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September 20, 2002



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

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NEWSLETTER

November 29, 2002

STILL MISSING: According to the Department of Defense, there are now **1,902** Americans missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War, 1,445 in Vietnam, 391 in Laos, 58 in Cambodia and 8 in the territorial waters of the PRC. Over 90% of all Americans still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War were lost in Vietnam (North and South) or in areas of Laos and Cambodia under wartime Vietnamese control. Since the last League Newsletter, individual or group identification has resulted in the accounting for thirteen Americans, though four families have not yet officially accepted the identification and made burial arrangements. Recovery dates are listed (RR) to illustrate the timing of each country's cooperation and the time required for the identification process. Following are the releasable names, listed alphabetically, of **Americans now accounted for**.

Mr. Joseph C. Cheney, Civilian, MIA 9/5/63, LA, RR 7/10/01
Lieutenant Colonel Eugene O. Conley, USAF, MIA 1/21/67, NVN, RR 6/22/89
Lieutenant Jefferson S. Dotson, USAF, MIA 8/9/69, LA, RR 12/11/01
Captain Laurent L. Gourley, USAF, MIA 8/9/69, LA, RR 12/11/01
Mr. Charles Herrick, Civilian, MIA 9/5/63, LA, RR 7/10/01
Captain Larry F. Lucas, USA, MIA 12/20/66, LA, RR 9/20/99
Lieutenant Commander Geoffrey R. Shumway, USN, MIA 6/25/72, NVN, RR 8/3/93
Lieutenant Francis W. Townsend, USAF, MIA 8/13/72, NVN, RR 7/13/99
Major Hobert M. Wallace, Jr., USMC, MIA 1/19/68, NVN, RR 4/11/86

PRESIDENT RENEWS PLEDGE: On Veterans Day, at Arlington National Cemetery, President George W. Bush reaffirmed his commitment to accounting for America's POW/MIAs, stating, *"America must, and will, keep its word to those men and women who have given us so much. Veterans have been promised good health care when they are sick and disabled; they must be treated with fairness and respect. And to families across this land with loved ones whose fate is still undetermined, America owes the fullest possible accounting of our prisoners of war and those missing in action."* The hundreds gathered in the amphitheater gave the President resounding applause for both commitments.

INTERNATIONAL LEADERS MEET: President **George W. Bush**, Secretary of State **Colin Powell** and other senior US officials attending the APEC conference in Mexico had an opportunity to ask their Vietnamese and Chinese counterparts for increased efforts on POW/MIA. In September, Deputy Secretary of State **Richard Armitage** met in Washington with the Vietnamese Foreign Minister and raised the need for further POW/MIA efforts and information. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs **James Kelly**, in New York City for the UN General Assembly Session, met with the Lao and Cambodian Foreign Ministers where the POW/MIA issue was a priority topic, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian & Pacific Affairs **Matt Daley** recently visited Hanoi where he, too, stressed the need to improve and expand POW/MIA cooperation.

US/RUSSIAN COOPERATION: Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for POW/MIA Affairs Jerry Jennings, accompanied by Mr. Norm Kass, Senior Director of the Joint Commission Support Directorate at the Defense POW/MIA Office (DPMO), visited Moscow September 25-27th to meet with senior Russian officials. Jennings reinforced the need for improved POW/MIA cooperation to Russian Chairman of the US-Russian Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs (USRJC) General-Major Vladimir Antonovich Zolotarev and Chairman of the Commission's Vietnam War Working Group General-Major Nikolay Maksimovich Bezborodov.

The US Commission Chairman, MG Roland Lajoie, USA (Ret), and senior Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD) staff held discussions in Moscow with Commission counterparts November 18-21st to follow-up several pending questions.

League Executive Director Ann Mills Griffiths will visit Moscow December 7-15th and, while there, will meet with these same Russian officials and hopes to call on others whose support is crucial to gaining greater access to relevant archives and information. Highlights from a published report on the Commission's work appear later in this newsletter.

Comment: Though hopeful that there would be bilateral dialogue with Russian President Vladimir Putin on several recent occasions, most recently in Prague, that included the need to jump-start the Commission's work, the League has received no confirmation that the issue was raised. With or without such confirmation, however, there is a continuing need for high-level signals to the Russian leadership that cooperation on the POW/MIA issue is crucial. The potential afforded by the US-Russian Commission's efforts is significant and warrants serious, high level attention.

DASD VISITS LAOS: On October 21-24th, DASD Jennings met in Vientiane, Laos, with Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Somsavat Lengsavad, Minister of Defense Duangchay Phichit, Minister of Justice Kham-Ouane Boupha, former Lao President/Party Advisor Nouhak Phoumsavanh, other senior officials and wartime leaders. In all discussions, he urged various initiatives to expedite concrete answers by improving existing programs. These included actions by the Lao Government to locate and make available potential sources, provide access to wartime archives and veterans with relevant information, and to expand the size of joint field teams to handle the backlog of cases now pending recovery. The Lao leadership renewed its commitments and agreed to consider a specific US archival research proposal for obtaining information from wartime documents and other material.

