



**DPAA Family/VSO/MSO Quarterly Call and Update Notes**  
**Thursday, Apr 16, 2020, 2:00 P.M.**  
**'Fulfilling Our Nation's Promise'**



**Summary:** Keeping the families of our missing as well as veterans informed is a primary objective of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's (DPAA) mission. This update is intended to provide an overview of efforts during the previous quarter to account for our missing.

**Family Group-Veterans Service Organization Participants:**

- American Legion
- Coalition of Families
- Disabled American Veterans
- Honor Release Return, Inc.
- Korea-Cold War Families of the Missing
- Korean War POW/MIA Network
- Korean War Veterans Association
- National League of POW/MIA Families
- Special Operations Association
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- Veterans of Foreign Wars

The agenda includes:

- Director's Update (Mr. Kelly McKeague)
- Deputy Director of Operations Update (RDML Darius Banaji)
- Operational Update (Euro-Med COL Frank Tank/Indo-Pac Col Brian Peterson)
- Partnerships and Innovations Update (Dr. Tom Holland)
- Scientific Analysis Update (Dr. John Byrd)
- Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES) Update (Dr. Tim McMahon)
- Outreach and Communications Update (Mr. Todd Livick)
- Question & Answer

In addition to those listed above, Principal Deputy Director, Mrs. Fern Sumpter Winbush and Mrs. Jennifer Nasarenko from Policy & Plans also participated in the call.

**Director's Update**

**Loss of Senior Enlisted Leader**

Shocked and deeply saddened, we share the news of the passing of our Senior Enlisted Leader, Army Sergeant Major Joaquin Andujar. After he did not participate in two teleconferences on Monday, we reported him missing to law enforcement, and on Tuesday the Honolulu Police

Department found him deceased. They are conducting an investigation as is the Honolulu Medical Examiner to determine cause of death. This was Jei-J's second assignment serving this noble mission, which he loved; he started with the mission in the early 2000s as a recovery NCO. Please keep his wife and parents in your thoughts and prayers.

### **COVID-19 Impacts**

Like every other element of the Department of Defense and American society, DPAA has been significantly impacted by COVID-19. First and foremost, we are fortunate that, to date, none of our personnel have exhibited COVID symptoms or tested positive for it. Here are some additions to my March 20 email to all of you -- our last deployed teams returned safely on March 21 (we have no one in the field today); we brought home all personnel and dependents from our detachment in Laos due to deteriorating conditions there; we have maximized teleworking worldwide with only 3 percent of our team in the office by exception; and we canceled the May 16 FMU in Chicago (the third FMU to be canceled).

### **Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Budget**

With all the canceled or postponed field missions, at least through June, we are behind in executing our apportioned budget. We are exploring and pursuing options to obligate funds to previously unfunded, but key requirements, such as our Case Management System and a project demonstration with the University of Illinois-Chicago centered on Philippines cases. We will be returning to DoD the \$16.9M that was specifically added to our FY2020 budget for field work in North Korea since there have been no communications with the North Korean Army since March 2019.

### **Misidentification Follow-up**

Since our January call when we briefed you on a 2019 misidentification of the remains of an Unknown disinterred in 2018, we conducted with the Army Casualty Office an in-person briefing to the family, led by Fern Sumpter Winbush; completed an internal cause analysis and corrective action report from which we have already implemented adjustments to our procedures; and we began this week an independent scientific assessment conducted by a team of outside experts.

### **VFW and American Legion Conferences**

We were privileged and appreciated the opportunity to provide a mission update to the state leaders of the VFW and American Legion who were assembled in DC for their annual VFW Midwinter Conference and American Legion Washington Conference, respectively. Our briefings preceded their engagements with Members of Congress and their staff members. A special thanks to BJ and Freddy for allowing us to participate to articulate how important this mission is.

