



# Defense POW/MIA Weekly Update

March 24, 1995

## **Summary of Southeast Asia Trip**

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/MIA Affairs Wold visited Southeast Asia March 7-17, 1995. During the trip, Mr. Wold held policy discussions with foreign government representatives in Vietnam and Cambodia; visited and received current operations briefings from the JTF-FA detachment commanders in Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia; visited joint field activity sites in Laos and Vietnam; and met with Ambassador Tomseth in Laos, Chief of the U.S. Liaison Office Jim Hall in Vietnam, and Charge De' Affaires Bob Porter in Cambodia.

While in Hanoi, Mr. Wold met with the following Vietnamese Government officials: Acting Director of VNOSMP Mr. Tran Van Tu; Vice Minister of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs Nguyen Thi Hang; Vice Minister of Defense General Nguyen Thoi Bung; Vice Minister of the Interior Pham Tam Long; and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Dinh Bin. Discussions with these officials centered on the following topics: the February 17, 1995, Department of Defense Report to Congress; the on-going DoD comprehensive review of cases involving Southeast Asia loss incidents; current and future joint field operations; the relationship between JTF-FA Detachment Two and the US Liaison Office in Hanoi; repatriation and identification of remains; current and future cooperation in trilateral operations; a number of individual case specific questions; progress in unilateral efforts to recover POW/MIA related documents; the requirement for a detailed Vietnamese Government report regarding the Special Remains Cases; and current and future MIA-related work by Vietnamese and American war veterans/veteran service organizations.

In Phnom Penh, Mr. Wold met with the recently formed Kingdom of Cambodia POW/MIA Committee chaired by General Nuon Sareth. The committee's membership represents the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of the Interior. Points of emphasis discussed during the meeting were the upcoming joint field activity and the oral history/archival research programs.

Mr. Wold last met with government officials in Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia to discuss POW/MIA related issues during his November 1994 trip to Southeast Asia. In December 1994, he met with Vietnamese and Lao officials in Hanoi for discussions regarding trilateral operations.

## **Joint Field Activities in Southeast Asia**

- The 34th Joint Field Activity (JFA) in Vietnam, the third this fiscal year, officially ended March 22. However, the Vietnamese government is allowing two recovery elements to continue to their conclusion on-going excavations in Hai Haung and Hai Phong Provinces. Although the number of remains recovered that may be of missing or unaccounted for Americans will not be known until the forensic review is completed, all six recovery elements recovered remains. Additionally, there were a number of unilateral returns by Vietnamese citizens during the JFA.
- In Laos, American-Lao joint teams are conducting JFA 95-4L (the 37th Lao JFA) through April 7. Possible human remains were recovered during the past week from one site and both recovery elements reported recovering aircraft wreckage and personal effects. Vietnamese witnesses participated in the investigation of three cases during this JFA.

## **WARNING: DOG TAG REPORTING**

If you, or anyone you know, plan to travel to Southeast Asia, expect to be approached and offered the opportunity to buy dog tags or dog tag style information; dog tags are sold openly on the streets of Hanoi by souvenir merchants. We recommend you exercise caution in such situations.. Our analysis indicates only two percent of all dog tag reports relate to missing or unaccounted for Americans. If you obtain dog tag-related information, please get the name, location, and telephone number of the individual from whom you obtained the tag or related information and contact the DPMO Operations Center at 703-602-2202/Extension 262 (please call collect). We will gladly check the status of the names while you are on the telephone. If the individual named **IS** missing or unaccounted for, we will request you provide whatever additional information you may have regarding the dog tag, as well as your name and telephone number to facilitate further investigation of your report.

The number of identification/dog tag reports received since the fall of Saigon in 1975 totals more than 8,800. This number will continue to increase because almost all visitors to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia are being approached by individuals either selling or giving away dog tags.

Dog tag information is received either in the form of an actual tag, rubbings of tags, photocopies, or handwritten samples. Stories associated with the tags range from the name on the tag is a live American; he is a POW; he died during the war; to his remains are available for sale.

More and more visitors are paying for these tags. Recently, an American notified us he had procured 38 tags while in Vietnam. He insisted on personally delivering the tags to DPMO from his home in Florida despite being informed by us that the names could be validated during the telephone call. None of the individuals named on the 38 dog tags are missing or unaccounted for.