

October 16, 2001

RELEASE NO. #01-26

---

## New Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs visits Vietnam, Laos

By JO1(SW) Tim Paynter  
*JTF-FA Public Affairs*

**BANGKOK, THAILAND** - The Honorable Jerry D. Jennings, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs wasted no time in visiting the front lines of the full-accounting mission, after assuming his current post in August.

A little more than a month after his appointment as the Director of the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), Jennings made a trip half way around the globe to meet with high-level leaders of the Cambodian, Lao and Vietnam governments in hopes of further strengthening ties between the two countries and the United States. Stronger ties means more cooperation in continuing the mission of bringing home Americans who did not return from Southeast Asia as a result of the Vietnam War.

Jennings' visit began Sept. 30 in Laos where he co-hosted with Vice Foreign Minister Phongsavath the Lao provincial seminar. More than 60 provincial and district representatives attended the seminar held in Savannakhet. This was an opportunity for Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA), Central Identification Laboratory (CILHI), Stony Beach, [and] DPMO leaders and the Lao government to iron out details of upcoming investigation and recovery missions JTF-FA wants to execute in that country. Missions that JTF-FA hopes will bring answers to the families of Americans that never returned from Southeast Asia.

After departing Cambodia, Jennings then traveled to the Joint Task Force's Detachment Two in Hanoi, Vietnam. While meeting with key Vietnamese officials, Jennings visited a recovery site Oct. 5 near Haiphong where a recovery element is searching for remains of a naval aviator who perished in a RA-5C aircraft.

One reality remains in the full-accounting mission, time is the enemy. "Time truly is not on our side, but we deal with cases from all wars from the past 50 years and we're getting results. This mission is the heart and soul of America because we simply don't leave our servicemen behind. This mission is going to continue all over the world and will certainly continue in Southeast Asia," Jennings said.

Although his authority encompasses all wars throughout the world, the search for Americans in Southeast Asia is a personal commitment for him as he served as an intelligence officer in the region during his time in the Marine Corps. "A few weeks ago I met a man named Robert Apodaca whose father's remains were brought back. His father was flying an F-4 Phantom like many of my friends did and I really identified with him. I was there (Southeast Asia) when he went down."

Photos available at the JTF-FA website. More information about the U.S. government's full accounting mission in Southeast Asia can be found on the Joint Task Force-Full Accounting website at [www.pacom.mil/jtffa/index/index.htm](http://www.pacom.mil/jtffa/index/index.htm) or the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Affairs Office web site at [www.dtic.mil/dpmo](http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo) JTF-FA point of contact is Capt. Gina Jackson (808) 477-5301. Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI) point of contact is: Ginger Coudon at (808) 448-8903 ext. 109.