

Progress in Cambodia

Oct. 12, 2020

Current Status of Unaccounted-for Americans Lost in the Vietnam War

	Vietnam	Laos	Cambodia	China	Total
Original Missing	1,973	573	90	10	2,646
Repatriated and Identified	728	288	42	3	1,061 [1]
Remaining Missing	1,245	285	48	7	1,585

Of the remaining 48 Americans still unaccounted for in Cambodia, seven are in a “non-recoverable” category. This means that as a result of rigorous investigation, we have conclusive evidence the individual perished, but do not believe it possible to recover his remains. On rare occasions, new leads can arise that bring a case back to an active status.

Field Operations

- The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) conducts at least one Joint Field Activity (JFA) per fiscal year in Cambodia.
- Each JFA involves 25-40 U.S. personnel plus their Cambodian counterparts. Together, they work on investigations and excavations throughout the country for a period of approximately 30-60 days per JFA.
- Recovered remains believed to be those of Americans are transferred to DPAA’s laboratory in Hawaii for further analysis and identification by forensic anthropologists.
- The 53rd JFA began January 15 and continued through March 12, 2020. A recovery team excavated a site in Ratanakiri Province; an investigation team worked throughout the country.
- Future JFAs are pending the resolution of the COVID-19 (corona virus) pandemic.

Resolving “Last Known Alive” Cases

- Of the original 19 individuals “Last Known Alive” in Cambodia (those who survived or may have survived their loss incident and were either alive on the ground, in captivity, or in immediate proximity to capture, but did not return), DoD has confirmed the death of 13, with six still unresolved.

- Of the 13 whose deaths have been confirmed, the remains of seven have been recovered and identified; efforts continue to recover the remaining six.
- U.S. and Vietnamese specialists met in Hanoi last year to discuss Last Known Alive cases in areas of Cambodia controlled by Vietnamese forces during the war.

Research and Investigations

- A U.S. POW/MIA investigator is stationed in Phnom Penh full-time. He pursues leads associated with the remaining 48 individuals still unaccounted for in Cambodia.
- Witnesses have assisted in identifying recovery sites on Koh Tang, the island associated with the Mayaguez incident. Thirteen of the 18 Americans missing from that incident have been recovered and identified.
- U.S. researchers continue to review materials in Cambodian archives. Private researchers studying Khmer Rouge wartime atrocities in Cambodia have also shared relevant information they have uncovered.

¹This number now includes the 63 Americans who were returned and/or identified from 1973 – 1975.