

# NEWSLETTER

December 18, 1998

AMG:123

**ACCOUNTING FOR FIVE AMERICANS ACHIEVED:** Since the Leagues 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in June, the Department of Defense (DOD) announced only five Americans as accounted for from the Vietnam War.

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, DOD announced that two Americans previously missing in North Vietnam were identified, but at his familys request, the name of one of the two Air Force officers was withheld. The officer named is **Major Woodrow W. Parker, II**, missing since April 24, 1968 in a Phantom F-4D over North Vietnam. The remains of both officers were jointly recovered in June, 1992 and October, 1993. On October 30<sup>th</sup>, DOD advised that another Air Force officer previously missing in North Vietnam was also accounted for. Again, at the request of his family, the name of this officer, missing since October 6, 1972, was not publicly announced; his remains were recovered in September, 1990.

On November 30<sup>th</sup>, the names of two Americans previously missing in Laos were announced as accounted for. **Colonel Gregory I. Barras, USAF**, was listed as missing December 18, 1968 while on a night-flying reconnaissance mission over Laos. Remains were recovered by Joint Casualty Resolution Center (JCRC) and Lao personnel in 1991. The remains of **Captain Joseph O. Brown, USAF**, were recovered in Laos in 1994-5 during two separate joint field operations.

The accounting for these five Americans brings the number still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War to 2,076. Of that total, 1,549 are missing in Vietnam (North, 563; South, 986); Laos 444; Cambodia 75; Peoples Republic of China (PRC) territorial waters 8. A total of 507 Americans have been returned and accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War: Vietnam-375 (164 showed evidence of storage; 1 was turned in by an indigenous source); Laos-125 (all jointly recovered except 3 brought in by indigenous personnel); Cambodia-5 (all jointly recovered); and China-2 (unilateral turnover by the PRC government). **During the two Clinton Administrations, a total of 139 have been returned and identified: 72 from Vietnam; 63 from Laos; and 4 from Cambodia.**

**Comment:** There are several factors to consider when gauging the level of cooperation by Vietnam which still holds the key to obtaining the Leagues objective of the fullest possible accounting for Americas POW/MIAs. First the obvious: far more Americans are missing and unaccounted for in Vietnam than elsewhere. Second, the US Government has extensive documentation about Vietnams comprehensive process during the war and since to collect remains of and information on US casualties. Third, nearly 85% of the 444 missing in Laos and 90% of the 75 unaccounted for in Cambodia were lost in areas under the control of Vietnamese forces during the war. Joint field operations are absolutely needed in Vietnam, but especially in Laos where, by comparison, there was minimal ability to document incidents, especially in remote areas. (At the time, control was split

between Pathet Lao, Royal Lao and Vietnamese, with Chinese and Soviet participation and assistance.)

Fourth, the number of remains that reveal evidence of storage is far below the number previously judged by the US intelligence community as likely available. The National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), recently conducted by Clinton Administration officials, is classified, other than selected findings that support drastic reductions in accounting expectations. To date, despite Clinton Administration claims of full faith cooperation, the Government of Vietnam has provided **no** incident-specific records on cases in Laos or Cambodia. Vietnam long ago provided a summary of aircraft incidents in Laos, written in one person's hand, but has not yet even provided the source documents used to compile the summary, known as the Group 559 Summary of incidents along an area of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Although some progress is being made through joint excavations in Vietnam, there is still almost total reliance on joint activities and too little on unilateral Vietnamese actions. There has been some increase in willingness by both US and SRV officials to schedule longer and more frequent periods for unilateral investigations by Vietnamese teams. However, there appears to be little acceptance by US officials that Vietnam can unilaterally repatriate remains of Americans that are still being withheld. Examples of where only unilateral Vietnamese actions are logical include cases where it is established that the missing American was alive in captivity, or in close proximity to capture by Vietnamese forces, such as the Last Known Alive (LKA) cases, but also those photographed dead, out of an aircraft, but no remains have been returned. These, too, are discrepancy cases that were provided for many years, including in the Vessey Cases, to the Government of Vietnam.

**SECRETARY OF DEFENSE MEETS WITH SENIOR SRV OFFICIAL.** On October 1<sup>st</sup>, Secretary of Defense William Cohen met with Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam at the Pentagon. Secretary Cohen reportedly raised the POW/MIA issue as a US priority in the bilateral relationship. The SRV Vice Minister of Defense, with whom the League Delegation met in 1997, also led a senior Vietnamese military delegation that was hosted by DOD as part of the expanding military dialogue between the two countries.

**Comment:** Understanding the nature of Vietnam's military-based, communist government, such exchanges should be encouraged, providing that the opportunity is used by US officials to press for renewed unilateral Vietnamese actions to account for missing Americans. It is for this reason that the League encouraged sending a Defense Attaché and urging senior US military officials to go to Hanoi.

**MEETINGS WITH SENIOR LAO OFFICIALS:** On September 25<sup>th</sup>, League friend, adviser and 8-year Reagan Administration National Security Council Director for Asian Affairs Richard Childress and League Executive Director Ann Mills Griffiths met with Lao Deputy Prime Minister-Foreign Minister Somsavath Lengsavath at the Lao Embassy in Washington, DC. The Ministers' private visit to Washington was very brief, but all relevant POW/MIA matters were discussed, including expanded access for oral history interviews. The Minister also met with Assistant Secretary of State for Asian & Pacific Affairs Stanley Roth on September 24<sup>th</sup> in New York City when senior officials from around the world attended the Opening Session of the UN General Assembly. On August 24<sup>th</sup>, the League Executive Director also met with the newly arrived Lao Ambassador, Vang Rattanaong, for discussions on all aspects of the POW/MIA issue.

**STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL VISITS LAOS AND VIETNAM:** Newly appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (DAS/EAP) Ralph Skip Boyce visited Laos, Vietnam and Thailand during the first week of December. Prior to his departure, the League provided an extensive background briefing and material for his review.

**Comment:** . Although the League does not have a full readout on the trip, indications are that he raised all of the salient concerns in Hanoi and Vientiane. This was particularly useful as a follow-up to DASD Jones trip, reported below. Having served in both Thailand and Singapore, DAS Boyce comes to his position with significant experience in and knowledge of Southeast Asia, including the countries in which the League has primary interest. It is hoped that Mr. Boyce will bring a new spirit of objectivity to efforts by the State Department to pursue the Presidents stated priority, the fullest possible accounting for Americas POW/MIAs from the Vietnam War.

**DOD DELEGATION TO VIETNAM:** From November 2-5<sup>th</sup>, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for POW/MIA Affairs Bob Jones led an official delegation to Vietnam. He met with the Vice Ministers of Defense, Public Security (former Interior Ministry) and Foreign Affairs and with the Chairman of the National Assemblys Foreign Affairs Committee. The delegation included the JTF commander, the new Stony Beach commander and other DPMO and JTF staff.

DASD Jones commended Vietnams initiative in increasing their unilateral investigations from which useful results are being obtained. Among other documents, he requested specific Vietnamese policy directives regarding searching for, verifying and recovering the graves and personal effects of American casualties and emphasized the need for Vietnamese documents to aid in conducting trilateral efforts with Laos. According to the official DPMO report, DASD Jones told the SRV officials that US focus is to continue working to *resolve those 833 Vietnam cases which warrant further pursuit, discover information about other Americans lost in the border areas of Cambodia and Laos, and find new information on those 151 Vietnam cases that are in a deferred status.*

The Vietnamese were provided with a list of 602 names of US personnel who fall into a No Further Pursuit category, 569 of whom are unaccounted for in Vietnam, and the names of the 151 deferred cases on which new leads are sought. (Family members who do not know the category in which their missing relative is listed should contact their Service Casualty Office to request this information.) The Vice Minister of Defense stated his hope to close investigations on the No Further Pursuit cases and pledged to seek more information on the deferred cases. The Vice Minister of Public Security agreed to examine the lists, but stated that the SRV has no further information on either list of cases.

Regarding LKA cases, DASD Jones characterized as positive the agreement for working level meetings to share ideas on how best to determine their fate. The SRV Vice Ministers, despite protesting that LSIs (live sighting investigations) are unnecessary and a poor use of resources and time, agreed to continue cooperation. All SRV officials pledged to continue the Oral History Program.

**Comment:** From all indications, the Jones Delegation was the most useful for the issue of the many that have occurred in recent years. Other than repeating the Presidents (in our view false) certification that Vietnam is *fully cooperating in good faith*, DASD Jones appears to have raised valid points and sought solutions to problems. However, in an AP-Hanoi article published November 4<sup>th</sup>, DASD Jones was quoted as stating, *We are very happy with the results we have achieved.* If accurately quoted, the

League disagrees with his assessment and is not happy with the results thus far achieved, but does recognize and appreciate Vietnams support for joint field activities. **The League calls on Vietnam to take unilateral actions to locate and return remains and provide the documents needed to help account for those involved in incidents that cannot be resolved in the field. Until such unilateral actions occur, the fullest possible accounting will not be achieved.**

**CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO VIETNAM:** According to a Vietnamese Government press release, *General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Le Kha Phieu met with the visiting American Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Phil Gramm (R-TX) in Hanoi on November 14<sup>th</sup>. The senators were in Vietnam as part of an Asian tour to study the impact of the regions economic crisis. The release went on to say, The senators thanked the Government and people of Vietnam for their positive cooperation in the search for servicemen listed as missing in action (MIA) and pledged to do their utmost to boost economic, trade and investment relations between the two countries. And they wished for an ever stronger and more prosperous Vietnam.*

**TECHNICAL OPERATIONS VIETNAM:** US/SRV technical talks were held in Da Lat, Vietnam, shortly before arrival of the Jones Delegation. JTF Commander BG Terry Tucker, USA, and DPMO and CILHI staff provided SRV officials with a statistical summary of activities over the past ten years, and both sides focused on improving the effectiveness of joint operations and plans for the upcoming joint field activities. US/SRV technical talks will again be held in mid-January, possibly in Hawaii.

**Remains Repatriated:** On August 25<sup>th</sup>, remains believed to be those of 7 US personnel were turned over after joint review by forensic anthropologists. On November 5<sup>th</sup>, remains that may be those of 3 or more Americans were repatriated at a ceremony attended by the Jones Delegation and US Ambassador to Vietnam Douglas Pete Peterson. The remains were flown to the US Armys Central Identification Laboratory (CILHI) where analysis is underway to establish individual identification.

In late August, **joint field operations** were conducted for a period of about 30 days. The schedule called for investigation of 47 cases involving aircraft and ground losses in 15 Vietnamese provinces, and as many as 8 excavations. Joint field activities resumed November 5<sup>th</sup>, with the intention of investigating another 52 cases and excavating as many as 10 sites in 26 provinces of Vietnam within the 32-day period that concluded on December 7<sup>th</sup>.

