Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency

DPAA STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND APPROACH

October 2015

Fulfilling Our Nation's Promise

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ACTING DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE, OCTOBER 2016

What a privilege and an honor it has been to be part of such a mission driven, highly skilled, and professional organization. As we approach the one year anniversary of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) reaching full operational capability (FOC), it is important to pause and take a moment to reflect upon how far we have come, crediting the steadfast commitment of our workforce, our Department of Defense leaders, and all of our external supporters. Serving as the foundation for our efforts, the DPAA Strategic Initiatives and Approach document provided the strategic vision required to develop subsequent operational level documents that continue to move DPAA and the accounting community a little closer to fulfilling our nation's promise. The strategic relevance of this document remains valid and it will continue to guide our efforts in providing the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel to their families and the Nation.

It has been a busy year. We have established ourselves as a regionally focused, multi-disciplinary agency and we implemented several key process improvements to improve how we conduct investigations, excavations, and disinterments and how we communicate the importance of our mission. Further, we made significant strides in developing our strategic partnership programs, developed a global campaign plan and operations plan that prioritize and synchronize our efforts for the next six years. Also, we have augmented our world-class workforce with many new, talented professionals.

Most importantly, our efforts have translated into improved results. In Fiscal Year 16, we accounted for more missing personnel than in any other year and significantly increased our responsiveness to families and external stakeholders. These accomplishments are recognized by our accounting community partners, family members, and Department of Defense officials. It is apparent that DPAA is realizing its vision of maximizing the number of missing personnel accounted for while ensuring timely, accurate information is provided to the families of the missing. The state of the Agency is improving every day and our collective efforts are making a difference.

However, I believe the best is yet to come. We must not become complacent or over confident in our accomplishments. Together we must build upon our firm foundation, emphasizing innovation, increased external and internal collaboration, agility, a sense of urgency in our mission, and support for one another. Our agency values—compassion, integrity, teamwork, respect, and innovation—serve as our compass that guides our actions. We must be committed and hold each other accountable to these values, ensuring no time is wasted in our individual and team best efforts in achieving the fullest possible accounting.

Fulfilling Our Nation's Promise!

Fern O. Sumpter Winbush

Acting Director, DPAA

FUNDAMENTALS

OUR VISION

A world-class workforce fulfills our nation's obligation by maximizing the number of missing personnel accounted for while ensuring timely, accurate information is provided to their families.

OUR MISSION

To provide the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel to their families and the nation.

OUR VALUES

Compassion: We conduct our work and communication with empathy.

Integrity: We live our lives with truthfulness and objectivity.

Teamwork: We partner with family organizations, veterans, public and private entities, foreign governments, and academia to achieve our mission.

Respect: We always demonstrate the utmost regard for one another, our partners, and our missing personnel and their families.

Innovation: We apply fresh thinking and continuously improve everything we do.

FULFILLING OUR NATION'S PROMISE

The United States has made a sacred promise to its citizens that it will bring home with dignity all those who have served. Providing a critical role in fulfilling that promise, DPAA is responsible for determining the fate of our missing and, where possible, recovering and identifying those who have made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of a grateful nation. We will not stop in our pursuit of answers for the families and for our nation.

In order to achieve this, we are committed to the principles of unity of effort, transparency, and maintaining scientific rigor throughout the accounting process. We will keep families informed of case progress and new information as proactively and rapidly as possible. We will continually improve by assessing what works and what does not, and revising our processes as needed.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Our mission requires operations in sometimes remote geographic locations with limited external support, presenting unique environmental, fiscal, legal, and logistical challenges that must be managed to achieve success. These challenges require foresight, resourcefulness, and agility during planning and execution to ensure DPAA personnel can operate safely, efficiently, and effectively.

In certain countries where DPAA is required to conduct operations, access and freedom of movement can be restricted or inconsistent.

> "As a grateful nation, we owe it to all who put on the uniform of the United States to remain unwavering in our promise to them. With hearts of love, families carry on with an unfillable void, and we stand beside them—one and all—acutely aware of the cost at which our liberty comes."
>
> - Barack Obama, President of the United States, September 2015

These realities can sometimes limit our ability to execute missions where there are significant numbers of unaccounted-for U.S. personnel. We will continue to seek access in these locations, however, and remain flexible in taking advantage of opportunities when they present themselves to increase accounting, often as the vanguard for the U.S. government to improve and expand international relations. In doing so, we will integrate our efforts with those of the Geographic Combatant Commands. We will continue to strengthen our work with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the Services.