Comment: Prior to departure, Lao Ambassador to the US Phanthong Phoummahaxay hosted a dinner at the Lao Embassy for DASD Jennings and his DPMO delegation. Other guests included League Executive Director Ann Mills Griffiths, State Department Director for Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam Affairs Judith Strotz, and Lao Desk Officer Kim Karsian, also Department of State. The informal discussions prior to departure helped set the stage for a warm, very high level series of meetings in Vientiane, organized in large part by US Ambassador to Laos Douglas Hartwick and former Lao Ambassador to the US Vang Rattanaong, now serving as Director General of American and European Affairs, Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Both ambassadors participated in the meetings in Vientiane, as did the US Deputy Chief of Mission Susan Sutton, also of significant assistance in solidifying DASD Jennings' schedule.

DASD VISITS VIETNAM: In August, DASD Jennings met in Hanoi with Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and Vice Ministers Nguyen Huy Hieu of Defense, Nguyen Van Hung of Public Security and Nguyen Dinh Bin of Foreign Affairs to stress the need for increased unilateral efforts by Vietnam in keeping with the President's language in the March 30, 2002 certification to Congress. He initiated meetings with senior wartime leaders, seeking relevant information and leads on other possible sources. The Vietnamese Government offered assurances that they would continue their ongoing cooperation.

Comment: It undoubtedly will be welcome news, if not already aware, to learn that US Ambassador to Vietnam Raymond Burghardt and Deputy Chief of Mission Bob Porter are both experienced Southeast Asia specialists, well known to the League and familiar with and supportive of the POW/MIA accounting effort. As career State Department Foreign Service Officers, both had prior assignments during the Reagan and Bush (#1) administrations that were supportive in substance and rhetoric, rather than focused on the latter. Their support for and participation in the meetings scheduled for DASD Jennings' visit sent a unified message that the United States expects responsiveness on the criteria outlined by President Bush as areas in which Vietnam could and should unilaterally improve cooperation.

At every logical opportunity, it is very important for senior Bush Administration officials to reinforce both the President's commitment and his calls for improved cooperation by Vietnam. In his March 20th certification to Congress, the President outlined areas in which cooperation should be strengthened, calling on Vietnam for *"unilateral provision of POW/MIA-related documents and records, focused initially on archival data pertaining to Americans captured, missing or killed in areas of Laos and Cambodia under wartime Vietnamese control. Vietnam should also focus greater attention on locating and providing information on discrepancy cases, with priority on those last known alive in captivity or in immediate proximity to capture, and to locating and repatriating the remains of those who died while in Vietnamese control that have not yet been returned."*

This long-awaited realism, largely absent from 1992–2001, must be incorporated into all appeals, public and private, to be most effective in ensuring that Hanoi understands the Bush Administration's approach and expectations on the POW/MIA issue. It is critically important, especially just now as the League is concerned that Vietnam may not respond adequately to Deputy Secretary Jennings' visit. It may be that Hanoi has decided to pocket the positive publicity received, without implementing appropriate steps to increase their unilateral efforts. We have not yet made this judgment, but anxiously await Hanoi's response to detailed proposals to be forwarded by DPMO to Hanoi.

CAMBODIA POW/MIA SEMINAR TO BE HELD: BG Steve Redmann, USAF, Commander of the Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA) will host a US-Cambodian seminar on December 6th. As was the case with the League-recommended, successful 2001 POW/MIA Seminar in Laos, the purpose is to solicit wider cooperation and support from province and district level officials. This can be done by increasing their understanding of US accounting objectives and the various types of operations, including investigations, surveys and recoveries. The seminar will be preceded by technical talks on December 5th; officials from DPMO, JTF-FA, CILHI (Central Identification Laboratory-Hawaii) and the Defense Intelligence Agency's (DIA's) Stony Beach Team will participate in both the seminar and the consultations.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ASSESSMENT: DASD Jennings has now been in office for just over a year, and serious discussions with relevant foreign officials have been held with Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, North Korea, Russia, Burma (Myanmar), Israel, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, with talks upcoming soon with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and again with Cambodia. As is evident, the effort to account for Americans missing from our nation's past wars has become worldwide. Our focus is on the Vietnam War missing, but this achievement is something of which the League can justifiably be proud. The world now knows that the US Government stands behind those who serve and, should they be captured or missing, will do everything possible to return them – alive or dead – to their families and our nation.

Though leverage to elicit unilateral efforts, especially from Vietnam, was poorly utilized for the past nine years, the seriousness and determination with which Jerry Jennings is pursuing initiatives are encouraging and long overdue. The facts pertaining to Vietnam War missing are still the same and, in large measure, the slogan – ONLY HANOI KNOWS – still applies, though other governments should also be expected to provide answers unilaterally as well. Until and unless Vietnam can be convinced that it is in their national interest to respond to President Bush's outlined criteria for unilateral actions, accounting results that are or should be readily available will continue to be slow and difficult to achieve.