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, an **SRV team resumed unilateral investigations** that DPMO and JTF view as increasingly productive. Reports from these investigations are provided to the US government and are said to be developing useful new leads on individual cases. Another period of unilateral SRV efforts is scheduled to occur January 9-30<sup>th</sup>.

**Comment:** Scheduling 99 investigations and 18 excavations within a total of just over 60 days is a sizable number for such a short period. The League has long supported a policy of pursuing quality, versus quantity, and measuring progress by the accountability achieved, not the pace and scope of joint field activities. **A credible investigation process must be maintained despite the volume of activities scheduled during each field operation.** The families recognize that JTF-FA, CILHI and DIA/Stony Beach personnel endure serious difficulty and some danger while conducting field operations and appreciate their sacrifices. We also recognize that US field teams cannot obtain results in the field that have been recovered earlier through Vietnams program for recovery and documentation

of American losses. **Regarding unilateral SRV investigations**, the League has long sought such efforts and is encouraged by Hanoi initiative. Even more encouraging would be a unilateral Vietnamese effort to resume recovery and repatriation of identifiable remains. The League seeks accountability the man returned alive, or his remains, or convincing evidence as to why neither is possible. **Reports, records, archives and oral history become critical when the desired outcome of accountability is not possible.**

**TECHNICAL OPERATIONS-LAOS: POW/MIA consultations**, led by the JTF-FA Commander, brought positive Lao government agreements to: 1) make additional sources available for interviews; 2) provide responses by current and former Lao officials to US-prepared questionnaires; and 3) continue efforts to improve the joint accounting process. The Lao POW/MIA team visited CILHI and JTF headquarters in Hawaii to obtain more detailed information on US capabilities to achieve the accounting. The next such consultations are scheduled to occur February 23-24<sup>th</sup>.

**Month-long US-Lao joint field operations** concluded just prior to the start of activities in Vietnam on November 5<sup>th</sup>. The US-Lao teams succeeded in recovering remains at 2 of 3 excavation sites. US officials are hopeful that remains will be found at the 3<sup>rd</sup> site where numerous items of crew-related equipment and aircraft wreckage were recovered. A follow-up excavation of this site will occur during the next joint field operation that begins January 12<sup>th</sup>. Shortly after the joint field operations noted above, the **Lao conducted unilateral investigations** from November 15-30<sup>th</sup>.

**Comment:** This initiative by the Lao to conduct unilateral investigations can be very helpful in locating sources for interview as part of the Oral History Program. Since there was not a comprehensive Lao government process for collection and storage of remains and information, interviews may be the only source of information on cases about which little is known unless the US or Laos succeeds in convincing Vietnam to provide its case-specific records.

**TECHNICAL OPERATIONS-CAMBODIA:** The DPMO-contracted research effort in Cambodia is concluded, though much remains to be done, and some useful information was obtained. The political situation in Phnom Penh recently stabilized through formation of a new government. Most US officials have resumed their missions, and JTF is now scheduled to begin a small-scale field operation on January 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Comment:** Oral history interviews should proceed without further delay. The League is awaiting notice that US Ambassador to Cambodia Ken Quinn has authorized Stony Beach Khmer specialist to return to Phnom Penh and resume his tasks. When that occurs, it will be a signal that the MOU explained below is being implemented seriously and that some of the obstacles have been overcome. Given the successful formation of the new government in Phnom Penh, further delay is not warranted.

**MOU IMPLEMENTATION:** The Defense POW/MIA Office, JTF-FA and Defense Intelligence Agency recently reached tentative agreement in a Memorandum of Understanding to restore DIAs role in the accounting effort through renewed participation by DIAs Stony Beach field office in Bangkok.

**Comment:** Vietnamese intelligence officials participate in most POW/MIA meetings and operations. Reintegration of Stony Beach into the process will also allow such officials to exchange information and expertise on this humanitarian issue. The League worked for years to restore Stony Beach to its

original role and looks forward to full MOU implementation, but there may yet be turf obstacles to overcome. To his credit, DASD Bob Jones has been a strong advocate of full integration, as have DIA Director LTG Pat Hughes and Director of Operations BG Bob Harding. All assets and resources should be used to obtain accounting results as rapidly as possible, but there are indications that some have another agenda, one that does not include ensuring that the POW/MIA issue is given priority. Vietnamese intelligence officials participate in most POW/MIA meetings and operations; reintegration of Stony Beach into the process will allow such officials to interface on this humanitarian issue.

**NIE KEY FINDINGS RELEASED:** In July, George Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence, authorized release of key findings from a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) entitled Vietnamese Intentions, Capabilities, and Performance Concerning the POW/MIA issue. It is a very short summary of a lengthy (60+ pages) assessment conducted by the intelligence community, the first since 1987. The text included a Summary Evaluation which labeled Vietnam's level of cooperation on joint field activities and recovery and repatriation of remains as excellent and continuously improving since 1990, with increased professionalism. It also characterized providing documents, personal artifacts and equipment as good and making officials available for interviews as fair to good. On LSI investigations, cooperation was gauged as reluctant but still reasonably good and, importantly, on transfer of POWs to the Soviet Union as uncertain, noting that Vietnam says none were transferred but (the) issue remains open.

