cooperation by post-war governments in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. A total of 287 have been accounted for from Laos, 727 from Vietnam, 42 from Cambodia and 3 from the PRC. **NO IDs have been announced since July 29th.**

PRESIDENT TRUMP'S VETERANS DAY REMARKS: During remarks in New York City, the President stated: *"You left your families and fought in faraway lands. You came face-to-face with evil and you did not back down. You returned home from war, and you never forgot your friends who didn't return, including prisoners of war and those missing in action. Every day, you think of them and pray for them."*

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE VISITS VIETNAM: Secretary Mark Esper recently visited Vietnam to meet with Prime Minister Nguyễn Xuân Phúc, Minister of National Defense Ngô Xuân Lịch, and other key leaders to discuss the regional security environment and ways to enhance the growing defense relationship. He tweeted "During my visit to Vietnam, I toured Hỏa Lò Prison where American POWs were held. We will never forget the sacrifices of our POWs & those still MIA. I appreciate the efforts of the Vietnamese government & the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to help identify & return the remains of our service members."

VIETNAM WAR ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS: Newly assigned **DPAA Director of Operations RDML Darius Banaji, USN**, is currently meeting with DPAA teams conducting field operations in Laos and Vietnam and personnel assigned to Detachment 2 in Hanoi and Detachment 3 in Vientiane. In addition, he will meet with US Ambassadors and other US Embassy staff, as well as counterpart government officials in both countries and in Cambodia and Thailand. Before he retired on October 25th, RDML Banaji's predecessor **RDML Jon Kreitz, USN**, held POW/MIA Technical Talks in Hanoi and Phnom Penh and consultations with the Lao in Hawaii. In all instances, the talks were described as positive, helpful

and productive. DIA Stony Beach intelligence specialists were included in all sessions. Best wishes are extended to RDML Kreitz for the next step in his future, with gratitude for his service to the POW/MIA accounting mission. We also wish RDML Banaji every success as he assumes the significant responsibilities inherent with his new position, as he learns about the mission.

DPAA STATISTICS: As of December 2, 2019, there are 72,634 still unaccounted-for from World War II, 7,603 from the Korean War, 1,587 from the Vietnam War, 126 from the Cold War, 5 from the Gulf Wars, and 1 from Operation El Dorado Canyon, for a total of 81,956. Of that total, 75% of the losses are located in the Indo-Pacific, and over 41,000 are presumed lost at sea (i.e. ship losses, known aircraft water losses, etc.).



FIELD OPERATIONS: The following photos were taken during recent field activities in Vietnam and Laos.

SSG Johnathan Swope, USA, assigned to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), removes debris from an excavation site during a recovery mission in Sekong Province, Laos Democratic People's Republic, Nov. 6, 2019. The team is searching for the remains of missing US service members lost during the Vietnam War. (USN photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Tyler Thompson)



Local Vietnamese workers pass buckets of dirt to the screening stations during DPAA recovery mission in Lang Son Province, Vietnam, Nov. 3, 2019. For more than two decades, the US has conducted joint field activities with the governments of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to recover the remains of missing Americans. Throughout these countries, field teams continue to investigate crash and burial sites, as well as interview locals to gain additional knowledge. (USAF photo by SSgt Rusty Frank)



TALKS STILL ON HOLD REGARDING KOREAN WAR REMAINS RECOVERIES. It should be noted that 41 IDs have been made on remains that came out of North Korea in the 55 flag-draped transfer cases. In addition, DPAA leaders stated publicly that there is DNA of more than 150 US personnel, plus just under 100 likely PRC or South Korean indigenous personnel. DNA reference samples are available for 92% of families of the unaccounted-for from the Korean War. Korean War IDs for Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) reached 73; the WWII total is even higher, standing at 140 for FY19. **Only 5 Vietnam War personnel were accounted for during that same one-year period**, and none from the Cold War for a total of 218 IDs announced by DPAA for FY19, a record number for the DPAA Lab.

Joint service members assigned to DPAA fold flags onto transfer cases, onboard a C-17 Globemaster III in Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati, September 27, 2019. The service members are preparing the transfer cases containing 12 sets of remains believed to be US service members who died in WWII. The remains will be repatriated to the US and will undergo analysis at the DPAA laboratory with hopes of being identified. (USN photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Amara Timberlake)

POW/MIA FLAG TO BE DISPLAYED YEAR-ROUND: On November 7th, President Trump signed into law the “National POW/MIA Flag Act,” introduced by **US Rep. Lt Gen Jack Bergman, USMC (Ret) (R-MI)** and **US Rep. Chris Pappas (D-NH)** on March 7, 2019. The League-originated POW/MIA flag is now required to be displayed whenever the American flag is posted on prominent federal properties, including the White House, US Capitol, World War II Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, every national cemetery, the buildings containing the official offices of the Secretaries of State, Defense and Veterans Affairs, office of the Director of the Selective Service system, each major military installation, each Department of Veterans Affairs medical center and each office of the US Postal Service. The League is grateful for this tremendous level of support, a meaningful signal to all nations that America stands behind and with those who serve – past, present and future – and if captured or missing, all possible efforts will be made to recover and bring home our UNRETURNED veterans.

LEAGUE’S 50TH ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL MEETING: Although a full report is now out, it is noted that this year’s meeting was the largest, most significant in years. That’s not surprising; it was a year-long

effort to plan and schedule speakers to maximize effectiveness. DPAA provided Facebook live streaming of all sessions. The following key factors applied:

- 1) A Retrospective featured key participants who outlined the very difficult challenges that were met throughout the 1980s, building on President Reagan's commitment and priority;
- 2) Former Army Chief of Staff, now Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Lieutenant General Robert Ashley, USA, and Ambassadors Ha Kim Ngoc of Vietnam, Khamphan Anlavan of Laos and Chum Sounry of Cambodia were key participants;
- 3) DPAA Director Kelly McKeague again pledged five years of operational priority on Vietnam War accounting. DPAA leaders and specialists, and DIA's Stony Beach Team of POW/MIA investigators, briefed on current operations and approach.

Despite many challenges, including continuing structural dysfunction within DPAA, there is reason for measured optimism. With sustained support from the families and our nation's veterans, the League is determined to press for priority and answers on Vietnam War accounting, as pledged by DPAA Director McKeague. The League also supports field investigation and recovery of unaccounted-for personnel from past wars and conflicts as a priority over disinterment and ID of remains of the known dead, so long as Vietnam War accounting efforts remain DPAA's operational priority.

2020 MEMBERSHIP DUES: Time has come to renew your dues for 2020, only \$25 a year for an individual, family member or associate member (concerned citizens/veterans) or organization. Please help the League save on postage by sending an email to admin@pow-miafamilies.org, and mail a check for dues to the League office, or pay your dues online at <https://www.pow-miafamilies.org/membership>. The more dues the League receives, the fewer postcard reminders will need to be sent in January. We greatly appreciate your assistance in this cost-saving matter!

SUPPORT THE LEAGUE: This Holiday Season of giving, take a step back from the hustle and bustle to relax and support the League by shopping at AmazonSmile. It is simple and automatic, at no extra cost to you. Just visit <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7071242>, and you will find the exact same low prices, vast selection, and convenient shopping you are used to on Amazon. The added bonus? The AmazonSmile Foundation will automatically donate 0.5% of the cost of your eligible purchases to the League.

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