

**LEAGUE 51<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL MEETING NOT HELD:** As previously announced, the 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting did not take place June 24-28<sup>th</sup>, as previously scheduled. Never before in the League's history has an annual meeting been cancelled; however, it is unlikely that a date will be rescheduled before the end of this year. That is due to uncertainty over options available, including the previously contracted venue at the Hilton Crystal City Hotel which is one of the few hotels in the area still open; most are closed. Of course, **DPAA also cancelled annual briefings that are provided during the League's annual meeting, as well as the DPAA-hosted Annual Government Briefings for Korean War/Cold War Families.** This is all due to the COVID 19 virus and resulting pandemic, DoD travel restrictions, plus DoD, DIA, State Department and other US agencies being under strict orders to telework to the extent possible. It is also due to concerns over endangering the health of League members, as well as US and foreign officials who customarily attend and participate.

**POW/MIA FLAG TO BE DISPLAYED YEAR-ROUND:** On November 7<sup>th</sup>, President Trump signed into law the National POW/MIA Flag Act. The League-originated POW/MIA flag is now to be displayed whenever the US flag is posted on federal properties, including the White House, the US Capitol and all Senate and House Buildings, World War II Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial and the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial, every national VA cemetery, buildings containing the official offices of the Secretaries of State, Defense and Veterans Affairs, the Director of the Selective Service system, all major military installations, as directed by the Secretary of Defense, all VA medical centers and all offices of the US Postal Service. The League is grateful for this tremendous support, a meaningful signal to all nations that America stands behind and with those who serve – past, present and future – and if captured or missing, all possible efforts will be made to recover and bring home our UNRETURNED Veterans.

**FLAG DAY CONFUSION:** Flag Day is one of the six days each year when the POW/MIA flag was previously directed to be flown, as well as Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, National POW/MIA Recognition Day and Veterans Day. This year, on Flag Day and for unknown reasons, our POW/MIA Flag was taken down from on top of the White House and placed on a separate flag pole, under the US flag, but scarcely visible in a small cluster of trees just outside the circular driveway around the South Lawn. Strangely, this occurred only seven months after the President had signed into law the bills passed by the House and Senate requiring display of the POW/MIA flag on "all days on which the flag of the United States is displayed."

**Comment:** When this occurred, DPAA and the League were notified within minutes of each other and given no reason, nor any information concerning who had ordered construction of a new flagpole near the South Lawn and removal of the POW/MIA flag from atop the White House, especially on Flag Day, June 14<sup>th</sup>, where it had proudly flown for decades. The way this was handled was truly bizarre and, to date, neither DPAA Director Kelly McKeague nor League Chairman/CEO Ann Mills-Griffiths has been provided the rationale. Removing the POW/MIA flag from atop the White House sends conflicting signals to counterpart countries which figure prominently in US efforts to achieve the fullest possible accounting, in particular on Vietnam War POW/MIAs. Unless corrected, such will likely be viewed as reducing the priority and seriousness of US determination to obtain answers, including from the DPRK. Accounting for unreturned Korean War Veterans was the 4<sup>th</sup> element of the Singapore Agreement of June 12, 2018.

**SECRETARY OF DEFENSE INCLUDES POW/MIA FLAG IN AUTHORIZATION MEMO:** On July 16<sup>th</sup>, Secretary of Defense Mark Esper issued a memorandum that specified which flags are legally authorized for official display on or depiction by any/all US military-related installations/facilities/personnel. As a result, the Army, Navy and Air Force issued Service-wide instructions for implementation on July 17<sup>th</sup>. **All include our POW/MIA flag.** The League deeply appreciates, is honored, pleased and relieved that this action was taken to reinforce our nation's commitment to accounting for those who served our country during the Vietnam War, as well as wars and conflicts further past.

**SUPPORT THE LEAGUE:** A longstanding League Associate Member recently contacted the League office and volunteered to match a fundraising goal on Facebook for \$2,000. That single concept translated into a donation total of \$5,290 for the League. Others, have initiated similar efforts, such as donating funds that would have been spent on attending the 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting or the amount planned for a family vacation that couldn't be enjoyed in this year of COVID-19. Whatever the reason, please remember the League at this critical time!