



INTERNATIONAL  
SECURITY AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

2400 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2400



11 DEC 1995

In reply refer to:  
I-95/52966

Dear Mr. Jim Weitkamp:

In October 1994, the Department of Defense initiated a comprehensive review of each case involving an American serviceman or civilian who is unaccounted for as a result of United States involvement in the war in Southeast Asia. Analysts of the Defense Prisoner of War and Missing In Action Office, the Joint Task Force-Full Accounting, and the United States Army Central Identification Laboratory worked together to examine carefully all information developed throughout the years. Our efforts included a total review of wartime and post-war intelligence, as well as the reports of joint investigation, oral history interviews and archival research. The results of this diligent, case-by-case review have enabled us to define the next steps for achieving the fullest possible accounting.

As a result of this review, coordinated as of July 21, 1995, we have identified the specific next steps to take in the case of Warrant Officer Edgar W. Weitkamp, United States Army, REFNO 0004. Subsequent actions, if necessary, will be based upon the outcome of these endeavors.

As you know, a joint recovery team found seven gravesites in 1991 which were believed to contain the remains of your brother and the other individuals lost with him. The team excavated the gravesites, but recovered identifiable remains for only four of the individuals. Regrettably, your brother's remains were not among those found. During the investigation, local villagers told the team that some of the remains had been previously removed from their graves. We believe that the resolution of this case can best be accomplished by reinvestigation in the area of the grave sites and crash location. We hope to interview additional villagers and local officials to determine what may have happened to your brother's remains.

These follow-up actions in the case of your brother are being incorporated into our future work plans. The Army casualty office will keep you informed of further developments. In some cases, as you may already be aware, we may already have completed the actions described above and be in the process of once again reviewing the case. Please know that our efforts will continue.

We take our obligation to pursue the cases of our brave service members and civilians very seriously. Above all, I want to assure you that your brother's sacrifice in service of his country will be honored forever by all Americans.

Sincerely,

James W. Wold  
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense  
(POW/MIA Affairs)



Dear Friends & POW/MIA Families,

January 4, 1996

On December 11, 1995 Jim Wold signed and sent each POW/MIA family (next-of-kin) a letter outlining the next step that needs to be taken on their missing loved ones case. You should have received a similar letter from General Wold, such as the attached letter sent the Edgar Weitkamp family.

In October 1994 analysts at the DPMO (Defense Prisoner of War and Missing in Action Office) under the direction of General James W. Wold, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (POW/MIA Affairs) began a comprehensive review to examine all information—both wartime & post-war intelligence—in a cases-by-case review. The purpose for the review (over 20 years after the Vietnam War ended) was to decide which POW/MIA cases are unresolved or unaddressed by Hanoi, in which there is clear intelligence that Hanoi has knowledge on the cases, which Hanoi has refused to provide either the live man, his remains or a complete explanation as to what happened to that individual, who was in Hanoi's hands at one point in time. These "Case Summaries" were complete and printed on 11/20/95.

You should have received a copy of the analysts review of your case, such as the attached one received by the Weitkamp family. If you did not receive a case summary, you should contact: Al Santoli in Congressman Robert Dornan's office at 202-225-2965, or address a letter to-1201 Longworth HOB-Washington-DC 20515.

I am writing to you for three reasons:

1. I would like a copy of the letter Wold sent to you.
  2. I would like a copy of the 11/20/95 DPMO case summary
  3. I would like you to point out, in a list (1-2-3) any discrepancies in the data provided to you by the DPMO.
- Please provide documents to support your discrepancies.

In the Weitkamp case we found 8 major errors and other intelligence that was left out of the review. For example a returned POWs debriefing, who saw Weitkamp's wallet, was left out. Also the NSA had 2 radio intercepts where the enemy called headquarters and reported the shoot down and capture, but the DPMO study left this information out.

If you have any data to support any major errors in the DPMO report, please provide me with the details. If you know other POW/MIA families who are having problems please pass this letter on to them, as I am offering to help.

I am trying—on your behalf—to see if the DPMO study is valid or invalid. Please help me in this review by providing copies of the requested materials. I will give you a written report on what you can do to fix the problem if there is one. Thank you,

*Michael Van Atta*

Michael Van Atta 717-993-5498  
P. O. Box 735  
Stewartstown, PA 17363

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The area of the crash site and probable burial sites was under Pathet Lao control throughout the war and, after the LPDR took power, the area remained under tight communist governance. The shutdown was a seminal event at the time and the burial sites well known to local villagers and officials. The paucity of remains recovered by the Joint team in 1991 suggests that prior to 1991 the graves were either professionally excavated or thoroughly scavenged. In either case, this activity would have been known to local Lao villagers and, likely, local officials.

