



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

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NEWSLETTER

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AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR: According to the Department of Defense, the number of Americans missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War is now 1,948. Since the last League newsletter, the Department of Defense has identified 32 Americans as accounted for from the Vietnam War. Listed alphabetically (RR=Remains Recovered), these men include:

Major Harry A. Amesbury, Jr., USAF, MIA 4/72, SVN, RR 10/06/93
Major Victor J. Apodaca, Jr., USAF, MIA 6/67, NVN, RR 4/27/89
Staff Sergeant Rudy M. Becerra, USA, MIA 3/70, CB, RR 4/12/95
Sergeant 1st Class John A. Boronski, USA, MIA 3/70, CB, RR 4-12-95
Lance Corporal Irvin L. Bower, USMC, MIA 10/69, SVN, RR 11/20/00
Boatsman's Mate 2nd Class Anthony G. Chandler, USN, MIA 6/68, SVN, RR 10/06/93
Specialist 4th Class Willis C. Crear, USA, MIA 2/71, LA, RR 2/11/00
Specialist 4th Class Donald E. Crone, USA, MIA 2/71, LA, RR 2/11/00
Major Patrick R. Curran, USMC, MIA 9/69, LA, RR 2/11/00
Captain Fred C. Cutrer, Jr., USAF, MIA 8/64, SVN, RR 5/21/97
Commander John A. Feldhaus, USN, MIA 10/66, NVN, RR 6/27/00
Warrant Officer 1st Class Barry F. Fivelson, USA, MIA 2/71, LA, RR 2/11/00
Staff Sergeant Berman Ganoe, Jr., USA, MIA 3/70, CB, RR 4/12/95
Corporal Thomas A. Gopp, USMC, MIA 8/67, SVN, RR 6/8/94
Sergeant 1st Class Gary A. Harned, USA, MIA 3/70, CB, RR 4/12/95
Chief Warrant Officer 3rd Class John C. Hosken, USA, MIA 3/70, CB, RR 4/12/95
1st Lieutenant Leonard L. Kaster, USAF, MIA 8/64, SVN, RR 5/21/97
Chief Warrant Officer 3rd Class William A. Kimsey, Jr., USA, MIA 1/68, NVN, RR 1/1/98
Lieutenant Colonel Luther A. Lono, USMC, MIA 9/69, LA, RR 2/11/00
Hospital Corpsman James P. McGrath, USN, MIA 8/67, SVN, RR 6/8/94
Major David W. Morrill, USMC, MIA 3/67, SVN, RR 10/6/93
Lance Corporal John B. Nahan, III, USMC, MIA 8/67, SVN, RR 6/8/94
Major Michael D. O'Donnell, USA, MIA 3/70, CB, RR 4/12/95
2nd Lieutenant Maxim C. Parker, USMC, MIA 3/67, SVN, RR 6/9/93
Captain Jerry L. Pool, USA, MIA 3/70, CB, RR 4/12/95
Specialist 4th Class John L. Powers, USA, MIA 2/71, LA, RR 2/11/00
Colonel Harley B. Pyles, USAF, MIA 10/65, SVN, RR 4/8/93
Colonel Winfield W. Sisson, USMC, MIA 10/65, SVN, RR 4/8/93
Lieutenant Colonel Charles J. Ramsay, USMC, MIA 1/68, NVN, RR 1/1/98
Lieutenant Commander Edd Taylor, USN, MIA 8/65, NVN, RR 4/25/00
Captain James A. Wheeler, USAF, MIA 4/65, SVN, RR 4/28/98
Corporal Jack Wolpe, USMC, MIA 8/67, SVN, RR 6/8/94

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE: Since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, 637 Americans have been accounted for by recovery and identification of remains, returned to the United States to receive the honor and recognition of a grateful nation. For their families and friends, far too many years of frustration and uncertainty were ended, not as hoped with a joyful reunion, but with peace of mind and pride in their loved one's or friend's service. The League can justifiably share pride in this accomplishment that would not have happened without our determination and dedication.

Yes, greater results could and should have been achieved over the ensuing years. Sadly, some senior US officials immediately after the war ended and over the eight years of the prior administration viewed the issue as an obstacle to "healing" or to achieving economic and political goals, rather than a steady bridge between Vietnam and the U.S. that could simultaneously build trust and account for America's POW/MIAs.

