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DEFENSE DEPARTMENT UPDATES VIETNAM WAR MIA FAMILIES

The Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) hosted a series of national government briefings for approximately 200 family members of Vietnam War MIAs Thursday and Friday in Arlington, Va.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/MIA Affairs Jerry D. Jennings, who served as the senior host for the annual government briefings, opened the two-day event by highlighting recent breakthroughs in the POW/MIA issue with Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Jennings is responsible for policy oversight and control of the worldwide mission to account for America's missing from all conflicts.

The annual gathering was tailored to address the concerns of families whose loved ones are missing from the Vietnam War. Of the more than 88,000 Americans who are missing in action from all conflicts, 1,858 are from the Vietnam War.

Throughout the year, families receive individualized updates on their specific cases. These government briefings in Washington present broader information on the effort to account for missing servicemen. The presentations last week covered a wide range of topics including negotiations with North Korea, China and Russia; archival research; field investigations and recovery operations; and the use of DNA in identifying remains.

Casualty officers from each of the military services, as well as specialists from DPMO and other Department of Defense agencies, updated individual family members on the status of their cases. Jennings also met with leaders of several family organizations as well as with dozens of family members.

The DPMO holds similar updates in cities across the country, as well as two annual government briefings in Washington, and has reached more than 10,000 family members through this outreach effort.

Additional information on POW/MIA accounting may be found on the DPMO web site at www.dtic.mil/dpmo or by calling (703) 699-1169.