There is much yet to be accomplished, but despite the necessary priority on national security, the administration cannot flag its efforts. Fortunately for the issue, many senior Bush Administration officials have the background, knowledge and commitment to recognize the importance of standing behind those who serve our nation. Their pledge to our Armed Forces includes accounting as fully as possible for them if they are captured or missing. Nevertheless, the transition has been difficult, due in no small part to wide gaps in knowledge that exist at various levels in nearly every agency and organization.

It is no secret that DPMO has been ineffective in the past; however, DPMO was "only" organized in 1992, at the very end of the George H.W. Bush Administration, and really became operational in early 1993, as did JTF-FA. Both were formed – over the League's strong objections – as a result of recommendations by the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA, prompted by unfounded and unproven assertions of conspiracy and cover-up on the POW/MIA issue within the US Government. Sadly, our concerns and dire predictions came true, but recent years have brought increasing credibility in the operational process, for which we are grateful. Though many improvements are still needed, we are optimistic over continuing changes, with more to come, in particular the merger of JTF-FA and CILHI. The new organization (that I've nicknamed JPAC for Joint Personnel Accounting Command) will have a worldwide mission, maintaining all functions now performed by JTF-FA and CILHI, with DIA's Stony Beach having an integral, expanded role.

DASD Jennings is working hard to make DPMO a viable, functioning organization that contributes seriously to the US Government's accounting effort, but the challenges are huge. Whatever the subject or the department, institutional bureaucracies are hard to change even when all involved are in agreement on the need. It is a painful exercise, but it will continue, and the end-result will benefit the issue. The policy, control and oversight functions that DPMO was charged to fulfill were ignored for nine years; these responsibilities are being restored. It is an enormous undertaking, one that can and often does meet bureaucratic hurdles, far too often turf considerations, rather than substance, but progress is being made.

As a DoD field-operating agency, DPMO has clout in this Administration because of high-level backing in DoD, and this should be reinforced by the approval and formation of a Sub-PCC (Policy Coordinating Committee) on POW/MIA affairs. Authorization of this group, announced by DASD Jennings at the League's 33rd Annual Meeting in June, was concrete affirmation by the President's National Security Council that priority on the issue must and will continue. The Sub-PCC will also likely have growing pains, but all official US organizations have the same experience. The Sub-PCC on POW/MIA Affairs, meant to substitute for the POW/MIA Interagency Group that functioned so effectively throughout the 1980s, will mature and be fully and effectively operational. Hopefully, that will happen soon!

I have also noticed a welcome change in this Administration, a willingness to listen to League concerns and act on our recommendations. It is difficult for some who feel insecure in dealing with other than government officials, but the senior personnel in each of the relevant departments and agencies, recognizing the League's unbroken, responsible history on this issue, request the League's views and listen.

LEAGUE DELEGATION PLANNED TO SEA: Based on a unanimous vote of the Board of Directors, a three-person League Delegation will go to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in early February. Executive Director Ann Mills Griffiths, Chairman of the Board Jo Anne Shirley and League Policy Adviser Richard (Dick) Childress were unanimously selected to again represent the League, as they did successfully on their 1999 visit. A major purpose is to measure Vietnam's responsiveness to the President's criteria on unilateral actions (noted earlier) and initiatives launched by DASD Jennings last August. In Laos, the delegation will explore ways to accelerate field operations and progress on archival and oral history matters. Matters affecting regional cooperation, particularly in areas controlled by Vietnam where US losses occurred, will be the focus in Cambodia, as will expressing appreciation for the full support and assistance being afforded by the Cambodian Government.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart Foundation responded generously to a League proposal and provided substantial funding for the trip that will conclude with a Board of Directors meeting in Hawaii February 20 – 23rd. At that time, the Board will receive a detailed report from the League delegation, receive briefings from JTF-FA, CILHI and DIA's Stony Beach Team on the status of official accounting efforts, and pursue answers to questions about ongoing plans to merge JTF-FA and CILHI into one operational organization. A full report will be sent to all League members in March, following the delegation's return. Donations to help offset costs would be most welcome, and now is the time. December 31st is the deadline for non-profit donations that are tax-deductible to the extent allow by law.

DASD AGAIN HOLDS TALKS WITH DPRK: In late October, DASD Jennings successfully concluded a second round of talks in Bangkok with North Korean officials. During meetings last June, Jennings and his DPRK counterparts agreed to resume joint recoveries. The third and last operation for this year recently concluded with repatriation of what are believed to be the remains of 11 American servicemen unaccounted for since the Korean War.

Comment: The DPRK is trying to politicize the issue with public threats to cease cooperation after US criticism over their actively pursuing production of nuclear material, thus violating agreements reached in the Clinton years. Despite current strains in bilateral relations, POW/MIA accounting efforts must continue on a humanitarian basis. If the DPRK stops allowing cooperation, the public blame should be on them for doing so, not the United States.

NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY: This year's national ceremony was held September 20th at the Pentagon's River Entrance Parade Field. Hosted by the **Secretary of Defense** and **Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Congressman Sam Johnson** (R-TX), a Vietnam War returned POW and member of the US-Russian Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, was the guest speaker. **Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz** was also attended the ceremony, as did numerous other dignitaries and guests, including **Secretary of the Navy Gordon England**.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld reinforced President Bush's commitment, stating *"For more years than most of us can remember, the POW/MIA families have been the standard for all of us to follow – never abandoning hope, insisting that the world remember and respond, overcoming every obstacle placed in your path.....We remember, and we re-dedicate ourselves to an accounting as full as is humanly possible, for America can never move forward as long as even one missing son or daughter is left behind."*

General Richard Myer, USAF, expressed strong support for the accounting mission, stating *"Let me assure you that our government is exploring every possible avenue, every means of influence to achieve the fullest possible accounting for our fallen and missing heroes. President Bush.... made it clear that Vietnam must do more to repatriate remains, open their archives further, and placed particular emphasis on the last known alive cases and those lost in Laos and Cambodia. This is a quest that we must pursue relentlessly, wherever it takes us....for as long as it takes us, until all are accounted for."*

New York Stock Exchange: Through a series of unusual circumstances, representatives of the Air Force Casualty Office, Randolph AFB, TX, were invited to ring the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) on National POW/MIA Recognition Day. In New York City for a Defense POW/MIA Family Update, the Air Force Casualty officials visited the NYSE in the hope of getting a good photo of our POW/MIA flag behind the podium. They got much more than anticipated, including positive attention to the issue and the symbolism of our flag.

Comment: The League doesn't have the luxury of putting out costly newsletters in full color, with photographs, though it would be great if all of the families and our wonderful associate members could share these events more fully. Maybe someday..... but for now, I'll just report that it was reassuring to see the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff hosting this year's event. It is always good to see long-time friends and supporters, certainly including Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, but also Assistant and Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense, State and Veterans Affairs, the DIA Chief of Staff and other senior officials of various agencies, as well as representatives of the major national veterans organizations. Though in black and white, this year's National POW/MIA Recognition Day poster appears on the front of this newsletter. The color version can be seen or downloaded at the DPMO web site: www.dtic.mil/dpmo.

FAVORABLE CONGRESSIONAL ACTION: On November 15th, the House passed legislation previously passed by the Senate that requires the **League's POW/MIA flag** be flown at the World War II memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial and the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial "any day on which the United States flag is displayed," though without requiring erection of a new or additional flagpole for this purpose.

STATUS OF GULF WAR PILOT RECLASSIFIED: Secretary of the Navy Gordon England acted on October 11th to again change the status of Navy Captain Michael "Scott" Speicher from MIA to "Missing/Captured" during the Gulf War. According to the Navy spokesman, the change means that the Navy believes it likely that CAPT Speicher, shot down over Iraq on the opening night of the Gulf War, was at some point held by Iraqi forces. On October 15th, Congress passed the Senate's version of what is referred to as the "Speicher Bill," to reinforce their hope that Captain Speicher will be accounted for soon.

JOINT OPERATIONS: In July, Lao Minister of National Defense Duangchay Phichit visited an ongoing field excavation, the first such visit by a Lao Defense Minister, though the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister and several Vice Ministers have previously shown such high-level interest. Consultations, led by the JTF-FA Commander, were held on August 20th, and the Lao agreed to relocate the US base camp, a difficult, but necessary move closer to the area of current joint operations in **Laos**. The 76th Joint Field Activity (JFA), led by new Detachment III Commander, LTC Tom Knight, USA, recently concluded, and the 77th JFA will take place January 16-19th, consisting of one investigation and four recovery teams.

BG Redmann recently visited Vietnam and met with Vietnamese and US officials, including LTC Steve Hawley, USA, who recently assumed command of Detachment II in Hanoi. **Vietnam** reportedly completed another 30-day period of unilateral investigations based on US-provided leads and turned over some written reports of their efforts. On September 11th, officials from Vietnam's POW/MIA office (VNOSMP) visited Hawaii for technical talks and toured CILHI and JTF-FA headquarters to further enhance their understanding of US accounting capability. The 71st joint operations in Vietnam were ongoing throughout October, and technical talks will again be held December 10th. Also in December, Vietnam is again scheduled to pursue unilateral investigations, based on US-provided leads.

Comment: The "unilateral process" with Vietnam is poorly structured, was established by joint agreement during the Clinton Administration, and deals primarily with interim operational steps intended to lead to joint activities. Significant revisions to this process are needed to attain viability, and BG Redmann is working to address this and other inherited problems. Unilateral actions by the Government of Vietnam, as called for by President Bush, are critical to achieving our accounting objectives; in that context, US-provided leads are unnecessary.

Cambodian officials are engaged in unilateral investigations to augment ongoing efforts by DIA's Stony Beach linguist/interviewer, Joe Fraley, now permanently assigned in Phnom Penh, **Cambodia**, to locate and interview sources with relevant information. JTF-FA, CILHI, Stony Beach and their Cambodian counterparts recently conducted a limited joint field activity, and a full-scale operation is scheduled for January 16-February 18th.