### **Deputy Director for Operations Update**

#### **Key Engagements**

Since we last spoke and before the COVID-19 restrictions, we hosted several key leaders. In the latter part of January, we hosted visits by U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia, Kamala Lakhdir, and U.S. Ambassador to Laos, Peter Haymond. In February, we hosted the Republic of Korea (ROK)–U.S. Alliance Foundation, which was led by the former ROK Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General (retired) Seung Jo Jung, and U.S. Ambassador to Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, and Tuvalu, Joseph Cella. And in March, we hosted U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia, Patrick Murphy. As you

can imagine, they were great engagements and each of these leaders remains a big supporter of our mission, and these opportunities helped further strengthen our relationships.

### **Contingency Operations Planning,**

For your awareness, we have begun deliberate planning to assess the various U.S./worldwide conditions and limiting factors, which when improved, may enable some organic and partner missions (investigations, recoveries, and disinterments) to resume later this summer. We will be poised to safely resume field operations as soon as U.S./global conditions allow. At the same time, I want to reiterate we have not closed our doors. Our operations team, including researchers, analysts, planners, and scientists continue to further case progression.

### **Korean War Disinterment Project**

On February 24, we reached a milestone by completing Phase 2 of the Korean War Disinterment Project at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP) in Hawaii. Everyone should be extremely proud of their role and advocacy in this tremendous team effort. We have been reviewing the number of these cases in our laboratory and synchronizing sampling and testing with the overall pace of the disinterments. Our request to move to Phase 3 will be submitted for approval once we are confident that beginning the next phase is operationally prudent for the lab and cemetery; we expect to begin this phase later this calendar year.

### **Republic of Korea (ROK) Counterpart**

In March, we held a teleconference with our ROK counterpart, the Ministry of National Defense Agency for Killed in Action Recovery and Identification (MAKRI) and its Director, Brig Gen (Ret) Heo. We had extensive discussions regarding future joint field activities along the ROK side of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and future Joint Forensics Reviews, and a repatriation ceremony of Asian remains from the K-55 unilateral turnover. These activities will be dependent on the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions both here and in the ROK.

### **Future Operations**

Last week, you should have received the latest DPAA Operations Update from me, which provided a summary of our organic and partner missions that ended in March. The next DPAA Operations Update you'll see from me will be after we resume field operations. If you did not receive this email, please reach out to Todd Livick or Johnie Webb with your email address.

### **Direct COVID-19 Support**

For DPAA, 13 of our medical personnel have been detailed to provide clinical support to three DoD medical facilities in Hawaii and Germany and assist patient care there.

## **Regional Teams Overview**

### **European-Mediterranean (EM) Region**

#### **February-March Operations**

During this time period, we conducted five investigations. Two investigations occurred in Panama, one in Italy, and one in the United Kingdom. The fifth was an underwater partner investigation in Latvian waters.

### **February-March Disinterment Operations**

During this time period, EM conducted two disinterments at Rhone American Cemetery in France. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) has suspended access to its cemeteries in Europe, resulting in postponement of 11 disinterments scheduled in March at Sicily-Rome American Cemetery in Italy, and Lorraine American Cemetery and Brittany American Cemetery in France.

### **April Operations**

EM does not plan to execute any operations for the month of April. Due to the pandemic, one Recovery Team (RT) to Belgium and one RT to Italy have been canceled; these missions were scheduled to begin on April 1<sup>st</sup> and continue through June 5. Additionally, one investigation to Poland has been delayed and may be executed later in the FY, if the COVID-19 situation in the region improves. Our research continues and we are developing case investigation proposals and disinterment requests.

### **April Disinterment Operations**

Because of ABMC cemetery closures, DPAA has also postponed 23 planned disinterments in April, which were scheduled at Brittany American Cemetery; Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery and Ardennes American Cemetery in Belgium; and Netherlands American Cemetery. Depending on worldwide conditions, we will look at what we can do for the remainder of the year.