Now that diplomatic and economic ties with Vietnam have been normalized and approved by Congress, the very normalcy of the relationship inherited by the current Bush Administration offers opportunities to pursue. Rather than continued assurances that we are receiving full faith cooperation, we now look forward to accurate, objective assessments of Hanoi's cooperation – not to turn back the clock, but to provide Vietnam's leaders with a clear understanding of our real expectations. No longer are there any excuses to do otherwise.

Progress over the past year has been made by significantly improved joint field operations, but the sad reality is that Hanoi still has not taken steps on its own that could account for scores of Americans. Few have focused attention on the fact that 85-90% of the 411 Americans missing in Laos and the 60 unaccounted for in Cambodia were lost in areas under Hanoi's wartime control. Yet, Vietnam's leaders still have not authorized release of case-specific records on these Americans.

It is no secret that the eight years of the Clinton Administration were fraught with frustration. Definitions were changed to alter perceptions, and analysis was slanted to accommodate their highest priority: full normalization of economic and political relations with Vietnam. They followed a consistent policy that was readily apparent to all of us and many current and former US officials. Based on a decision very early in the first Clinton term to promote bilateral POW/MIA cooperation as superb, excellent, unprecedented, outstanding and extraordinary – whether or not valid – some in the administration set the stage for controlling the message and the environment.

Soon, the issue was depicted as a relatively straightforward, simple task of clearing the battlefield. This occurred despite significant evidence that remains and archival data were being withheld. Accolades flowed from public affairs pipelines at State and Defense Departments, the White House and the Congress, in particular the Senate. There was little focus on the need for unilateral actions by Vietnam to repatriate remains previously recovered or provide archival data that could help resolve many of the most pressing discrepancies, cases of Americans last known alive, in captivity or proximity to capture.

These and other gaps still exist, but far too often have gone unmentioned within the bureaucracy. Exposing these facts and the glaring discrepancies would have raised criticism and undercut former President Clinton's ability to easily proclaim that Vietnam was "*fully cooperating in good faith*," as he did year, after year, after year.

The “photo-op” in Vietnam shortly after the presidential election and before President Clinton left office was instructive. The long-planned trip may have been somewhat useful in raising the public profile of our quest for answers, but spin on the level of cooperation was vastly overstated. The massive publicity that accompanies a presidential visit, especially the first to Vietnam since the end of the war, was intended to persuade doubters that circumstances were right to take the final steps in the normalization process.

Despite the hype, we are grateful that US-funded joint field operations are succeeding in bringing answers, but some of the most compelling cases are not in crash sites and are likely to be resolved only by unilateral Vietnamese actions. The truth is that Vietnam has provided accurate, hand-written summaries of American loss incidents, but not the original documents used by one person to create them. One must ask why? What else is Hanoi withholding?

There are still unsolved cases of Americans who were last known alive, in captivity or on the ground with Vietnamese forces close at hand. Though Hanoi asserts no one is alive, only they are in a position to back up their assertions by handing over remains and archival records. Contrary to political spin by the prior administration there is convincing evidence that Vietnam can provide answers to account for these men.

These are some of the avenues that the Bush Administration should – and we believe will – pursue. Senior officials now at the Departments of State and Defense have a proven record of serious effort and commitment on the issue, and we want them to put it to work. Some actions and emphasis since they assumed office give us confidence they are taking their responsibilities seriously and want our help. From the Vice President on down, these officials worked closely with the League during the Reagan/Bush years to establish priority that had earlier dropped to near zero. Their backgrounds well serve our shared objectives – not to raise unrealistic hope – but to recognize and pursue viable goals.

Following up former Secretary of Defense William Cohen’s very helpful trip near the end of the Clinton Administration, **Secretary of State Colin Powell** made a historic visit to Vietnam in July. In a letter to me just before his trip, he stated, *“I wish to express my strong admiration and support for the League’s tireless advocacy on behalf of POWs and MIAs from the Vietnam War. Achieving the fullest possible accounting of all of our missing comrades will remain a top foreign policy priority of the Bush Administration. When I visit Vietnam next month to attend the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) meetings, POW/MIA accounting will be one of the principal issues raised in my discussions with Vietnamese officials.”* During the visit, he fulfilled his promise.