DPMO FAMILY UPDATES: Family Updates, held to bring current information to POW/MIA families, are generally held one Saturday each month, preceded on Friday evenings by a Veterans Forum, a shorter version. The vast majority attending are Korean War relatives with relatively little experience or historical background, but similar uncertainty about missing loved ones. Vietnam War families are urged to attend, particularly for the opportunity to discuss the status of their own case with responsible US officials, but also to share knowledge. On January 18th, a Family Update will be held in the San Francisco area and on February 22nd in Birmingham, AL. If in these areas, plan to attend one forum or the other. Call 703-602-2102, Ext. 165, for LTC Jim Brandon, USA, DPMO Family Support Directorate.

33RD ANNUAL MEETING

The League's 33rd Annual Meeting was held June 19-22nd. **Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz** and **Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers, USAF**, were the two principal speakers. Both focused on the increased seriousness signaled by President Bush's certification to Congress that Vietnam should take specific steps to be more forthcoming on the accounting. All organizations with POW/MIA responsibilities spent three days briefing the families and responding to questions on the issue.

Policy Forum: The very full, three-day program included a Policy Forum, led off with an assessment of where things stand by the **League's Policy Adviser Richard Childress**, a former League Award recipient and the first and only (until this year) recipient of the highest League award, the **Distinguished Service Award**.

Deputy **Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian & Pacific Affairs Matt Daley** outlined US policy on the issue and reinforced the priority being pursued at the Department of State, underscoring the commitment of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of State, Colin Powell and Richard Armitage. **National Security Council Director for Asian Affairs Karen Brooks** participated and brought renewed commitment from the President and reinforced the policy and priority being pursued.

Information Access & Analysis Forum: A long-involved US Government official and long-time League supporter and friend, **Mr. John Kiehm, DIA Chief of Staff**, led off this important session. Always in the background, but simultaneously working to make the POW/MIA accounting effort more serious, Mr. Kiehm was instrumental (along with Dick Childress) in the 1986 formation of DIA's Stony Beach Team of specialists. His selection for this year's **League Award** came as a surprise to him, as did his acceptance remarks at the Annual Dinner, during which he made public the fact that his uncle is still missing and unaccounted for from the Korean War.

Mr. Kiehm's presentation was on "DIA's Role in POW/MIA Collection and Analysis." Tom Brown, Chief of DIA's POW/MIA Analysis Cell, Tom McKay, Chief of the Stony Beach Team, and Joe Fraley, Cambodian Linguist/Specialist, now assigned full time in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, followed with presentations in their areas of specific expertise.

The final presenter in this forum was Norm Kass, DPMO Senior Director and Executive Secretary of the US-Russia Joint Commission (USRJC) on POW/MIA Affairs. He provided an update on the Commission's work, near and long-term objectives, and the frustrations and challenges encountered in Russia. Excerpts on the work of the Commission appear later in this newsletter.

Comment: Access to information and its analysis have consistently been of serious interest to family members and others involved in the issue. The specialists primarily responsible for collection of information were and are members of Stony Beach, the DIA team that has been the focus of significant League effort and determination through the years to ensure assets and resources were assigned and utilized. Though the struggle was long and at times ugly, Stony Beach is now fully manned and well on the way to full restoration of its mission, thanks in part to John Kiehm and to a more inclusive approach by JTF-FA. Stony Beach is also now conducting research in Vietnam, working out of the US Embassy in Hanoi.

33rd Annual Dinner: This year's entertainment was performed by the **US Navy Band Sea Chanters**, singing period songs from the 1940s that were especially appreciated by the MIA parents who are still with us and able to attend.

As previously noted, **Deputy Secretary of Defense Dr. Paul Wolfowitz** was the dinner speaker. Quoting excerpts of his remarks, he stated, *"I also see a lot of family members of our missing servicemen, the parents and siblings and children who have never wavered in their commitment to bring them home at last. I've gotten to know many of you over the years. I think it's 19 years since my first League dinner, if I remember right, and we all draw great inspiration and strength from your tireless devotion."*

And I'm very pleased to see that my good friend Dick Childress is here as well. That's no surprise, of course, to any of us who know him. After years of faithful service in the Army and at the National Security Council staff, Dick is retired. Or to put it more accurately, he's retired from the day-to-day responsibilities that he handled for so long. But as those of us who know him can attest, Dick will never retire from the work of finding and bringing home our missing heroes.

Sixteen years ago when I was Assistant Secretary of State, Dick and I traveled to Vietnam together, along with Rich Armitage who was then at the Defense Department and is now our Deputy Secretary of State, and your own Ann Mills Griffiths who has kept the flame burning for so many years.