### **U.S. – Russia Joint Commission (USRJC) Update**

Representatives from the U.S. and Russian Sides of the USRJC met on March 6 in Washington, D.C. to conduct technical talks for the USRJC's World War II (WWII) and Vietnam War Working Groups. Summarized minutes of both meetings will be posted to the DPAA website as soon as they are coordinated with the Russian Side. U.S. Side highlights from the WWII talks included discussions regarding investigations of WWII-era aircraft crash sites on and along the coast of the Kamchatka Peninsula and Northern Kuril Islands in the Russian Far East region, archival research of Soviet mortuary affairs records that may contain information on the burials and reburials of U.S. missing lost in Eastern and Central Europe, as well as researching Soviet security service archives for information on five U.S. airmen lost in three separate incidents in areas of current day Poland and Serbia. Highlights from the Vietnam War talks included discussions on focusing efforts to search the records of Soviet air defense units that supplied advisors deployed to Vietnam during the war, surveying Russian naval archives for reports from Soviet naval units conducting intelligence operations against U.S. air assets lost during missions over the waters near Vietnam, as well as searching Russian military medical archives for information on American POWs who may have been treated by Soviet medical personnel deployed to assist the North Vietnamese during the war. Additionally, the U.S. Side took the opportunity to express its strong desire and readiness to conduct a previously postponed recovery mission at a cemetery near Vladivostok, which may correlate to the loss of a U.S. Navy aircraft during a 1950 Cold War incident. The Russian Side reiterated its commitment to support this mission, as well as optimism that all logistical arrangements and legal permission would be in place to execute this work in the planned July-August timeframe. It is important to note the U.S. and Russian Co-chairmen have agreed to postpone the 23<sup>rd</sup> Plenum of the USRJC due to the current worldwide crisis related to the pandemic. Once the crisis is resolved, the Co-chairs will agree on a new date for the next Plenum.

## **Indo-Pacific (IP) Region**

### **February-March Operations**

During this period, we conducted missions in Vietnam and Cambodia, consisting of two Joint Field Activities (JFAs). Vietnam was comprised of two RTs, one Vietnamese RT, one underwater RT, one partnered underwater investigative team (IT), and one organic IT. Cambodia consisted of one RT and one IT.

The WWII, Korean War, and Cold War IP missions during this period included completion of recovery efforts at an air crash site in Monywa, Burma; partial completion of an investigative and a recovery mission conducted by partner University of Illinois-Chicago in the Philippines; and continued recurring daily recovery efforts by History Flight Group on Tarawa. Operations in Tarawa were postponed in mid-March due to COVID-19. IP continues to actively dialogue and coordinate with United Nations Command and our ROK MAKRI counterpart for future investigative and recovery opportunities within the southern section of the DMZ.

### **February-March Research and Analysis**

IP researchers conducted weekly planning meetings, providing case information on ground and air cases to support anticipated investigative operations in the ROK in September of this year, including potential cases in the DMZ. Additionally, our researchers collaborated with our planners on investigation proposals to support FY 2021-2022 field operations in Papua New Guinea and the Philippines. In light of archival closures, we are organizing data from our backlog of archival materials acquired in the past year. IP researchers reviewed 13 Case Narratives for the Vietnam conflict for upcoming field work.

### **February-March Disinterment Operations**

There were 22 Korean War Unknowns exhumed from the NMCP, as were 10 WWII Unknowns, prior to operations being suspended by the cemetery due to the pandemic. At the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, 55 Unknowns have been exhumed in the current FY. Other planned February and March disinterments were cancelled due in part to approval delays and COVID-19. This brings IP's total disinterments to 127 for the current FY. We are prepared to restart disinterment operations when the current crisis has been resolved.

### **April Operations**

An Investigative Team scheduled for the ROK and disinterments scheduled for Manila American Cemetery in April have been postponed. Likewise, missions in Laos and Vietnam scheduled for early May, have been suspended until conditions warrant a resumption of field operations.

