



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

**Statement for the record as prepared by  
The Honorable Glenn 'GT' Thompson (PA-05)**

**House Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives  
Subcommittee on Military Personnel**

**Hearing on: Review and Restructure of the Prisoner of War/Missing in  
Action (POW/MIA) Office and Agencies**

**Tuesday, July 15, 2014**

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Davis, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you all for the opportunity to submit comments for today's hearing. I appreciate and thank you for your tireless efforts in support of our nation's brave service men and women, including those who served and never made it home.

As the Subcommittee reviews and considers the future of the POW/MIA Office and Agencies, it is essential to ensure that the Department of Defense is correctly prioritizing recovery missions. Recent problems and mistakes raise concerns that deserve our immediate attention, including a troubling situation that has arisen within the Joint POW/MIA Accountability Command (JPAC), which involves the case of Major Lewis P. Smith III, a constituent of mine who was listed as Missing in Action in May of 1968.

Major Smith was trained on the T-38 and C130 aircraft, and was assigned to the 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron, Pleiku Air Base. During combat in Vietnam, Major Smith piloted a Cessna O2A "Sky Master" aircraft in Saravane Province, Laos. During the mission, Smith encountered enemy fire, resulting in the crash of his plane. Electronic signals were heard at the scene, indicating that he had survived the crash, but he was not rescued, and is now honored on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Panel 62W - - Line 2.

Major Smith's family has been working with JPAC for many years to recover his remains. The excavation site in Laos is has been on the list for over three years and the

trip to excavate the crash site has been postponed twice, allegedly due to budget pressures and sequestration.

Following these events, Major Smith's family reached out to me to help with their efforts to bring Major Smith's remains home. Over the past several months I have worked with the House Appropriations Committee to ensure the accounts for JPAC are fully funded. Despite this work, Major Smith's family recently received devastating news that the recovery site in Laos had been flooded by a newly built dam. As a result, the task of recovering Major Smith's remains has been exponentially complicated.

Furthermore, the dam construction in Laos was planned and built over the course of a decade. During that time, JPAC was fully aware of this project, yet failed to complete the mission before it was too late. This series of events brings into question the adequacy of coordination between JPAC and officials from partner nations and the process by which JPAC prioritizes recovery missions. Ultimately, I remain concerned that JPAC's failure to recover this site could have been prevented. If this is found to be the case, corrective action must be taken to ensure this does not reoccur in the future.

It is vital that families do not have to experience the repeated anguish of losing a loved one for a second time because of an avoidable oversight, such as what happened to Major Smith's family in Pennsylvania. Those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country and their family members deserve much better.

Thank you again for your help and consideration.

Sincerely,



Glenn 'GT' Thompson  
Member of Congress