

VFW Supportive of POW/MIA Mission Reorganization

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The nation's largest and oldest major combat organization is supportive of a Pentagon announcement to realign the organizations charged with locating and identifying tens of thousands of American troops who have yet to return home from their wars.

"What's most important about this initiative is that the Full Accounting Mission continues, and we appreciate Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel's personal involvement to reshape a multi-organizational structure that shares unity of purpose into one that also shares unity of command," said William A. Thien, a Vietnam veteran and national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Over the next 18 months, a Pentagon team will examine the requirements necessary to merge policy guidance, archival research and analysis, and worldwide field investigations and recovery operations into one organization. Those tasks are currently performed by the Defense POW/MIA Office, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, and portions of the Air Force Life Science Equipment Laboratory. Also being realigned is the scientific element of the mission, which moves JPAC's Central Identification Laboratory under the Armed Forces Medical Examiner, which already encompasses the Armed Forces DNA Laboratory. Included in the new look will be a centralized budget, a consolidated case management system, and expanded public-private partnerships.

"Any effort that helps to recover, identify and return more missing service personnel to their loved ones is a positive initiative," said Thien, "and the VFW looks forward to continuing to work with the secretary and his team to make this happen."

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org