President George W. Bush made clear his commitment during the campaign and renewed it at the Tomb of the Unknowns: *“...on Memorial Day, we must remember a special group of veterans, Americans still missing and unaccounted for from Vietnam, Korea, the Cold War and World War II. We honor them today. They deserve and will have our best efforts to achieve the fullest possible accounting and, alive or dead, to return them home to America.”*

The League was also encouraged by **Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld’s** assurance that despite the tragedy that struck the issue (see later article), the accounting effort will continue. His pledge that the JTF-FA, CILHI and others involved will proceed with excavations and investigations and *“continue to search for those still missing in Southeast Asia”* was welcome and greatly appreciated.

Just this month, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage used a trade-related visit by the Vietnamese First Deputy Prime Minister to again raise POW/MIA concerns, reinforcing earlier messages from the President and the Secretaries of State and Defense. The League expects those working under these senior officials to translate such policy pronouncements into mission implementation, and it is our responsibility to help ensure that the guidance is carried out.

Some separate comments on cooperation with **Laos** and Cambodia are also warranted. In Laos, though there are significant obstacles to overcome, including the limited number of trained Lao officials and the remoteness of sites to be investigated or excavated, we have seen greater seriousness by the Lao Government, to include proposal of accounting initiatives. There is still room for improvement, and the League does not shy away from making recommendations. Fortunately, the senior Lao leadership often reacts positively, despite US domestic circumstances that the Lao find difficult to understand.

Though Laos' developmental, humanitarian and educational needs are great, senior level US attention since the early 1990s has focused on Vietnam, to the virtual exclusion of Laos. Even now, US attention on Laos too often ignores positive developments on POW/MIA accounting and efforts to combat narcotics production and trafficking, focusing instead on religious freedom and human rights. Largely inspired by small, but vocal constituencies of selected Members of Congress, these same two issues are greater problems in Vietnam, but were set aside when it came to consideration of the bilateral trade agreement (BTA) and normal trade relations (NTR). The Senate overwhelmingly approved both. There appears to be no equal standard; yet despite this uneven reality, the Lao have assured the League POW/MIA accounting cooperation will continue to increase. We are grateful.

There is also reason for some optimism regarding accounting efforts in **Cambodia**. Due to many years of genocide, destruction and chaos that have plagued Cambodia, there are serious obstacles to overcome. Still, the US is able to operate freely to pursue answers when and where it chooses. The absence of more frequent field operations is due to US decision-making, not any lack of cooperation on the part of the Royal Cambodian Government. They are ready and willing to assist; yet, citing a lack of leads and potential benefit, JTF-FA ended its presence in Phnom Penh in the mid-1990s. The reality is that Stony Beach investigators were largely barred from in-country operations, but that situation has now changed. Stony Beach will shortly have a full time representative in Phnom Penh.

Our road together has been long and hard, but also worthwhile and rewarding. Even after 25-30-35 or even 50 years, families blessed with answers finally have peace of mind. We all know that some Americans will never be accounted for, and we accept the reality of war, but the time is now right to push hard for concrete answers. Accounting as fully as possible for Americans who served and haven't returned is a matter of duty, honor and principle. We must continue this quest so long as it is reasonable – based on existing evidence – to conclude that answers are or should be available.

I have now served the issue and the League for over 30 years. On August 1, 2002, I will begin my 24th year as your executive director, thus spanning more years than most military careers. I'm asking each of you – family members and concerned Americans – for your continued loyal support to uphold principles, with unfailing determination and responsibility.

Yes, this past year has been a struggle, with no full-time staff just one of many challenges. Yet, despite my inability to write newsletters as often as I wish, or pursue other deserving projects, the League is richly blessed with strong, dedicated supporters and volunteers. We have a core of dedicated volunteers, particularly just before and during the annual meetings each year. One such dedicated person, Betty Bartels, is known to all of you who have attended League annual meetings as the primary person responsible for registration each year. She left this life on November 18th. She is and will be sorely missed, yet two of her daughters have already volunteered to step in and help do her "job" for the families.

Our League Adviser, Richard Childress, an eight-year staff member of President Reagan's National Security Council and retired US Army Colonel, has left the area after residing here for 23 years. He and his wife, Elli, also known to everyone who attends our annual meetings, have been with us each year since 1981. Thankfully, he has generously agreed to continue serving as our Adviser, and both are planning to attend the 33rd Annual Meeting next June.