Senator Bob Smith (R-NH) has completed a thorough analysis of the NIE, and it has now been published and distributed; however, it had to be in classified form since the NIE is still classified. Senator Smith urged declassification of everything -- the NIE, his own analysis and the analysis done earlier by DPMO which, reportedly, points out several disconnects in the NIE.

**Comment:** CIA Director Tenet denied the League's appeal for full declassification, claiming his responsibility to protect sources and methods as the primary reason. His denial letter claimed that release of the key findings was an effort to respond to the League's interest and that of others, that the best intelligence experts participated, and that the assessment was not politicized. Such assertions are not plausible. Those who participated may be excellent intelligence analysts on broader issues, but none were expert on the POW/MIA issue, and much of what has long been well known to the League and others was not even considered in the final NIE.

It is important to recognize and understand the significance of the extensive US Government effort to generate favorable media reporting about excellent Vietnamese cooperation, versus the CIA's decision to deny release of evidence of non-cooperation by classifying the official estimate. Refusal to declassify and release the NIE has occurred despite presidential directives and many assurances by President Clinton that all POW/MIA information is made available to the families. Despite this, Mr. Tenet stated that he appreciates the important work of the League, values the League's advice on POW/MIA matters and shares our desire to achieve a full accounting of those who have served their country in battle and are now unaccounted for. We can always hope that the Director of Central Intelligence's expressed sentiments permeate the intelligence bureaucracy.

**POW/MIA OVERSIGHT HEARING HELD:** A hearing was held on October 2<sup>nd</sup> before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, House Committee on National Security, chaired by Congressman Steve Buyer (R-IN). Witnesses included Under Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

Walt Slocombe, DASD Jones, John Sommer, Jr., Executive Director of The American Legion, Bob Dumas, Korean War POW/MIA brother, Donna Knox, representing a newly formed Korean War/Cold War family group, and League Executive Director Ann Mills Griffiths. In view of this Sub-committee's responsibility, League testimony focused primarily on personnel issues, such as the need for personnel expansion to cover existing requirements, full utilization of resources to accomplish accounting objectives, and an assessment of real progress to date. Copies of the testimony can be obtained by calling the Subcommittee at 202-225-7560.

**US/RUSSIAN COMMISSION:** On November 25<sup>th</sup>, President Clinton announced that he was appointing Major General Roland Lajoie, USA (Retired), as the US Co-Chairman of the US-Russian Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, effective December 1<sup>st</sup>. He replaces Ambassador Malcolm Toon who has retired. A highly decorated veteran, MG Lajoie served two tours in Vietnam and held numerous important national security positions over his 35-year military career, including Army Attaché to the former USSR.

During an early November session of the Commission held in Moscow, Russian officials presented to the US a collection of some 6,000 documents and 300 photographs from their military archives. All of the material pertains to the former Soviet Union's 64<sup>th</sup> Fighter Aviation Corps which flew 74% of all combat sorties by communist forces during the Korean War. Senator Bob Smith, then in Moscow as a member of the Commission and Chairman of the Vietnam Working Group, called release of the documents a *dramatic breakthrough*. He indicated that the information should help determine what happened to some of the over 8,000 Americans still unaccounted for from the Korean War. DPMO stated that it may take a year to process all of the documents, but as progress is made, the documents and translated copies will be provided to the affected families and sent to the Library of Congress.

**Comment:** The League welcomes this release of information, though long-withheld, and expresses appreciation to former US Co-Chairman Ambassador Malcolm Toon and to Senator Smith for their continuing determination to account for missing Americans. Hopefully, MG Lajoie will be more successful than the State Department and others have thus far been in persuading Russian officials to provide the critical document cited by former Russian Co-Chairman of the Commission Lt. General Dimitri Volkogonov, now deceased, as evidence that the Soviet Union had specific plans to transport US POWs from the Vietnam War to the USSR, to exploit them for intelligence.

**KOREAN WAR ACCOUNTING EFFORTS:** On November 6<sup>th</sup>, remains that could be those of 9 American servicemen missing since the Korean War were turned over at Panmunjom during a ceremony attended by DASD Jones who was in the Republic of Korea (South Korea) meeting with senior officials. (DASD Jones had planned to meet with North Korean and Chinese officials, but these visits were postponed.) The remains were recovered by a joint US-North Korean team about 100 miles north of Pyongyang, during operations that continued over a 24-day period.

This was the 5<sup>th</sup> US-North Korea joint operation during 1998 and the 9<sup>th</sup> since such recoveries began in 1996. A total of 27 remains believed to be those of US personnel have been recovered and repatriated since field recoveries in North Korea were begun. This latest effort was the most successful to date in terms of the number of remains recovered, but the North Korean government cautioned US officials

that such humanitarian cooperation depends on the US attitude, citing continued US military exercises with South Korea as an example of poor attitude.

During early December, talks were held in New York between the US and the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK) in an effort to reach agreement for increased joint field operations and greater access to records and potential sources of information. DPRK officials agreed to increase the number of joint field activities from five to six per year, conduct interviews (accompanied by US officials) to obtain POW/MIA-related information, and agreed in principle to permit excavation of grave sites at cemeteries adjacent to known wartime POW camp locations.

**MORE SOUTH KOREAN POWs ESCAPE:** Of significant interest to all involved in the POW/MIA issue was the escape and return of more former South Korean soldiers who were captured and held in captivity all of these years. Five POWs have now escaped from the North and reported that others are still held captive. Some 40,000 South Korean prisoners were not returned at the end of the Korean conflict, but the communist North maintains that all POWs were released in 1953. DOD officials work closely with the South Korean government to interview these returned POWs.