**Future Pursuit Information:**

<b>FurtherPursuitJust :</b> Y	<b>CtryForUnilatPursuit :</b> NA
<b>PursueWho :</b> J	<b>HowToUnilat :</b> N
<b>CtryForJointPursuit :</b> LA	<b>TypeOfUnilatLeads :</b> S
<b>HowToJoint :</b> JE	<b>KindOfUSPursuit :</b> O

**Narrative :**

The JTF-FA should return to the area of the grave sites/crash location. CILHI personnel should undertake further work in the grave sites and, if possible, make a determination as to whether or not the graves showed evidence of pre-1991 exhumation. (This action should require examination of the report submitted by the 1991 Joint recovery team). Local villagers and officials should be contacted and asked for any information regarding pre-1991 exhumations and/or scavenging of the grave sites. In 1991, the Lao team leader told the JCRC team that remains had been removed. Dog tag reporting strongly suggests that I.D. media was removed from personnel associated with this loss. Additionally, in some cases remains have been associated with these dog tag reports. It is highly possible that some of these I.D. items and remains may be in the hands of local villagers or officials. JTF-FA should seek interviews with local Lao villagers and officials, particularly those who were present from 1961-1991.

If this effort is unsuccessful, recommend special research.

**Future Pursuit Deferred Information:**

**WhyDeferPursuit :** NA  
**HowWhereOffScope :** NA

**Narrative :**

**No Future Pursuit Information:**

**WhyNoFurther :** NA  
**PrevAttemptRecov :** NA

**Narrative :**

**INITIALCOORD :** A--JOINT INVESTIGATE;JTF TO FIND OUT WHO EXCAVATED GRAVES;COORD 2

**RECORD1 :**

**RECORD2 :**

**RECORD3 :**

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found; the name correlates to this incident. The team excavated the seven graves to sterile soil, to include seven test pits. Remains, consisting of teeth, were recovered from five of the graves. Some personal effects were also recovered. (CDR JCRC, 192045Z Jul 91) On 29 Nov 91, the Armed Forces Identification Review Board approved the identification of remains for four of the personnel included in this incident. (CJMAO, 292100Z Nov 91)

On 22 Jul 93, during JFA 93-6L, a Lao male approached a member of the JTF-FA at the Mittaphap Hotel and presented a bone fragment and dog tag information associated with three men involved in this incident (Matteson, Garside, and Magee). The man asked about the possibility of rewards in exchange for information and explained that his brother Long has the remains of three servicemen. He stated that the remains were recovered from a crash site located north of Phon Savan. (His information accurately correlated to the area of the grave sites associated with this incident). He further stated that he had learned that the Americans were in town from a friend who worked at the local French hotel. He refused to provide further information without compensation. He was asked to return and discuss the matter with Lao team members. He did not return. On 23 Jul, Mr. Sousat, a Lao businessman, approached the Joint team at the Mittaphap hotel and inquired about rewards for remains information. When advised of the USG policy he declined to assist any further. He did not present any information associated with this incident. (CDR JTF-FA 2610003Z Aug 93 and 261953Z Aug 93). On 17 Aug 1994, a Joint team interviewed Mr. Sousat Petراسي (son of PL spokesman Soth Petراسي) at his home in Phon Savan. Mr. Sousat was unable to provide any further information and claimed not to know the names of any of his sources of information. He said that he had simply been collecting information as a potential means of profit and, when told of the USG policy on rewards, was no longer interested. Following the interview, the U.S. team was told that Lao officials would not permit any further interview of Mr. Sousat. (AMEMBASSY Vientiane, 020917Z Sep 94)

#### Unilateral Information:

UnilInfo :	Y	CtryProvidedFilm :	VN
CtryofInfo :	VN	CtryProvidedRemains :	NA
ValueofInfo :	C	SignifInfoUniAction :	N

#### Narrative :

In Aug 1994, JTF-FA reported that an archival research team working at the Central Armed Forces Museum in Hanoi photographed a number of personal documents associated with personnel involved in this incident. (CDR JTF-FA, 040702Z Aug 94)

In Sep 1994, JTF-FA reported that an archival research team working at the Vietnam News Agency (VNA) in Hanoi had obtained duplicates of VNA photographs which appeared to correlate to this incident. The photographs show the wreckage of a USAF C-47, Pathet Lao soldiers, and a number of unidentifiable bodies. (CDR JTF-FA 291112Z Sep 94).