I also want to thank each member of the Board of Directors, the seven family members you elected to lead our effort. Each serves at his/her own expense, as do our volunteer state and regional coordinators, some of whom are concerned citizens. Though it would be impractical to name all League officials, one in particular regularly comes to the League office, usually twice each week, to help with financial requirements. In a non-profit, humanitarian organization such as the League, these tasks can be daunting, but Karen McManus, sister of returned POW LtCol Kevin J. McManus, USAF, makes the effort and takes the time. She has her answer, but she continues to work to help us.

The same can be said for three others: returned POW LtCol David Gray, USAF-Ret., Mark Stephensen, son of Col Mark Stephensen, USAF, accounted for since 1988 and Gail Innes, our newest (though return) member whose brother, LCDR Roger B. Innes, USN, was accounted for by remains identified June 23, 2000. The remaining Board members have loved ones still missing: Phillipe Ritter, son of civilian MIA George Ritter, Sue Scott, sister of Capt Douglas Ferguson, USAF, and Jo Anne Shirley, our Chairman of the Board and sister of Maj Bobby Jones, USAF, the only flight surgeon still missing. They deserve your gratitude, as they have mine.

The point is passage of time...and many family members are no longer able to participate as actively as they once did or are no longer with us. League voting membership will never increase. By charter and bylaws, we are restricted to close relatives of Americans who were or are still prisoner, missing or unaccounted for from the Vietnam War, and returned POWs. Without support from the veterans' community and all Americans, the issue and the League would not have survived. We must have their continued support, and we do. We are grateful.

As we enter the New Year, there is reason for optimism. With determination and will, this should be a very good year for the issue and for the League. I ask each of you to make a special effort to contribute, whether financially, with your prayers, or by speaking publicly about what we do and why. Everyone can help in some way, and I'm counting on each of you for support. Best wishes for a very Happy Holiday Season, a Merry Christmas and a New Year that is richly blessed.

The League is nationally eligible for Combined Federal Campaign/United Way: #1174

SENIOR POW/MIA OFFICIAL APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT: The Bush Administration formally announced the appointment of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/MIA Affairs and Director of the Defense POW/MIA Office, **Mr. Jerry Jennings**. Although initially the League was hopeful that he would be in office before the League's 32nd Annual Meeting June 20-24th, he was finally in place on August 21st. Mr. Jennings is highly qualified, including Vietnam War service as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps, Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Emergency Management Agency and Acting Director of the Selective Service System, plus service at the Reagan White House on the National Security Council staff. The League is working closely with Mr. Jennings as we seek to achieve shared goals; he met with the League's Board of Directors October 26th.

LAO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER TAKES ACTIVE POW/MIA ROLE: On November 10th, Lao Deputy Prime Minister Somsavat Lengsavad met in Washington with the League's Adviser and Executive Director, and others. The Minister is active in POW/MIA matters, and such informal talks are often very helpful in removing obstacles to reaching agreements. In response to the League's request to consider ways to implement a viable Oral History Program, the Minister indicated understanding of the challenges and the need to find solutions aimed at obtaining relevant POW/MIA information. In May, 1999, he proposed the successful POW/MIA Seminar that was held this fall, and on November 20-21st, he visited the Ban Alang Base Camp in Savannakhet Province, the site where US teams stay during joint field operations. This was the first such visit by a Lao deputy Prime Minister, again signaling the high level attention Laos gives to the bilateral accounting effort. He also visited ongoing joint excavations.

POWMIA SEMINAR HELD IN LAOS: In early October, US and Lao officials concluded a two-day POW/MIA seminar for provincial and district level Lao officials. Preceded by POW/MIA consultations on September 27-28th, this seminar was first proposed by the Lao during discussions with the League's May 1999 Delegation, but only recently moved forward by the US. In his first POW/MIA mission to Southeast Asia, Mr. Jennings led the US delegation, joined by recently confirmed US Ambassador to Laos Douglas Hartwick and BG Steven Redmann, USAF, new Commander of JTF-FA. (In mid-July, BG Harry Axson, USA, relinquished command of JTF-FA to BG Redmann, the first Air Force commander of the organization. Thus far, the League is working closely and well with General Redmann and his team.) Lao host for the seminar was the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs. All briefings on the accounting process were presented in Lao, a commendable effort by the US team. At the conclusion of the sessions, a ceremony was held to turn over remains recovered jointly during prior field excavations. In a moving tribute, the US Ambassador and Lao Vice Foreign Minister delivered remarks in each other's language honoring those who gave their lives.