## **Partnerships & Innovation (PI) Update**

### **February-March and Future Operations**

PI had an ambitious slate of field missions scheduled for FY 2020; however, as of today, all 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter field missions have been cancelled or –mostly, postponed. Fortunately, most of these missions are with academic partners and are supported through cooperative agreements rather than contracts. This allows us tremendous flexibility in rescheduling, including pushing many of these

missions into FY 2021. Other non-recovery partnerships, such as archival research projects, have been temporarily placed on hold due to academic research partners being focused on converting to telework and finishing up on-line teaching. We hope these non-field partnerships will be able to resume within the next several months. Regardless, PI continues to develop new partnerships and we continue work on arranging future operations. There is a lot of planning for next year.

### **Scientific Analysis (SA) Update**

The DPAA Laboratory System is balancing the maximized teleworking situation with limited access to the facilities so as to maintain progress on identifications and other scientific work, while also mitigating any health risks. We are still making identifications and have made several in the last couple of days and expect that to continue in this restricted posture. Our stable isotope analysis team continues to write the scientific papers necessary to introduce novel methods and to see them validated. Since we missed many scientific meetings due to spring cancellations, we are finding other opportunities for professional development such as online courses. Working closely with the AFMES-Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) team, there are a number of cases that are being developed for identification this month.

#### **FY2020 Identifications**

Total IDs = 37 identifications, but we made several more in the last couple of days  
WWII = 35 identifications / 33 newly-accounted-for – a lot are Tarawa and USS Oklahoma  
Korean War = 4  
Vietnam War= 0

### **AFMES Update**

#### **February-March Operations**

FY 2020 goal is 4,400 DNA analyses; as of 31 March, AFMES reported 2,294 analyses to DPAA. This is an average of 382 analyses per month, which is above the 366 analyses per month needed to reach 4,400 analyses for the year. We are right on schedule, but will likely see a dip in the coming months due to COVID-19.

In March, AFMES -- in response to the COVID-19 outbreak -- was mandated to adhere to social distancing and DoD guidelines in regards to work. To keep the mission going, AFMES has adopted a dual-shift program running two shifts per day (AM and PM) with about 10 percent of employees per shift. This is allowing us to work with DPAA to process cases as well as to issue Believe to Be Reports, as requested. Although not all scientists are in the building working, a large number of them are doing case review from home to keep case work moving forward. It is our goal to continue shift work with minimal staffing to meet DoD, State, and Federal guidelines for the foreseeable future.

Year to date: This has led to 68 First-time Named Believe to Be Reports (first time a Family Reference is consistent with an unknown sample submitted by DPAA for DNA testing). This is a big thing we are working daily with DPAA even though all of our sections are on a reduced staff.

## **Outreach and Communications (OC) Update**

### **February FMU**

On February 22, the Agency hosted an FMU in Portland, Oregon, for 252 family members, representing 137 cases of missing personnel. Throughout the day, the service casualty officers and the Agency's analysts/historians met with family members and conducted 126 one-on-one briefings. The AFMES staff collected family reference samples for 25 losses. The FMU was livestreamed and reached 14,675 people, generating 6,723 views. We are grateful to the American Legion, who provided refreshments for the families attending the FMU. On the Thursday prior to the FMU, an OC/AFMES team briefed 75 ROTC cadets from Portland and Portland State Universities. On Friday, the team briefed more than 20 members from the Oregon National Guard. Later, the team met with staff members from Senator Merkley's and Congressman Blumenauer's offices.

### **Future FMUs**

As you know, FMUs for Miami, FL; Little Rock, AR; and Chicago, IL, scheduled for March 21, April 18, and May 16, respectively, have been canceled. This is the first time DPAA has ever canceled an FMU, but all three of these locations have been rescheduled for FY 2021; the latest schedule can be found at <https://www.dpaa.mil/Families/Family-Events/>.

### **Vietnam War Families Annual Meeting**

Since the National League of Families cancelled its Annual Meeting due to the pandemic, DoD has cancelled the government briefings held in conjunction.

### **Korean/Cold War Annual Government Briefings (July 30-31, 2020)**

Planning is still ongoing and we anticipate that we will have a final decision on hosting this event in mid to late May.

