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News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BREAKTHROUGH ANNOUNCED IN POW/MIA ACCOUNTING

The senior U.S. official responsible for policy oversight of accounting for American POWs and MIAs concluded three days of talks Thursday in Vietnam, marked by what he termed “clear and concrete positive steps” from SRV government officials.

Jerry D. Jennings, deputy assistant secretary of defense for POW/MIA affairs, arrived in Vietnam Sunday for a series of discussions with the Deputy Prime Minister, as well as with senior officials in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, National Defense, and Public Security. According to Jennings, “I’m very pleased at the outcome of our discussions here. This commitment from the highest levels of the Vietnamese government offers us the opportunity to achieve significant results.”

Jennings cited specifically the positive outcome of discussions to gain access to Vietnamese national archives, with the central focus on the Ministry of National Defense. Vietnamese archivists will be permitted to pursue POW/MIA leads wherever the information may take them. This is the first joint archival search effort publicly endorsed at the level of the deputy prime minister.

In another significant breakthrough, the Vice Minister of Public Security, Nguyen Van Huong, granted a request from Jennings to visit the Central Highlands, an area to which access had been denied for POW/MIA activities for nearly three years due to sporadic local unrest. His visit is expected to allow for the return to the area by U.S. investigation and recovery teams.

Jennings also cited good support in his interviews with senior Vietnamese wartime leaders, whose recollections may provide important POW/MIA information on wartime activities and policy to help the United States locate its missing servicemen.

He noted the Vietnamese agreed in principle to support underwater recovery operations. Currently an assessment of technical requirements is being conducted and when it is completed a decision will be made regarding what type of vessel and equipment would offer the best opportunities for success. He also welcomed Vietnam’s

support for the U.S.-hosted 2004 POW/MIA consultations with Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, which will take place in Cambodia in late July.

During the visit, Jennings turned over hundreds of documents from U.S. national archives containing information about Vietnamese soldiers who died during the war. “This is a mutual humanitarian effort,” he said, “and we’re committed to sharing information with Vietnam whenever we find it.”

For additional information about POW/MIA recoveries, visit <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> , or call the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office at (703) 699-1169.