**DOD SEEKS TO LOCATE POW/MIA FAMILIES:** The Defense Department and the Military Services are seeking to locate Korean War and Cold War POW/MIA families. Announcements at meetings of veterans organizations, civic and church groups and other community functions would be helpful. Trying to locate them after so many years is difficult. The Military Services still seek some **Vietnam War POW/MIA families** who have never established contact with the Service Casualty Offices. As age increases, so does the urgency to ensure that blood samples for possible DNA matching are obtained. POW/MIA families should contact the Defense POW/MIA Office, 202-602-2102, Ext. 165-USA; Ext. 166-USN; Ext. 167-USMC; Ext. 162-USAF, or their Service Casualty Office: USA: 800-892-2490; USN: 800-443-9298; USMC: 800-847-1597; USAF: 800-531-4401.

**NOTICE TO POW/MIA FAMILIES:** The Defense POW/MIA Office has developed a written procedure regarding family member access to DPMO-held case files. Arrangements can be made to personally review the file at DPMO headquarters or a hard-copy duplicate of the file can be obtained by calling one of the numbers listed above. If you have not yet obtained a complete case file on your missing relative, the League urges that you do so. The League has many examples of the importance of taking personal responsibility for closely monitoring official actions to account for the missing. If you need assistance, the League has a list of recommendations that may be useful. (Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the League office to obtain a copy of the procedure and recommendations.)

**LEAGUE mtDNA POLICY ESTABLISHED:** In a precedent-setting case, long-standing League members COL and Mrs. Woodrow Parker insisted on second testing of remains believed to be their sons due to contradictions between investigation reports and forensic data. The positive outcome reinforced the validity of Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) analysis. The results of both AFDIL and a private laboratory that conducted the second test (including separate cutting of the remains and separate blood sample) were compatible. The Armed Forces Identification Review Board (AFIRB) concluded its review of the findings from both laboratories, and Major Parker was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery on September 25<sup>th</sup>.

In a related action, the Board of Directors unanimously established League policy on second testing using mtDNA technology, as follows: *The League supports USG-funded 2<sup>nd</sup> testing (to include taking separate samples of the bone) if discrepancies exist between investigation and forensic reporting and sufficient bone material has been recovered to permit 2<sup>nd</sup> testing without destroying burial potential. Further, if these condition are not met and the primary-next-of-kin (PNOK) wishes 2<sup>nd</sup> testing/cutting, it should be permitted at the expense of the PNOK only if it will not preclude the potential for burial, i.e. final disposition of remains by the PNOK or, failing that, the Secretary responsible.*

**TOMB OF THE UNKNOWNNS:** At its October 2-3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, the League Board of Directors revised and approved recommended language to inscribe on the cover of the marble crypt reserved for Vietnam War remains at the Tomb of the Unknowns. The Boards unanimous recommendation is *In honor of those still missing, this crypt remains forever empty, 1961 1975* for the inscription.

**Comment:** DOD has not made a final decision on the wording or the requests by some to inter other remains that have not yet been identified. The Leagues position is that forensic science and mtDNA technology continue to improve and, therefore, unknown remains will no longer be available. **A check several months ago revealed that there are no remains at CILHI that meet the criteria for interment in the Tomb of the Unknowns.** That is positive and signals success, not failure, of the identification process. The League has requested that a ceremony to dedicate the inscription be held at 11:00 a.m. on the opening day of the **Leagues 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, June 17, 1999.**

**LSEL EXPANDS CAPACITY:** The League was recently notified that the additional personnel have been authorized to expand the ability of the Air Forces Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory (LSEL) to conduct its critical work. The eight highly qualified people who join the staff of LSEL and its Life Sciences Artifact Section (LSAS) will be instrumental in facilitating the pace of scientific analysis that brings answers to families about the incidents involving their missing men. **LSELs work is especially crucial when remains are not recovered during joint field operations.** In such cases, the reports generated by LSEL may be the only information that is ever known. This long-sought expansion is very welcome and much appreciated!

**NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY:** On September 17<sup>th</sup>, the President joined the governors of all 50 states by proclaiming September 18<sup>th</sup> as National POW/MIA Recognition Day. The national ceremony was held at the Pentagon, hosted by Secretary of Defense William Cohen. In his remarks, Secretary Cohen noted the importance of US priority on accounting for our missing as a matter of principal on which todays military personnel depend. COL Norman McDaniel, USAF-Ret., a returned POW from the Vietnam War, was the principal speaker. Unfortunately, his remarks did not focus attention on the need to account as fully as possible for those still missing.

The Leagues POW/MIA flag again flew over the US Capitol, the White House, all relevant Washington, DC-based departments and agencies and all US Post Offices, military installations and VA facilities nationwide, and ceremonies were held throughout the country. **Recognition Day posters can be obtained by calling the League office.**

**Comment:** The League expresses appreciation to all of the veterans, government officials and others who helped make successful this years effort to get Recognition Day proclamations from all 50 states. The number since 1993 had steadily declined, due primarily to repeated, false administration claims

that Vietnam is cooperating fully and that the issue is well on the way to resolution. It is heartening to see the renewed interest on the part of all state governments and the American people.