Comment: The consensus of participants, both American and Lao, was that the sessions created a very effective opportunity for direct dialogue and exchanges between senior and working level officials of both countries. It was deemed especially useful in conveying to Lao provincial and district officials the specifics regarding the POW/MIA accounting – the who, what, when, where and why of the issue – in an effort to gain greater cooperation and assistance at the local level throughout Laos.

LAO FIELD OPERATIONS: Fifty CILHI and JTF-FA personnel recently concluded work with their Lao counterparts conducting five joint recovery missions. This is the first time that five recoveries have been undertaken simultaneously in Laos, an encouraging development.

In addition, a small JTF-FA and Stony Beach team recently held talks in Vientiane to discuss implementing a unilateral Lao program to interview witnesses who may have leads to resolving US incidents. The exchanges during this meeting were very positive, and all are hopeful that a serious program will be underway early in 2002.

CAMBODIA OFFERS GREATER COOPERATION: General Pol Saroeun, Chief of the Joint Staff, Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, and senior Cambodian official responsible for POW/MIA Affairs, also recently visited Hawaii and Washington. In Hawaii, he met with senior CINCPAC leaders and JTF-FA Commander BG Steve Redmann. General Saroeun met informally in Washington with the League's Adviser and Executive Director and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/MIA Affairs Jerry Jennings. The Cambodian POW/MIA Committee recently proposed a series of unilateral investigations and interviews of current and former officials to develop leads on missing Americans.

In early October, following the POW/MIA Seminar in Laos, Mr. Jennings stopped briefly in Cambodia and met with Prime Minister Hun Sen and General Pol Saroeun for substantive, positive discussions. Unfortunately, a short time later, a joint field operation in Cambodia was postponed by the US Ambassador due to security concerns related to the US Embassy in Phnom Penh. The site involved last known alive (LKA) cases and had been planned for quite a long time. The League was pleased to learn that this LKA investigation has now been rescheduled for early February.

VIETNAM-RELATED EVENTS: In the final stop of his Southeast Asia trip, Mr. Jennings made introductory calls in Vietnam. He had discussions with Deputy Minister of Public Security Nguyen Van Huong, Deputy Minister of Defense for International Affairs MG Nguyen Huy Hieu, and former Vietnamese Ambassador to the U.S. Le Van Bang, now Assistant Foreign Minister in Hanoi. Mr. Jennings also visited a field excavation site and was present for the October 5th ceremony in Hanoi when remains recently recovered in Vietnam were turned over to US officials. In September, Vietnamese officials concluded a 30-day period of unilateral investigations, and the most recent joint field operations concluded November 9th. US officials met in Hanoi December 12th for technical talks with their Vietnamese counterparts. JTF-FA Commander BG Steve Redmann, USAF, headed a team that included the Stony Beach Commander and other representatives from JTF-FA, CILHI and DPMO.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS NORMALIZED WITH VIETNAM: Earlier this year, President Bush issued the required certification to Congress that Vietnam is *"fully cooperating in good faith"* to resolve the issue, language required by Congress that President Clinton repeatedly used.

Comment: This blocking legislation lost its usefulness after repeated, though unwarranted, Clinton Administration certifications. It is disappointing that Congress did not amend this requirement to permit a presidential waiver that would allow certification, but with an objective explanation on the status of the issue. Unfortunately, the decision was required early in the current administration, with few political appointees confirmed, especially in the Department of Defense. Former US Ambassador to Vietnam Pete Peterson (D-FL, returned POW) was often in Washington to promote certification, Senate approval of the BTA and passage of NTR status for Vietnam. The two votes passed by large margins; congressional objections focused on human rights and religious freedom.

Comment (continued): As in the past, the League is looking forward and has no interest in trying to regain leverage squandered during the prior eight years. Attention must be focused on increasing Vietnam's unilateral efforts to locate and return remains and provide records, as well as improving the accounting process, the combination of which will bring increased answers for the families.

USG MEETS ON CASES: US specialists from DPMO, JTF-FA, CILHI, Stony Beach and LSEL met November 27-30th in Washington to discuss of incidents on which new information has been obtained that may impact on accountability. Whether acquired through survey, investigation, excavation or any other means, the case coordination process is conducted regularly in an attempt to ensure that nothing slips through the cracks in the accounting effort. The general officer board that reviews last known alive cases also was to meet that week to discuss a few cases in which evidence reportedly is persuasive that the individual died and should no longer be listed as an LKA discrepancy case. The session was postponed; however, in such reviews, the primary next of kin is notified of the outcome.