### **POW/MIA Chair Dedication**

DPAA dedicated its first POW/MIA Chair of Honor at the Hawaii facility. Keynote speakers at the ceremony were former Vietnam War POW, Navy Capt (Ret) Hickerson, and Natalie Rausch, daughter of Air Force Col Warren Anderson, who is missing from the Vietnam War. The chair occupies a prominent place in the atrium of the main building. Chairs of Honor will be dedicated in our DC, Nebraska, and Vietnam facilities once the pandemic situation allows us to do so.

### **Media Engagements of Note**

FOX NATION: On March 28, Lara Logan interviewed Johnie Webb via ZOOM for her new series – "Lara Logan Has No Agenda." Each episode includes four 22-minute segments. This interview was for the third episode, currently in pre-production and scheduled to air in May leading up to Memorial Day. Ms. Logan is focusing on veterans affairs "through the eyes of veterans and those dealing with these issues, from their success stories to cutting edge technology, those treating them, and those still searching for the missing." The interview with Mr. Webb focused on his service in Vietnam, the history of the accounting mission, and DPAA's mission, traditions, protocols, and international work. Ms. Logan explained that it will also get a lot of air time on FOX News when

she makes appearances over the course of the next few months to discuss the new documentary prior to the air date.

**VOICE OF AMERICA//KOREAN SERVICE:** On March 31, Reporter Songwon Baik interviewed Dr. Jennie Jin about the Korean War Identification Project, which she leads. The interview was conducted in Korean and highlighted the on-going identifications despite restrictions brought about by the coronavirus situation, progress on the K-55, and extensive challenges due to commingling.

**PBS Documentary:** WQED, the Pittsburgh PBS affiliate, produced a 30-min documentary that tells the story of an Army Air Corps crewman from Pennsylvania, who was shot down in 1945. A German researcher found his crash site, History Flight recovered his remains in 2017, and the Offutt Lab identified him in 2018. The film can be viewed at <https://www.wqed.org/homecoming>.

### **Media Awards**

Department of the Navy - 2019 Russell Egnor Navy Media Awards

Photo – Feature 1st: MC2 Seth Coulter, DPAA

[https://www.dvidshub.net/image/5018282/dpaa-disinterment-january-7-2019?fbclid=IwAR0chcn-tWiXMKdZiPkG6Z6A78l4mEV3isYK9jp9A4Sloyqx9Fs\\_W6sMVQ](https://www.dvidshub.net/image/5018282/dpaa-disinterment-january-7-2019?fbclid=IwAR0chcn-tWiXMKdZiPkG6Z6A78l4mEV3isYK9jp9A4Sloyqx9Fs_W6sMVQ)

Graphic Design - Digital Art 2nd: MC1 Thompson, DPAA

[https://www.dpaa.mil/portals/85/Images/Posters/pow\\_mia\\_poster\\_2019.png](https://www.dpaa.mil/portals/85/Images/Posters/pow_mia_poster_2019.png)

2019 Air Force Public Affairs CMSgt Douglas W. Morrell Media Awards - News Photo

1st: SSgt Apryl Hall, DPAA

<https://www.dvidshub.net/image/5776202/dpaa-teams-return-papua-new-guinea>

As a reminder, to search for and use DPAA mission photos, please visit the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (<https://www.dvidshub.net/>), where you can browse current as well as archived DPAA content.

### **Questions and Answers**

**Veterans of Foreign Wars:** Condolence and prayers for Jei-J's family. I can't tell you how personal that news affected me. We expect to cancel our national convention due to COVID; it was scheduled for July in Reno. Our concern is for our membership and we continue to work under telework like everyone else; continuing the mission as we have since 1899.

**Vietnam Veterans of America:** We're being affected by COVID and have lost several members due to COVID. Appreciated all the updates you are able to provide.

**Disabled American Veterans:** Question about the designation of the National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum in Jacksonville, FL; question on the designation of National Memorial. HR 4446 designates the memorial/museum as The National POW/MIA Memorial and Museum. Will it be receiving federal funding?



**ANSWERS provided by:**

- Honor Release Return, Inc.: The memorial and museum will focus on MIAs who are still missing from 1941 through current times ---will not be a priority on former POWs. Cecil Field was chosen because of the 16 Naval aviators who were stationed there and went missing.