At that time, we were the most senior executive branch delegation to visit Vietnam since the end of the war, and we went with some skepticism, and in my case that is a gross understatement. In fact Ann Practically had to break my arm to get me to come. By the time we concluded our talks with senior Vietnamese officials in Hanoi, we felt that we had made some progress. More importantly, we were confident that we were moving the issue in the right direction.

Over the many long and frustrating years that the league has kept the home fires burning, I've sometimes heard it said that if we fail to keep faith with those who did their duty in the past we could not expect Americans to do their duty in the future should that need ever arise. It might have been easy to dismiss those words during periods of peace and prosperity, but that need has arisen. The truth of those words came home to us in an inescapable way on September 11th and in the weeks and months since."

Following his introduction of DASD Jerry Jennings as *"the President's point man on the issue,"* Secretary Wolfowitz raised President Bush's candid certification to Congress that Vietnam should be doing more on the issue in certain areas. Quoting the President's statement, he said, *"Vietnam's unilateral provision of POW/MIA related documents and records should be improved, focusing initially on archival data pertaining to Americans captured, missing or killed in areas of Laos and Cambodia under wartime Vietnamese control Vietnam should also focus greater attention on locating and providing information on discrepancy cases with priority on those last known alive in captivity or in immediate proximity to capture, and to locating and returning the remains of those who died while in Vietnamese control that have not yet been returned."* Secretary Wolfowitz prompted applause throughout the audience when he added, *"Those words of our President define our mission."*

Secretary Wolfowitz ended his remarks, frequently interrupted by applause, by stating, *"So this night I would encourage you in your task. Now is the time to double and redouble your efforts. You have friends in the right places, but we need your continued help. Working together we hope to write that final chapter. So thank you all so much. God bless you. God bless our missing heroes. And God bless this great country."*

In addition to the League Award to John Kiehm, the **League's Distinguished Service Award** – presented for only the second time – was awarded posthumously to our life-long dedicated volunteer **Betty Bartels**. The award was accepted by two of Betty's daughters, Ginny Haenel and Betty Adair Murphy. Working together, they assumed Betty's duties prior to and during our annual meeting, and both are increasingly active and involved.

DOD PRESENTATIONS: DoD presentations on Friday, covering the scope of accounting-related operations, were given by DPMO, JTF-FA, CILHI, the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory (LSEL) and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL). Hard copies of the slides used in presentations were given to each attendee, for note-taking to facilitate later questions. The presentations prompted many questions, most of which were raised and answered during an over three-hour session on Saturday afternoon.

Comment: Though US officials are usually reluctant to be as forthcoming as would reveal their considerable knowledge and aid audience comprehension, the general consensus of the families and others who attended was that this year, presentations were more positive, understandable and interesting than has been the case for a very long time. This consensus was later reflected in a resolution adopted during the League Business Session.

FORT BELVOIR PROGRAM: The inspirational US Army program was both patriotic and historically fascinating. The highlight for many, however, was the escorted transportation to Ft. Belvoir during the height of evening rush hour. Thanks to support of the Virginia State Troopers, the POW/MIA families were treated like VIPs, enjoyed by all involved. This consensus also was later evident in a resolution adopted at the League Business Session.

BUSINESS SESSION: As is always the case, and is required in the League's bylaws, a business session was held during which resolutions were raised and considered, once a quorum was established. Following are the results of the voting that occurred this year:

TO COMMEND PRESIDENT BUSH FOR CERTIFICATION LANGUAGE

RESOLVED, that the League strongly supports and appreciates President Bush's decision in his certification to Congress to define steps Vietnam must take to account for Americans still missing from the Vietnam War; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the League calls on the Government of Vietnam to respond fully.

TO RECOGNIZE AND APPRECIATE IMPROVED USG EFFORTS

RESOLVED, that the families gathered for the League's 33rd Annual Meeting recognize and deeply appreciate the increased responsiveness and sensitivity demonstrated throughout by U.S. officials at all levels.

TO URGE GREATER COOPERATION BY RUSSIA

RESOLVED, that the National League of Families of Americans Prisoner and Missing in Southeast Asia (League) calls on President Putin to authorize access to relevant intelligence and other archives of the former USSR; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the League calls on President Putin to officially encourage Russian citizens in possession of information concerning missing Americans to come forth and provide any and all such information to U.S. officials; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that the League calls on President Bush to personally ask President Putin to request cooperation from the Russian president to permit such access, as well as direct all relevant policy-level officials to do the same, and to encourage citizens of Russia to come forward with relevant information.

TO EXPRESS CONCERN REGARDING SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY

WHEREAS, the League is deeply concerned over the apparent focus, especially in the prepared Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory presentation, on numerical success; be it

RESOLVED, that the Department of Defense ensure complete scientific integrity of CILHI, LSEL, AFDIL and any technical facility related to the POW/MIA identification process, including in the merger of CILHI and JTF-FA.

TO COMMEND VA STATE TROOPERS AND COMMANDER, FT. BELVOIR

RESOLVED, that the League appreciates and commends the Virginia State Troopers and the Commander of Ft. Belvoir and his staff for the tremendous support shown to the League on Friday, June 21, 2002.