#### Knowledgeability Information:

SeaCtryKnowLoss :	Y
WhichCtryKnew :	LA.VN
MoreInfo :	P

#### Narrative :

In Jun 1988 a Lao source reported that he had served as an intelligence officer with the Lao Neutralist army at Khang Khay in 1961 at the time of this incident. Source stated that he went to the crash site and spoke with the surviving U.S. aviator. (USDAO BANGKOK, 080438Z JUN 88, IIR 6 024 0390-88). In 1977 the U.S. government obtained a Pathet Lao propaganda film which showed an I.D. card, passport, and card associated with this incident (Garside, Magee, and Weitkamp). (DIA PW/MIA, 241040Z APR 90)

In Aug 1994, JTF-FA reported that an archival research team working at the Central Armed Forces Museum in Hanoi photographed a number of personal documents associated with personnel involved in this incident. (CDR JTF-FA, 040702Z Aug 94) In Sep 1994, JTF-FA reported that an archival research team working at the Vietnam News Agency (VNA) in Hanoi had obtained duplicates of VNA photographs which appeared to correlate to this incident. The photographs show the wreckage of a USAF C-47, Pathet Lao soldiers, and a number of unidentifiable bodies. (CDR JTF-FA 291112Z Sep 94).

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communist officials placed a jungle fence around the aircraft wreckage and told the local people to stay away from the area. (JCRC Bangkok, Report #0003-79).

In Jan 1986, JCRC interviewed a source who had provided to the U.S. Consulate in Udorn film which, when developed, had photographs of possible U.S. remains and aircraft wreckage. The source also turned over a dog tag rubbing associated with this incident (Bankowski). According to the source, a Lao pilot had discovered the grave sites and removed the remains to a storage area. (JCRC Bangkok, 270849Z Jan 86)

In Feb 1986, JCRC reported that a Lao source had passed along dog tag reporting which correlated to this incident (Bankowski) and stated that associated remains (including three broken skulls) were being held in a private residence in Seno, Laos. When USG policy was explained, source was unhelpful in providing the names of people in possession of these purported remains. (JCRC Bangkok, 110900Z Feb 86)

In Apr 1986, a Lao source provided dog tag reporting associated with this incident (Bankowski) and limited information regarding seven burial sites located on the Plain of Jars. (JCRC Bangkok, 231217Z Apr 86)

In Dec 1987, a Thai source reported dog tag reporting associated with this incident (Bankowski) and stated that his Lao contacts would be able to deliver three sets of remains associated with this incident for 8,000 USD. (JCRC Bangkok, 220113Z Dec 87)

On 17 Mar 1988, a source (unknown if Thai or Lao citizen) turned over a tooth (molar) and claimed that he was in contact with Lao resistance forces who had possession of American remains. On 16 Apr 1988, a JCRC investigator contacted the source by telephone and was told that without compensation the resistance forces would not be interested in any further contact. Association with this incident is based on the purported area where the remains were recovered. (Muang Pek, UG2466) (JCRC Bangkok, 191037Z May 88) CILHI later determined that the tooth had Caucasoid features (CDR JCRC 251802Z Jan 90)

In Jun 1988 a Lao source reported that he had served as an intelligence officer with the Lao Neutralist army at Khang Khay in 1961 at the time of this incident. Source stated that he went to the crash site and spoke with the surviving U.S. aviator. (USDAO BANGKOK, 080438Z JUN 88, IIR 6 024 0390-88).

In Sep 1989, a Thai source reported that he was in contact with Lao soldiers who had five sets of remains associated with this incident. As proof, a dog tag rubbing associated with this incident was provided (Matteson). However, the Lao refused to provide any further information unless they were paid. (JCRC Bangkok, 260810Z Sep 89)

In Oct 1994, a Thai reported that he had contact with a Lao source who had the remains of two men associated with this incident. As proof, he presented dog tag information which can be associated with two men involved in this loss (Matteson and Magee). According to the source, the remains are located in Savannakhet province. (USDAO Bangkok, 111128Z Oct 94)

Several other Lao refugees have reported information which correlates to the known circumstances of this incident. There are slight discrepancies in the number of bodies and limited information on grave sites and remains. (DIA PW/MIA 241040Z APR 90)

#### Joint Investigations Information:

NumberofInvestig :	1.00	JFWitness :	Y
FoundCrashsite :	Y	SignifInfoJointInvest :	Y
PotentialLocations :	Y		