Also on National POW/MIA Recognition Day, US Ambassador to Vietnam Douglas Pete Peterson flew by helicopter to visit two field operations, with resultant press coverage. The Ambassador continues to publicly overstate the level of Vietnams cooperation, as he did at the Leagues 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting. It is unknown whether this is due to a lack of in-depth knowledge, unwillingness to accept the validity of empirical data and intelligence regarding what Vietnam can do on its own to account for missing Americans or other reasons. **The greatest obstacle to achieving the fullest possible accounting is Vietnams failure to date to resume unilateral efforts to locate and return remains and provide relevant records still being withheld.** With a such a constant stream of praise from administration officials, Hanoi may no longer feel it is necessary to take such actions.

**LEAGUE/POW/MIA ISSUE HONORED:** The Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge recently selected the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia to receive its prestigious George Washington National Awards medal. Also honored with selection for this award are League Chairman of the Board JoAnne Shirley, Executive Director Ann Mills Griffiths and Georgia State Coordinator Susie Ragan, as President of the Georgia Committee for POW/MIA, Inc. This decision by the Freedoms Foundation is deeply appreciated, especially for the long-deserved attention to our national, collective effort to account for Americas POW/MIAs. The awards are to be presented in Atlanta, Georgia, during January, 1999.

**USS DONALD COOK (DDG 75) COMMISSIONED:** On December 4<sup>th</sup>, the United States Navy held a formal ceremony in Philadelphia, PA, to commission the USS DONALD COOK, named in honor of COL Donald Cook, USMC, who was wounded and captured by a vastly superior Viet Cong force on New Years Eve 1964 in Phouc Tuy Province, South Vietnam. COL Cook died in captivity after heroic service that posthumously earned him our nations highest combat award, the MEDAL OF HONOR. USS DONALD COOK is an Arleigh Burke class guided missile destroyer, now based in Norfolk, VA, as part of the US Atlantic Fleet, is the only ship named for a Vietnam War POW. Congratulations to Mrs. Laurette Cook, wife of COL Cook and a founding member of the League, and her four children who participated throughout development, from laying the keel at Bath Iron Works, Bath, ME, on July 9, 1996, through the official launch on May 9, 1997, to commissioning this month.

**30<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING:** This years **30<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, June 17-19, 1999**, will provide a very special opportunity to all League members and friends. The Board of Directors is strongly urging attendance by all charter members and former Board members, pioneers of the Leagues formation. Members are asked to encourage former members and friends to attend. Registration will be \$40 per person. Further information, including from DOD and the Services, will be provided in subsequent League and USG mailings. This advance notice is provided to allow adequate time for planning.

The 30<sup>th</sup> annual Meeting will be held at the **Washington Marriott Hotel**, as it was last year, and the rates are the same for accommodations: \$105 for single and double occupancy; \$109 for triple and quad occupancy, plus tax. **Commercial airline transportation for two family members per American still missing from the Vietnam War will be authorized by the Secretary of Defense** to travel to and from nearby Washington, DC, airports. These include Reagan National, Dulles

International and Baltimore-Washington International airports. The primary-next-of-kin will be responsible for determining which two family members are eligible to accept the commercial travel. This is only fair, since it would be inappropriate for DOD to make such a decision for a family.

**League Photo-History Project:** Dedicated League concerned citizen/volunteers Tra Mason and Francine Nesson, both of whom have also served many years on our Sergeants-at-Arms Committee, have offered to put together a video collage of historic photographs associated with the League. Tra, owner of a photography studio, and Francine (chairman of last years BINGO) volunteered to record some of the Leagues history and, possibly, also raise funds for the League. Members, especially charter members and those who served on the Board of Directors through the years, plus long-time concerned citizens and former USG officials who have attended League annual meetings, are urged to **dig into your personal files and send photos to include in this historic video.** Please include photos from League-sponsored trips (Geneva, Paris, Vientiane, Saigon, Bangkok, etc.) board meetings, annual meetings, regional and state meetings, and any other events (such as early demonstrations at the State Department and the Chinese Embassy) that will add to this historic video.

At the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, **orders will be taken for duplicate videos**, and proceeds above cost will be donated to the League. Be sure to include your return address, a description of the event, date, location and names of those portrayed in the photos (with sticky notes). Please send them to the League office for collection and onward shipment to Tra and Francine, to be returned after production is complete. **Deadline for submitting photos for the video is April 15, 1999.**

**Program Highlights:** The Opening Session, 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, will be brief, but include introduction of the 1999-2001 Board of Directors and unveiling of the **1999 National POW/MIA Recognition Day Poster.** At 10:15 a.m., Military District of Washington (MDW) will provide bus transportation to Arlington National Cemetery for a wreath-laying ceremony. The League has requested that the inscription on the cover at the **Tomb of the Unknowns for the Vietnam War** be dedicated at that time. (There has as yet been no official response to this request; however, a wreath-laying ceremony will be held regardless of the Defense Departments decision.)

The afternoon session will begin with a **luncheon for all Navy, Marine Corps and Civilian POW/MIA families**, hosted by the United States Navy, United States Marine Corps and State Department, followed by a presentation on the VVA Initiative by the Vietnam Veterans of America, a keynote address, hopefully by **Secretary of Defense William Cohen**, and the **Executive Directors Report for the year.** This will be followed by an **Interagency Policy Forum**, with senior officials from the National Security Council and Departments of State and Defense invited to participate. **MDW will provide transportation to the Marine Corps Barracks, 8<sup>th</sup> & I, for a special event featuring a musical program and the USMC Drill Team.** (En route to the hotel, an optional visit to the National Vietnam Veterans and Korean War Memorials will be available.)