STONY BEACH NEARS FULL STAFFING: At long last, after overcoming near-extinction, DIA's Stony Beach Team, now located at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, is fully manned with qualified investigator/linguists. As of now, Stony Beach has three Thai/Lao linguists, three Vietnamese linguists and two Khmer (Cambodian) speakers. With the addition of a very necessary administration NCO (non-commissioned officer), the organization will again be fully staffed and able to participate in joint field operations as originally intended.

Comment: It has taken many years to reconstruct this team that was nearly phased out in the Clinton Administration due to orchestrated efforts to control the message and territory as it pertained to POW/MIA field operations. The League offers congratulations to all in Stony Beach who stuck it out, despite enormous frustrations, and to others who assisted in rebuilding this important organization. A key objective of the League's 1999 delegation to Southeast Asia was to directly ask senior officials in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia for their agreement to permit Stony Beach officials to participate fully in field operations. In every case, they indicated there was "no problem" with Stony Beach participation so long they stick to POW/MIA investigations. Since that is Stony Beach's only mandate, US officials could pose no further reasonable objection.

With the changes in administration and leadership, it is hoped that all in the US Government will be working as a team, rather than as individual organizations with separate "turf" and varied approaches. Though other improvements are still needed, especially in terms of fully incorporating the skills available at the Air Force's Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory (LSEL) in San Antonio, recent actions show a trend in the right direction. The League looks to DASD Jerry Jennings to provide the oversight that brings all the individual organizations involved into a unified team, confident that he has the ability and determination to succeed.

DIA FORMS POW/MIA ANALYTIC OFFICE: A special office for analysis of POW/MIA-related intelligence has been formed in the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), as stipulated by Congress and signed into law by the President. This office was established to provide independent intelligence analysis to augment the work of the Defense POW/MIA Office (DPMO). Though underway long before the September 11th terrorist attacks, formation of this office was expedited in preparation for ongoing military operations to fight terrorism.

Comment: The League welcomes formation of this office as a means of reducing concerns over skewing of intelligence data to support political objectives, such as occurred in recent years in relation to Vietnam. It is too early to assess how effective this effort will be, and it is a League priority to promote its effectiveness over the next year.

DASD VISITS SOUTH KOREA: Early this month, Mr. Jennings visited Seoul and other locations in South Korea for an update on the situation there and to meet senior US military officials. His visit focused on safety concerns and joint efforts to account for Americans still missing from the Korean War. He also reviewed current-day personnel recovery training and operations on the Korean peninsula and stopped in Hawaii to meet with CILHI scientific staff to discuss remains recovery operations in North Korea.

US-RUSSIA COMMISSION ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS: Russian officials of the US-Russia Commission on POW/MIAs were in Washington for discussions just before the League's 32nd Annual Meeting. Vietnam War Working Group Chairman General-Major Nikolai Bezborodov, a member of Russia's Duma, and two members of his team participated in a League-hosted working lunch, during which very useful discussions occurred. General Bezborodov also met with Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Senator Bob Smith (R-NH), his US counterpart on the Commission. During their time in DC, General Bezborodov provided a summary document on 142 Vietnam War-related matters, a welcome development. The League followed up this visit with a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin, forwarded through US official channels, urging greater access to archives of the former Soviet Union. Unfortunately, the Russian president has not yet replied, nor have his deputies.

In mid-November, US Commission Chairman MG Roland Lajoie, USA-Ret., visited Moscow and held discussions with his counterpart, General-Major Vladimir Zolotarev. The primary purpose of the visit was to maintain momentum established during the Russian Delegation's visit to Washington. A session with General Bezborodov was also held, but little new information was provided and no substantive clarifications were forthcoming in response to US questions about the 142 Vietnam-related matters passed earlier to Senator Smith.

Following these meetings, Commission US Executive Secretary Norm Kass and Mr. Russ Thomasson, Senator Smith's staff, held discussions at the Military Medical Archives in St. Petersburg. Efforts are under way to arrange for a research project to examine the archive's holdings for information about unaccounted for Americans from World War II. Preliminary indications are that the archives contain some relevant records.

