

Very Good News from Hanoi

At long last, the Vietnamese Government has formally given approval for a DIA Stony Beach Specialist to be permanently assigned in the US Embassy in Hanoi. This is not only good news, it is the result of many, many years of effort, in particular by the League, but also several US Ambassadors to Vietnam and others posted in Hanoi, most recently the immediate past US Ambassador to Vietnam, Ted Osius, and to patience on the part of successive DIA Directors. For the efforts of all who helped form the DIA Stony Beach Team in 1986, though reductions, attempts to reassign irreplaceable specialists, etc., etc., the League is deeply grateful.

The Stony Beach Team is comprised of highly trained specialists, language capable and culturally familiar investigators, capable of augmenting DPAA Investigation Teams, as they have done effectively for years despite having to rotate on a temporary basis in and out of Vietnam. This decision by the Vietnamese leadership is most welcome and deeply appreciated as it will expedite the investigation process to develop leads by interviewing firsthand witnesses before they pass from the scene.

There has long been a permanent Stony Beach specialist in Cambodia, filling the gaps since the former JTF-FA Detachment was pulled out and its responsibilities since handled by Detachment 1 in Bangkok. The Stony Beach specialist was the on-site point-of-contact and invaluable link to the very high level Cambodia POW/MIA Committee.

More recently, though a few years ago and after 14 years of consistent effort by the League, the Lao Government agreed to permit a Stony Beach specialist to be permanently assigned to the US Embassy in Vientiane. Having said that, however, they have most often been restricted to working within the limited timeframe of in-country JFAs (Joint Field Activities).

The ability for Stony Beach to work outside and in addition to the parameters of the JFAs, whether in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia, on a continuing basis and wherever opportunities arise is the objective and the best way to truly augment DPAA's policy and operational efforts.

I thought a positive results from this longstanding priority objective was most definitely worthy of a note in celebration!

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