Friday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, following a **breakfast for all Army POW/MIA families**, hosted by the United States Army, will be all DOD presentations. Briefings will be given by each organization that has a direct role in the accounting effort, including DPMO, DIA, JTF-FA, LSEL, CILHI and AFDIL. A **luncheon for all Air Force POW/MIA families**, hosted by the United States Air Force, will precede the afternoon session that will adjourn in time for annual dinner preparation.

The **30<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner and Candlelight Ceremony**, preceded by a no-host reception, will be both inspirational and entertaining. Recognizing that the all-day DOD briefings can be tiring, the League has sought to bring back the **82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne All American Chorus** from Ft. Bragg, NC. This year, it was possible, thanks to the efforts of Major Russ Scott, USMC, the DPMO Action Officer. It is hoped that General Hugh Shelton, USA, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will accept the Leagues invitation to be the guest speaker. The annual dinner will be a combined event of the Vietnam War and the Korean/Cold War families, and seating limited to only 300 will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Attendance is optional, and tickets are \$35 per person.

Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, will include a **League business meeting** and a **lengthy session devoted to asking questions of DOD officials from all organizations** who made presentations. The concluding events are scheduled for relaxation and enjoyment. Last years successful and entertaining **BINGO** game was followed by **Karaoke** in the hotel lounge that not only served as a fundraiser for the League, but was said by all to be lots of fun. Organized by the younger generation (daughters, sons, nephews, nieces and grandchildren), the Board had numerous requests to ensure that this event was again included.

**Assistance to Korean/Cold War POW/MIA Families:** Prior to the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, the League offered the Korean/Cold War families free meeting space and the same room rates during our annual meeting to facilitate their first such event. At that time, the Korean/Cold War Family Association of the Missing was not yet able to pull things together to ensure a useful meeting, but requested assistance in 1999, and the League Board of Directors has agreed to provide it. There are vast differences between Vietnam War and the Korean/Cold War circumstances and the approach to accounting for the prisoners and missing, but family members have the same generic problems and uncertainty with which to deal. For these reasons, there will be separate meetings, but no conflicting requirements, and some joint activities. The Leagues annual meeting will be conducted as in the past.

**Program Ads:** For several years, the League has published a very striking 8 ½ x 11 program that includes several categories of paid ads, ranging in price from \$10 to list your own name as a supporter to \$750 for a full page inside the front or back cover. A flyer is included with this newsletter so that all recipients will have an opportunity to participate. Those who have attended recent meetings are aware that these are keepsake programs, and this years will be extra special. Such ads not only afford businesses the opportunity to demonstrate support, but are a source of funds to help the League and offset costs for the annual meeting to keep registration fees as low as possible.

**1999-2001 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION:** Per Article VI, Section 2, of the League bylaws, election of the 7-member Board of Directors is to be held by the next annual meeting. Candidates for a two-year term on the Board must be League family members in good standing who are willing to donate the time and money required to function effectively as a member, including attendance at meetings of the Board at his/her personal expense. Such meetings are normally held in Washington, DC, five times each year, one of which is held during the scheduled annual meeting. Board members are required to be available from noon on the designated Friday until noon the following Sunday. This advance notice is included to give League members time to consider their ability to serve as a member of the Board of Directors. Applications will be distributed with the next League newsletter.

**1999 MEMBERSHIP DUES:** As previously announced, the League Board of Directors adopted a policy requiring payment of dues in the amount of \$25 per year, per member. Although this policy has resulted in fewer members, those who are willing to support the League in this reasonable way are most likely those who truly appreciate, read and use the information and services provided. As also announced, dues were prorated for the remainder of 1998, to become due and payable for everyone in January, 1999 for the full year. As a result, and as needed, **member and associate member dues are payable January 1, 1999, in the amount of \$25 per member.**

**REFLECTIONS ON 1998:** Summarizing the status of the issue, important events and actions over the past year is a challenge, due in no small part to the lack of accounting results achieved remains returned and identified in 1998 = 0; announcements on accountability for missing Americans = 20, all recovered in prior years. Yet, US officials have continued to shower the Vietnamese leadership with praise, commending Hanoi cooperation as full, excellent and performed in good faith with increased professionalism. Examples of why the League does not share this rosy assessment are plentiful in this newsletter. Throughout the year, there were times of serious disappointment, anger, discouragement and frustration, feelings that I know were shared by the League Board of Directors, other POW/MIA families, most veterans and many current and former government officials as well.

While the political climate in our nations capital has largely been diverted by other matters, deliberate actions have been taken to distort facts and skew intelligence, such as occurred in the National Intelligence Estimate. The NIE and other such studies are systematically and bureaucratically reducing POW/MIA accounting expectations. Taken together, such actions threaten continuation of priority efforts with sufficient assets and resources to succeed.

During the Leagues nearly 30 years of combat for answers, there have been ups and downs in terms of US Government support, including from and by the intelligence community. The level of official support is directly proportional to the level of political interest of those in office and their policy, not necessarily in rhetoric, but in practice. Although the vast majority of the families are realistic, this administration, unlike the Reagan and Bush administrations, refuses to share such studies and documents with the League. Is this in the best traditions of our country? Of course not! Does this denigrate the service of our relatives? Of course, and such actions subvert achieving the fullest possible accounting for Americans who answered our nations call and served the cause of freedom

President Clinton has consistently stated his sincere interest in the POW/MIA issue. He and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright have even stated that obtaining the fullest possible accounting is the highest priority of bilateral relations with Vietnam. But, their actions speak louder than their words. Their actions have signaled Hanoi that there is no longer an imperative to meet basic criteria that President Clinton announced as his yardstick for measuring progress toward accounting objectives. How did that happen? By altering language, making gradual changes in the definition of progress and moving toward full economic and political relations without insisting on unilateral actions by Vietnam. The burden on the Vietnamese Politburo to take unilateral actions to recover and repatriate remains was reduced by removing the unilateral and changing the language to recovery and repatriation of remains as a principle measure of Vietnams seriousness. This has meant blurring the lines between joint field operations and working out plausible ways for Vietnam to respond on cases that cannot be resolved in the field.