The third edition of **The Gulag Study** is now on the DPMO website, www.dtic.mil/dpmo. Trips to Russia to follow-up leads generated by the study will take place early next year.

Comment: The League is confident that with high level Bush Administration support, much greater progress can be made in accessing Russian archives and sources of information on missing Americans. In looking at avenues to exploit for information, it is clear that more can and should be done to reach former officials of the USSR and the PRC who were stationed in northern Vietnam and Laos during the war. Efforts by the Commission, its Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSJ) in DPMO and Task Force Russia personnel in Moscow need high level US and Russian attention to reinforce the importance of the mission and the need for more serious cooperation. Time is running out!

NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY: At the September 21st National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony, Secretary of the Army Tom White, substituting for Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, delivered a very strong message on accounting for Americans still missing from our nation's wars. The guest speaker was retired Marine LtCol Orson Swindle, III, held over 6 years as a POW in North Vietnam and now a Commissioner on the Federal Trade Commission. His inspiring remarks made clear the importance of the accounting effort to those who serve and sacrifice – past, present and future.

Countless ceremonies were held across the country on or around September 21st, and the League's POW/MIA flag was prominently displayed. By law, it is to be flown six days each year over the White House, Departments of State, Defense and Veterans Affairs, headquarters of the Selective Service System, the National Vietnam War and Korean War Memorials, all national cemeteries, all offices of the US Postal Service and major military installations as directed by the Secretary of Defense. POW/MIA Recognition Day posters can still be obtained by calling Mr. John Brown, Defense POW/MIA Office, 703-602-2102, Ext. 185. If not available, leave your name, address, and the number of posters needed.

POW/MIA FLAG FLIES PROUDLY: For some time, there has been debate over when the POW/MIA flag should be flown, whether daily or on the specific six days noted in federal law. At the 32nd Annual Meeting, League members voted overwhelmingly in favor of the following resolution: ***“Be it RESOLVED that the National League of POW/MIA Families strongly recommends that state and municipal entities fly the POW/MIA flag daily to demonstrate continuing commitment to the goal of the fullest possible accounting of all personnel not yet returned to American soil.”*** By federal law, the next date on which the POW/MIA flag will fly is Armed Forces Day in April, 2002.

LEAGUE ANNUAL MEETING: The 2001 annual meeting was inspirational in many ways, a spirit of optimism prevailed among those who attended, including US officials who participated. There was a positive attitude not seen in several years. Operational briefings were interesting, informative and realistic, much more so than over the prior eight years. **Dr. Paul Wolfowitz** was the dinner speaker, as he graciously has been in and out of office since the first Reagan Administration, but this time he was speaking as the Deputy Secretary of Defense. His warmly welcomed message was strong, objective, focused on completing the mission and clearly signaled those countries that continue to hold answers that the US is serious and determined. With his well-grounded knowledge, Secretary Wolfowitz's commitments were especially important to the issue and “marching orders” to all who implement policy for the Department of Defense and the President. (Copies of his remarks are available from the League office by request.)

The **33rd Annual Meeting** has been scheduled for **June 20-22nd** at the **DoubleTree Hotel** in Crystal City (Arlington), Virginia, across the freeway from the Pentagon. It is the same location as last year's successful meeting. We are hopeful that the Bush Administration will further recognize the importance of the League's mission and what we represent by reinforcing the message that America stands behind those who serve our nation. In this regard, it will be most helpful that DASD Jerry Jennings is now in a position to be actively involved. The DPMO staff will again be asked to provide assistance, as they have so ably provided in the past, and we again anticipate full support from the JTF-FA, CILHI, Stony Beach, LSEL and AFDIL. Registration and reservations forms will be sent in early spring, so be planning now to attend. This should be a very good year in terms of the issue!

ANNUAL DUES: Each League member, voting family members and associates, must pay dues of \$25 per year to remain on the League's active membership role. Most have responded to this requirement since the policy was put into place by the Board of Directors and supported by League members voting at a prior annual meeting; however, some have not. Those who are more than two years in arrears have been deleted from the mailing list and will need to rejoin the League to again become an active member. All who receive this long overdue newsletter should assume that the \$25 annual donation is now due, unless you have sent a check since October.