#### Narrative :

From 7-10 July 1991, a Joint team conducted a survey and grave site recoveries near a crash site located at UG080586. Before arriving at the site, the senior Lao team member told the U.S. team leader that there were seven graves located at the crash site, but he believed some of the remains had been removed. The team was taken to the crash and burial site where evidence of a burned aircraft was found. Within ten meters of the crash site seven linear depressions were easily recognized. The Joint team interviewed local villagers and was told that in the past few years remains were removed from the graves. During a surface search of the crash area an identification tag was

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**Case Summary Information:**

Refno : 0004            Name : WEITKAMP, EDGAR WILKEN  
Service : A            LossRank : W1            Idate : 3/23/61            Status : BB  
Ctry : LA            Province : XIANGKHOANG  
OffscopeCase : N            PriorityCase : N            FateDetermined : NA

**Narrative:**

On 23 March 1961, at about 1130, 1Lt Weston and seven other U.S. military personnel were aboard a USAF C-47 when it was shot down by rebel forces while making a pass over the Plain of Jars. The aircraft crashed approximately six kms northwest of Phon Savan airfield, Xiangkhoang province. One individual is known to have safely parachuted from the aircraft. He was immediately captured by the Pathet Lao, eventually transferred to Sam Neua, and was released by the Pathet Lao in August 1962. Numerous reports indicate that the other seven service members died in the crash and were buried near the crash site. The aircraft, flown by USAF pilots assigned to the attaché office in Vientiane, was to overfly the PDJ and then turn south for a TDY assignment in Saigon. There was no expectation that the aircraft would be taken under fire and the shoot down was not immediately known to U.S. officials. On 29 Nov 91, the Armed Forces Identification Review Board approved the identification of remains for four of the personnel included in this incident. (CJMAO, 292100Z Nov 91)

**U.S. Government Information:**

WartimeLivesight : N            RemainsReportedPrior : Y  
WartimeCrashGrave : N            SpecialReporting : N  
WartimeMediaRpts : N            PostwarMediaRpts : N  
DogtagRpts : Y            SignifUsgInfo : Y  
UncorrelatedRpts : N

**Narrative:**

SUMMARY: This loss occurred when a U.S. Air Force plane, attempting to gain intelligence on rebel activities, overflew Neutralist/Pathet Lao positions located on the Plain of Jars. The aircraft was hit by AAA fire and multiple reports indicate that only one of the eight men on board survived the resulting crash. The survivor was captured by Pathet Lao forces, moved to Sam Neua and, after seventeen months of captivity, was returned to U.S. control. The other seven men were likely buried near the crash site. There is also considerable reporting which seems to confirm that Pathet Lao officials and/or local villagers took possession of identification media found on the bodies. This has resulted in numerous dog tag reporting, some of it associated with purported remains. Clearly, this incident is well known to those living in the area of the crash site and Pathet Lao officials who were operating in the area at the time of the loss. Film evidence shows that the Pathet Lao, and later the LPDR, used documents recovered from this loss for propoganda purposes. (See Joint Investigations for further information)

U.S. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION: On 23 Mar 1961, a friendly military unit reported that a C-47 had been shot down by AAA fire over the Plain of Jars. The unit reported that two people parachuted prior to the aircraft crashing and burning. Hmong forces were directed to seek information and, if possible recover any of the personnel and or their equipment. On 25 Mar the same unit reported that a major (Major Bailey) with a broken shoulder had been taken prisoner and was in the Phon Savan hospital. Informants said the aircraft was extensively burned and there were seven bodies. (No further information on bodies). Additional reporting on 28 Mar stated that Viet Minh forces had captured the major. (Board Proceedings, ARMA, Vientiane, 29 Apr 61).

In 1977 the U.S. government obtained a Pathet Lao propoganda film which showed an I.D. card, passport, and card associated with this incident (Garside, Magee, and Weitkamp). (DIA PW/MIA, 241040Z APR 90) On 24 Jan 1979, JCRC interviewed a Lao refugee who stated that in Mar 1962 he had observed the shoot down of a C-46 over the Plain of Jars. He identified the crash site as being located at UG080550 and said that at about 1500, after the fire had subsided, two members of his group entered the aircraft and removed six bodies. The bodies were burned, but intact. They were described as four Americans (large noses) and two Thais (Asian features). Shortly after the bodies were removed, local communist officials loaded the bodies onto a Chinese 4x4 truck. He did not know where the bodies were taken, but presumed they were buried nearby. He said that the