THE FUTURE OF DPAA

DPAA is implementing a number of key initiatives in order to transform our agency into a single, accountable organization with oversight of all past conflict personnel accounting resources, research, and operations across the Department of Defense.

CULTURE OF INNOVATION

While sustaining proven strengths, we are continually seeking ways to improve and innovate our approach. We owe it to our missing and their families to continually adopt better and more effective ways of providing answers and seeking identifications. This includes pursuing improved technology and workforce innovation to increase our mission performance.

CULTURE OF COLLABORATION AND AGILITY

We are realigning ourselves to be more responsive and agile—leveraging multi-disciplinary teams in the Asia-Pacific and Europe-Mediterranean to increase coordination and feedback within our processes in an effort to speed collaboration and improve accountability.

DPAA's laboratory will continue to sustain excellence in its scientific and forensic processes while advancing procedures to significantly increase identifications.

CULTURE OF URGENCY

We have a sense of urgency, which leads us to review and prioritize cases based on operational considerations. For example, while time is always a factor, we routinely review cases to ensure a higher priority in geographic areas that are at greatest risk of degradation or where eyewitness accounts are at greatest risk for being lost. We will also review those cases where aging immediate family members are still alive in order to ensure they are given a higher priority.

HOW WE WILL GET THERE

DPAA has established the following key areas of investment to ensure we fulfill the nation's promise.

INCREASED RESPONSIVENESS TO FAMILIES

Our work is focused on the families of our missing. We will continue to maintain strong partnerships with the service casualty offices (SCOs) to ensure responsiveness to families. We will design a comprehensive communication approach to provide timely and accurate information to the families throughout their experience with DPAA. Part of this new communication approach is an innovative Case Management System (CMS). Our Case Management System will provide a portal by which family members can review the progress of their loved one's cases and contribute information from their personal research that may be useful to their accounting.

INCREASED RESULTS AND OUTPUTS

We are reviewing our performance measures to ensure they meet the requirement to drive continuous process improvement. For example, we will expect of ourselves (on an annual basis) accountability information on:

- Cases reviewed
- Investigations begun
- Operations completed
- Narratives completed on cases where recoveries cannot be made
- New partnerships leveraged
- Accessions to the lab
- Identifications made

We have finalized a single list of the missing. We have aligned our agency into multi-disciplinary, coordinated teams to integrate and synchronize the process from case research through recoveries. We anticipate aligning in this manner will allow quicker management of cases between research, investigations, and recovery of our missing.

In support of the Department's updated policy guidance, we will provide additional focus on disinterment (and identification) of remains of U.S. Service members buried as "unknowns" in our nation's cemeteries. Significant family interest in disinterments has been demonstrated time and again, and will serve as a starting point for research into these cases. We will also provide more timely response to information requests for disinterments that originate outside of our agency. Disinterments will be a priority in our mission and will account for many individuals who are buried as unknowns in cemeteries worldwide.

FOSTER AND DEVELOP BROAD PARTNERSHIPS

A major initiative of our agency will be to establish relationships with a number of partners who will serve as force multipliers for DPAA. We will strive to connect with U.S. and foreign agencies, universities, non-governmental organizations, volunteers, and corporations interested in supporting our mission with resources or expertise. Our new Strategic Partnerships office will be working with our multi-disciplinary teams to leverage research and recovery partnership opportunities to augment our capacity.

CONCLUSION

This initial strategy will provide the framework for future years' planning efforts—the agency's five-year campaign plan and annual operations plans. The agency will determine the milestones necessary to generate these plans in a timely manner in order to optimally achieve the agency's priorities. Each directorate will have the responsibility to develop an annual action plan in support of the agency's broader objectives and provide an assessment on how it has performed against that plan.

Through the implementation of this strategy, DPAA will perform our mission in the most operationally effective and cost-efficient manner in order to best research, find, recover, and identify missing personnel from the nation's past conflicts, and in doing so, provide the fullest possible accounting to families and to our nation.

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