Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 29, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

In anticipation of your upcoming state visit to Laos in September, we write on behalf of the families across the nation whose loved ones remain missing in Laos from the Vietnam War. Currently there are 301 Americans who remain unaccounted for in Laos. We kindly request that you focus on this important issue during your state visit. The families of these brave Americans have been waiting anxiously for decades for an accounting of their loved ones.

As you know, the Defense POW / MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) is responsible for the important mission of accounting for our missing personnel in Laos and elsewhere around the world, and conducts regular Joint Field Activities to excavate loss sites in search of missing Americans. In fact, since 1973, the U.S. has successfully accounted for and repatriated the remains of 273 Americans from Laos. This mission is extremely important for the families of our missing American personnel, and for our entire nation.

Unfortunately, the Lao government limits the number of personnel that DPAA can deploy on a Joint Field Activity, thus significantly impacting our ability to account for missing Americans. In addition, the Lao government requires DPAA recovery teams stay in a "base camp" and travel to and from excavation sites daily, usually by helicopter, adding costs to the mission. This base camp arrangement further limits the ability of these teams to account for missing personnel as recovery teams must spend several hours of each day in transit to these remote sites.

With this in mind we would strongly urge you and your Administration to make these issues major talking points when speaking with your Lao government counterparts in September. We ask that you thank the country of Laos for its support in upcoming remains recovery operations this fall, and also request you ask for a lifting of restrictions placed on DoD remains recovery teams. We owe it to the families of our missing American personnel in Laos to account for these brave Americans and to bring them all home to the country for which they fought and, ultimately, gave their lives for.

Thank you very much for your attention to this important matter, Mr. President. Please do not hesitate to contact our offices with any further questions.

Sincerely,

Sam Johnson

SAM JOHNSON
Member of Congress

Chuck Grassley

CHUCK GRASSLEY
United States Senator

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