- National League of POW/MIA Families: We've been working with those who organized the Cecil Field memorial and were very sensitive to the terminology. It represents renewing the commitment to account for as fully as possible for those who have not returned.

**Korean War Veterans Association:** Annual meeting and Board meeting have been postponed; no date for when it will be rescheduled, but if it happens it will likely be in the fall. How many Korean War remains are in the Lab from the various sources that are undergoing analysis? **ANSWER:** Not sure exactly how many we have --- we would have to put a lot of effort to come up with that number. Analysis of remains from the K-55 originally indicates as many as 250 remains were turned over; DPAA has identified a little more than 40 and there will be quite a few more IDs in the next few months. Approximately 80 or so of those from the K-55 are not American. DPAA has identified most of the American remains from the original K-208 --- a few remaining are going to be very challenging and we not certain many Americans are left. We estimate that there were at least 500 U.S. remains from the K-208 and Joint Recovery Operations. At least 100 of those are believed to be foreign nationals. DPAA has been very aggressive with the Korean War Disinterment Project and have a lot of unknowns in the lab and are having good success identifying them; all require next generation sequencing (NGS) if DNA is required. DPAA's best estimate of the total number of Korean War remains in the lab is more than 1,000; although not all are American. We expect our success to continue over the next year.

What is the percentage of Korean War family reference samples (FRS) that we have? **ANSWER:** 92 percent for the Korean War; AFMES began collecting Korean War FRS in 1992.

**Coalition of Families:** I have a few questions I've been waiting on answers for awhile. What about the Sanders (Korean War loss) case that I asked you about, any progress? **ANSWER:** We are in contact with Army, but like all of us, they there are still adjusting to their current telework status. We will reach out to Army for an update after the call.

Air Loss Maps, when will they be uploaded? **ANSWER:** The maps have been posted to the DPAA website (<https://www.dpaa.mil/Portals/85/Korean%20War%20Air%20Losses.pdf>).

Is there a place where identifications are updated? Are the Fact Sheets updated and kept current on the website? **ANSWER:** There is a current Korean War Disinterment Project slide deck that gives an update on the status of the project. The link provides an understanding in plain language on what the phases look like:

<https://www.dpaa.mil/Portals/85/Korean%20War%20Disinterment%20Project%20Phases%200420.pdf>

Coalition of Families does not get the Admiral's updates. **ANSWER:** DPAA will ensure their e-mail address is on the distribution list.

USRJC: Questions submitted and have not received feedback; four (4) specific losses and 24 crash sites, topographical maps. Are family members kept apprised of what's going on with their cases? **ANSWER:** DPAA JCSD is checking on the status of the questions. DPAA posts detailed minutes from each of the technical exchanges on its webpage and replies to questions from the families. Whether or not the families are contacted directly depends on the type/content of information that was discussed. NOTE: For more information on USRJC please visit - <https://www.dpaa.mil/Resources/Fact-Sheets/Article-View/Article/569603/us-russia-joint-commission-on-powmias/>.

**Korea-Cold War Families:** No questions -- just continue to be forever grateful for everything you're doing.

**Honor Release Return, Inc.:** No questions.

**National League of Families:** No questions --- I note the dearth of identifications on the Vietnam War. It was a difficult decision to cancel the League meeting; first ever in 51 years. Not sure we're going to be able to reschedule during this year. Commenting on Coalition of Families and the underwater case --- the law says all information that pertains to a loss is to be provided to the family - specifically Primary Next of Kin of specific advances that have been made on a specific case. It's a law and I've never known of them not notifying a family.

**Special Operations Association:** Condolences about Jei-J-- very sad news. We are still planning for our meeting in October -- Sorry to hear the League had to cancel -- always learn so much at your meetings.

**Korean War POW/MIA Network:** I would like to encourage you to work with me as a partner. **ANSWER:** Someone from DPAA's PI Directorate will contact you to discuss.