The date on the top of your name label is the date on which dues are payable, but the labels were printed in August, so they were outdated before this mailing due to circumstances previously mentioned. The February mailing will have current labels. If your label does not read "1 Jan 02" on top, it will mean that dues have not been paid for the New Year, 2002. To remain an active League member and receive mailings, and be eligible to vote if you are a family member, dues payment of \$25 per person will be required no later than April 1, 2002, or your name will be dropped from the active list.

Comment: The League does not have sufficient funds to send mailings and provide assistance to those who are unwilling to support our efforts in such a minimal way. If there are extenuating circumstances that prevent this small donation, please call the League office at 703-465-7432 to discuss the problem and make other arrangements. For those who can send more, please do. The League is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization, with Federal tax-exempt status, #23-7071242.

The Board and I want to express special thanks to those of you who regularly and reliably send monthly contributions to help achieve the League's goals. You know who you are, and many of you wish to remain anonymous, but your generosity is deeply appreciated.

We also want to express appreciation to those whose loved ones were recently accounted for that designated the League to receive memorial donations in lieu of flowers at the interment. This gesture is doubly rewarding: 1) all donations are put to good use to help others get answers; and 2) designating the League recognizes the fact that without the League over the many years since formed in 1970, the POW/MIA issue would not have survived to become what it is today, covering all wars around the world.

THE VIRTUAL WALL: Through the generosity of Kinko's (in the states), anyone is able to use the available resources – such as computers, scanners, specially developed software and the help of their employees – to attach a photo with the name of their loved one on the Virtual Wall, the online version of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, DC. The Virtual Wall was developed in 1998 in an effort to extend the legacy of the Wall. And with more than one million visitors per month, this Web version is the perfect opportunity to share one's personal story, as well as remembrances, veteran profiles and name rubbings. This program is a wonderful way to honor these brave Americans. For more information, you can visit the Virtual Wall at <http://www.thevirtualwall.org> or check out the program at <http://www.kinkos.com/theVirtualWall>. Additional information is posted on the VVMF website at <http://www.vvmf.org/> but act quickly since the deadline is December 31st.

POW/MIA MISSION MEETS TRAGEDY: The POW/MIA families were deeply saddened to learn of the tragic loss on April 7th of seven American servicemen and nine Vietnamese during a field survey mission in Vietnam. We will not forget their service to a noble cause and offer heartfelt condolences to the families of these men.

President and Mrs. Bush immediately issued a statement regarding this tragedy: *"Laura and I were deeply saddened to learn of the crash this morning in central Vietnam of a helicopter carrying sixteen people, including seven U.S. military personnel, who were on an important mission to find and recover the remains of servicemen missing from the Vietnam War. The families of the service personnel lost in today's tragic accident know better than most the contribution their loved ones made in bringing closure to scores of families across America. Today's loss is a terrible one for our Nation. Although not lost in a hostile act, like those for whom they search, they too have lived lives of great consequence, answering a calling of service to their fellow citizens. As we enter a period of religious holidays across America, may we remember their sacrifice and keep them, and their families, in our thoughts and prayers."*

On April 25th, a Memorial Service was held for the seven Americans and nine Vietnamese lost during an April 7th field survey mission in Vietnam. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz offered remarks consoling the families of those lost – both American and Vietnamese – and reassuring in terms of POW/MIA accounting. *"On behalf of those we honor today, and on behalf of those still missing, we rededicate ourselves to the fullest possible accounting of every American. We offer our deepest thanks to our Vietnamese colleagues who grieve with us, and who will renew with us the charge of our valiant dead."*

Former JTF-FA Commander BG Harry Axson, USA, and League Executive Director Ann Mills Griffiths participated in the service, as did Vietnam's former Charge d'Affaires in Washington, DC, Pham Que, who also served as former head of the Vietnamese Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP).

LEAGUE OFFICE MOVED: Due to tremendous increases in the cost of office space in downtown Washington, DC, there was no choice but to move from the building where the League office had been located since moving from The American Legion's Washington headquarters office in 1989. Our new address is: **1005 North Glebe Road, Suite 170, Arlington, VA 22201**. Or, after January 7th, call **703-465-7432**. If no one is available to take your call, be sure to leave a detailed message.

The number for the 24-hour Update Line is 703-465-8444.

RECEIVE POW/M8IA UPDATES ONLINE: For added information on any subject, please contact the League through our website at <http://www.pow-miafamilies.org>. Then, send us an email, asking to be added to our electronic distribution to receive frequent updates.