IN APPRECIATION FOR THE N.J. "DEAR POW/MIA PROGRAM"

RESOLVED, that the League commends and appreciates the Dear POW/MIA Program of New Jersey, initiated by Veterans of the Vietnam War in New Jersey and implemented by the Johnson Elementary School.

ADVANCE NOTICE - 34TH ANNUAL MEETING SET: The League's 34th Annual Meeting will again be held in the greater Washington, DC, area, at the Hilton Crystal City Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. The meeting will convene on Thursday, June 26th and end on Saturday evening, June 28th, though travel days on Wednesday, June 25th, and Sunday, June 29th, are the norm. Additional information will be provided in the March, 2003, trip report-newsletter, but plan now to attend this important meeting. Department of Defense-funded travel will be provided for two family members to represent each missing man.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION: Prior to the 34th annual Meeting, an election by mail will be held for positions on the seven-member Board of Directors. It is important that each applicant be aware that elected members are required to fund their own travel and housing expenses incurred to attend board meetings, most often held in the Washington, DC, area, but occasionally more centrally located at a military installation.

The 2001-2003 Board of Directors is diverse: four MIA sisters, including Chairman Jo Anne Shirley, Secretary Sue Scott, Treasurer Karen McManus (brother is returned POW) and Gail Innes (brother's remains returned); two MIA sons, Vice Chairman Mark Stephensen (father's remains returned) and Phillippe Ritter; and returned POW LtCol David Gray, USAF-Ret.

Comment: I want to extend to each member of the 2001-2003 Board of Directors my sincere appreciation for their selfless dedication and commitment to achieving our shared objectives. All deserve your gratitude as well. Though I have no specific commitments, and haven't asked, I hope that all are willing to serve again and intend to be candidates for reelection.

MEMBERSHIP NOTICE: The label on the front of this envelope provides the date on which your dues for League membership – both family members and associate members – are again payable. If the date is 1 Jan 03, or earlier, a \$25 donation is payable by December 31st for your continued membership.

Several years ago, the League's Board of Directors took this action as a matter of practical necessity. This was in part due to the need to conserve limited funds, but primarily to ensure that expenses for printing and postage were not squandered. Though a difficult decision, and much debated as some view our "dues" paid in full with the loss of a loved one, it was a logical step, and \$25 a year is less than pizza for four.

INTERNET UPDATES: If you are on line and have an e-mail address, you can be added to the League E-mail Distribution List to receive regular, current updates much more frequently than the newsletter is published. Send your email address to: info@pow-miafamilies.org. Or, check the League's website: www.pow-miafamilies.org and get the update on your own. Our volunteer webmaster **Kate Jones**, a **League Award** recipient for dedicated service, posts current information that is provided by the League office.

STAFF ASSISTANCE: Those calling the office may hear the pleasant reception of our part-time staff assistant, Heather Knight, daughter of the current JTF-FA Detachment II Commander in Vientiane, Laos. Some who attended the 33rd Annual Meeting may have met Heather who attended several sessions. Though still struggling to make ends meet and maintain operations at the appropriate level, it had become increasingly necessary to have at least one additional person in the office, 3-4 hours a day, to assist in administrative matters. Fortunately, Heather's college schedule has sufficient flexibility to manage 14-16 hours a week at the League office.

NOTES: POW/MIA car window decals are \$20 per 100 and lapel pins are \$3 each or 2/\$5, by sending a check to the League office. For added information on any subject, please contact the League's web site at www.pow-miafamilies.org or call the national office at **703-465-7432**. Be sure to leave a detailed message if no one is available to answer your call.

THE US-RUSSIAN JOINT POW/MIA COMMISSION (USRJC)

Vietnam War Working Group (VWWG): Established in 1993, the US Chairman is Senator Bob Smith (R-NH), former Vice Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs (1991-1993) and currently a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, (though recently defeated in the recent election primary and his replacement has not been named). The Russian Chairman is General-Major Nikolay Maksimovich Bezborodov, an active duty Russian Air Force officer and three-term member of the Duma (Russia's counterpart to the US Congress). Senator Smith has been a member of the Commission since its inception in 1992 and has co-chaired the working group since January 1997; General-Major Bezborodov assumed his position as a member of the Commission and VWWG co-chairman in February 2000. The American side of the VWWG seeks further information from Russian archives and their veterans of the Vietnam War about America's missing servicemen and is pursuing leads and information in a variety of areas.

Access to the Podolsk Archives: The Central Archives of the Russian Ministry of Defense in Podolsk may contain information of value to the US accounting effort. These include reports of the shoot down of American aircraft, POW interrogation reports, and reports on the activities of the Soviet "special group" that acquired several thousand pieces of captured American combat equipment for eventual technical exploitation in the former USSR. Senator Smith asked General-Major Bezborodov to facilitate US access to Vietnam War era documents in the archive. Should this request be denied, the US has urged Russian counterpart officials to search unilaterally for such information. The Russians have provided a list of 142 incident reports extracted from the Podolsk archives. The VWWG completed preliminary analysis and is asking the Russian government for more detailed information about the shoot-down reports. The US is also requesting access to any and all original reports that correlate to cases of missing Americans.