Our US Ambassador to Vietnam, Pete Peterson former Member of Congress, career Air Force officer and a returned Vietnam War POW -- has now begun implementing a public affairs strategy to advertise Vietnams cooperation as a priority of his Embassy staff. Yet, the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), which the administration still refuses to declassify, contains information that refutes the Presidents latest certification that Vietnam is fully cooperating in good faith. This was even acknowledged by the administration in a letter to Congress which stated that the full text could not be declassified because some of the information in the NIE contradicts the key findings that praised Vietnams cooperation. This is not a case of one part of the government not knowing what the other is doing, but a policy that places the objective of normalization higher than POW/MIA accounting. There are other concrete examples, but you get the point. Institutionally, State Departments attitude is dont rock the boat, but we will support field work. The few in this administration who both know the issue and care are also frustrated, but the odds are stacked against them as well.

It is acknowledged by most, both in and out of government, that had it not been for the League, the POW/MIA issue, now including the Korean and Cold War, would not have survived to be addressed as a priority by the Reagan Administration. The Leagues accounting objectives, adopted by President Reagan as a matter of the highest national priority, provided the example for nations throughout the world. Among other nations now pursuing their own POW/MIA accounting are Russia, Israel, Kuwait, Bosnia and Croatia. Over the years, the League has provided each with information and guidance.

The League can and should be proud that the principle has been established worldwide those lost in combat are no longer expendable. Americans serving on active-duty have a right to expect that if captured or missing, every effort will be made to return them, alive or dead. And, their families have a right to expect our government to do everything possible to account for them.

There are many reasons that the League must continue its efforts, even strengthen them, over the next few years, not least of which is to ensure that the issue is pursued with priority and objectivity through the year 2000 national elections. We must squander no time or energy looking backward, to include wasteful attempts to reverse normalization of relations with Vietnam, but available answers must be pursued. Our missing relatives deserve no less.

We, in the League, have the most at stake. If we fail to remain strong and viable, then we have only ourselves to blame. In this quest, our natural allies and greatest supporters are Americas veterans and those now serving in the Armed Forces, certainly those now in the Persian Gulf. With the support of our Board of Directors, the Leagues focus over the next two years will be to continue distributing factual information, including to all governments involved, and improving the ongoing process to increase concrete accounting results.

There is some reason for hope. DASD Bob Jones is energetic, increasingly knowledgeable, actively engaged, accepted the mission, is making significant changes within DPMO, and is pushing for improvements throughout the involved organizations. The incoming Commander in Chief US Pacific Command, Admiral Dennis Blair, has made clear his commitment, including at our 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner last year. Also, new DAS Ralph Skip Boyce is a breath of fresh air at the State Department, especially since his predecessor was MIA on this issue.

The POW/MIA accounting process now includes many facets, and all must be monitored continuously. To the extent that US officials do good work, they should be and are commended. On the other hand,

duplicity, turf nonsense, withholding of information and distribution of inaccurate or misleading data are and will continue to be the targets of League criticism. Other than some still in government or now retired, only the League has the credibility, knowledge-base and continuity to ensure that such monitoring occurs, including by Congress, and that the POW/MIA accounting is adequately pursued.

With your active support, including financially, the League can and will not only survive, but succeed in accomplishing our worthwhile mission: the return of all prisoners, the fullest possible accounting for the missing, and repatriation of all recoverable remains. Toward that objective, we all must strive as a team, unified by a sense of purpose and history. Our record will be scrutinized for years to come and will serve as an example of dedication to the principles for which our missing loved ones were willing to fight and, if necessary, to die.

The League has a solid core of former US officials and Asian specialists who are appalled by the current state of affairs and try to help. The Board of Directors and I are doing what we can to minimize the destruction that is taking place, but we need your help. It sounds redundant and certainly is tiresome after all of these years, but PLEASE write to your elected representatives and ask them to meet with the League. Write to the President and the Secretaries of State and Defense, and ask local veterans to do the same. Tell them the real facts. The League can follow-up. And, finally, think of the League for your charitable donations. We are still poverty stricken, but determined.

From my perspective, we are honor bound to do our best, but it takes stamina and will. I am counting on each of you for support and encouragement in prayers, actions and sacrifice of your own time and resources. Without your support, the League cannot and will not be up to the task.

At this time of year when loved ones gather and those no longer with us are close in thought, I ask that you give extra-special attention to your commitment to accounting for your missing relative, friend or comrade-in-arms. I am confident that the League will prevail and reach our shared goals. With your help and support, we will. With every best wish for a blessed Holiday Season and a New Year filled with hope, joy, peace and answers to many years of uncertainty.

Sincerely and with faith,

Ann Mills Griffiths, Executive Director  
Sister of LCDR James B. Mills, USNR  
MIA September 21, 1966