Volkogonov Memoirs: In early February 1998, USRJC staff researchers, working in the personal papers of the late General-Colonel Dmitri A. Volkogonov (former Russian Chairman of the USRJC, found a six-page, Russian language, autobiographical sketch entitled, "A Little More About Myself." This brief memoir, written by Volkogonov in August 1994, reveals his discovery in Russian archives of a late 1960s document that assigned to the KGB (Soviet equivalent of the CIA) the task of "delivering knowledgeable Americans to the USSR for intelligence purposes."

Nowhere in Volkogonov's memoir is the reported KGB plan linked explicitly to American POWs, but Joint Commission analysts have concluded that Volkogonov's discussion of the KGB plan in the context of his work with the Joint Commission strongly suggests that Volkogonov thought the plan targeted US POWs. Moreover, the date (late 1960s) suggests that American POWs from Southeast Asia may have been the targets of such a KGB plan.

With Senator Smith's active support, the VWWG immediately launched an inquiry into this memoir to gather as much information as possible about Volkogonov's revelation before requesting an official explanation from the Russian Government, but their response to date has not been encouraging. In the government and on the Joint Commission, Russian officials have said that their archives contain no evidence that a KGB plan, as described by

Volkogonov, ever existed. They claim that Volkogonov "later rechecked his information and arrived at the conclusion that such a plan did not exist as a separate entity," but they offer no evidence to support this claim.

Meanwhile, the issue of Volkogonov's memoir became public knowledge with the first revelation in the US press on November 9, 1998. US and Russian media covered the issue, and members of Congress, POW/MIA families and veteran organizations have all expressed keen interest. The US side of the VWWG is determined to pursue a complete explanation of the Volkogonov issue from the Russian Government.

Soviet advisors in Vietnam: During the Vietnam War, the Soviet Union provided technical and material assistance to North Vietnam. Air defense systems and personnel were sent, both to equip and to train the North Vietnamese.

About two years ago, the U.S. began to gather evidence that Soviet officials interrogated American POWs in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. This project examined information from three primary sources: the testimony of former American POWs; the testimony of Russian veterans of the Vietnam War who had knowledge of direct Soviet participation in POW interrogation; and US Intelligence Community reports that suggest the Soviets sought or obtained direct access to American POWs for interrogation. If, in fact, Soviet officials participated in interrogation of American POWs, or received interrogation reports from Vietnam, it would be reasonable to assume that these reports were generated in Vietnam and forwarded to Moscow for processing. Such interrogation reports should be available today in Russian military intelligence (GRU) and KGB archives, and these reports logically would contribute to accounting for missing Americans.

GRU officers were deployed to Vietnam to acquire captured American combat equipment and arrange for their shipment to the Soviet Union for exploitation. Although the U.S. has no interest in the classified aspects of the program, members and technicians who were assigned to these groups may be able to provide new information about shoot down incidents in Vietnam. For instance, in 1992, representatives of Task Force Russia (the predecessor of Joint Commission Support Directorate, or JCSD) discovered an F-111 crew capsule at the Moscow Aviation Institute. With assistance from FBI experts, Task Force Russia analysts correlated the capsule to a specific shoot down incident. The U.S. side has raised this issue several times continues to press for more information on the "spetsgrupp" and its members. In addition, the Russian side has agreed to try to locate museums and technical institutes where US equipment may be displayed or stored and, where possible, arrange meetings with technicians who may know how the equipment was acquired and transported to the USSR.

Interview Program: The Vietnam War Working Group maintains a vigorous program to locate and interview former Soviet military personnel who served in Vietnam or who have knowledge of events during that period. Since 1992, the VWWG has conducted over a thousand interviews in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and other former Soviet republics. The majority of interviews have been with PVO (Air Defense Forces) veterans who served as military advisors in North Vietnam during the war. VWWG personnel have also interviewed aviators, journalists, KGB and GRU officers, and former Soviet (now Russian) Government and Communist Party officials.



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703-465-7432-Phone www.pow-miafamilies.org Fax - 703-465-7433

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone: Home(_____) _____ Work(_____) _____

Fax: (_____) _____ Email Address _____

Rank/Rate, Name, Branch of Service, and Country of Loss of Missing Man: _____

Your relationship to missing man (mother, father, sister, brother, etc.): _____

Other dues paying members at same address, please indicate relationship to missing man:

Number of Members _____ @ \$25.00/member Total Amount: \$ _____

The National League of Families is a 501(c) 3 tax-exempt, non-profit humanitarian organization.



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ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone: Home(_____) _____ Work(_____) _____

Fax: (_____) _____ Email Address _____

Veterans Group Affiliation(s): _____

Other dues paying members at same address, please indicate relationship to missing man:

Number of Members _____ @ \$25.00/member Total Amount: \$ _____

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