



DPAA Family/VSO Quarterly Call and Update
Tuesday August 30, 2022, 2:00-3:00 PM EDT
‘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:

- Coalition of Families: Ms. Donna Knox
- National League of Families: Ms. Ann Mills Griffiths
- Disabled American Veterans: Mr. Wayne Stratos
- Honor Release Return: Mr. Moe Moyer
- Korean War Veterans Assn: Col. Rocky Harder
- Vietnam Veterans of America: Mr. Grant Coates

Director’s Update

Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Budget Matters. Congress continues its deliberations of both the Defense Authorization and Appropriations legislation. The DPAA FY2023 President’s Budget request consists of \$150.2 million (M) of Operations & Maintenance and \$513,000 of Procurement. The \$15M increase from FY 2022 funding is a result of DPAA’s program advocacy to the Department of Defense (DoD). It is likely the Federal government will start the new FY under a Continuing Resolution.

Vietnam War Annual Government Briefings. Although the National League of Families cancelled their Annual Meeting due to COVID and other concerns, DPAA conducted the Annual Government Briefings for Vietnam War families virtually in two half-day sessions June 24-25. While not ideal, the briefings allowed us, along with our Service Casualty, DIA-Stony Beach (SB), and Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) partners, to connect and communicate with families. The live and archived recordings reached over 4,200 people.

K/CW Annual Government Briefings: DPAA hosted the Korean/Cold War Annual Government Briefings here in Arlington, VA, July 26-27. With COVID mitigation measures in place to protect everyone’s health and safety, 406 family members attended. We planned the K/CW to coincide with the dedication of the Wall of Remembrance at the Korean War Veterans Memorial on the 69th anniversary of Armistice Day. The day before, the families were afforded a private viewing of the new marble tablets.

VSO Conventions. DPAA was honored to be invited to speak at the in-person national conventions of the VFW (July 17-18 in Kansas City), DAV (August 7 in Orlando), and American Legion (August 27), with a DPAA booth at the VFW and Legion. These opportunities allowed us to provide an update on the mission and to thank the respective membership for their steadfast support to account for their comrades-in-arms who themselves are Unreturned Veterans. The VFW

also awarded Johnnie Webb the prestigious Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal for his more than 40 years of dedicated service to the POW/MIA mission.

League MOU. Since the early 1980s, the National League of POW/MIA Families, representing the families of those unaccounted for from the Vietnam War, has been instrumental in the advancement and expansion of this noble mission. Earlier this month, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the League, which formalizes and should further strengthen collaboration between our organizations.

Malaysia MOU. On August 7, the U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia and Malaysian Secretary General of the Ministry of Defense signed a MOU, which provides DPAA access to Malaysia, secures their government's cooperation, and provides the framework for field activities there. The MOU had been worked for a few years and the U.S. Embassy team views our mission as a tool of engagement and strongly supports success.

SE Asia Trip. In early June, I traveled to Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos, which was my first trip to the region in four years. In meeting with host nation (HN) senior officials from various ministries, we discussed strategic and operational issues and I expressed appreciation for each country's decades-long support to the mission. Improvements and efficiencies continue to be accepted and incorporated by HN counterparts.

North Korea. Unfortunately, there is no change to our situation with North Korea. DPAA's last communication with the North Korean Army was March 2019. Both the Departments of Defense and State are very much aware of remains repatriation/recovery being a humanitarian "carve-out" and tools of diplomacy and engagement. However, all attempts by the Administration to open a channel of communications or engage in dialogue with the North Korean government have been met with silence.

Deputy Director for Operations (DDO) Update

Operations Overview. As COVID-19 conditions and country access continue to improve, we are safely maximizing global field missions. Of note, one of the last countries to gain access for our missions was Kiribati; which has opened to international flights at the beginning of August. In the past 3 months, we deployed 42 DPAA and partner field missions to 23 countries as well as disinterment missions in Hawaii, Belgium, France and the Netherlands. As FY 2022 comes to an end, we anticipate completing a total of 94 missions in 37 countries. This success was a result of extensive coordination and collaboration with our U.S. Embassy and HN counterparts. DPAA remains vigilant in applying our force health protection measures - before, during, and after missions - to ensure the safety of our teams, partners, and HN personnel. We are extremely optimistic as we finalize our operational plan for next FY.

Key Leader Engagements. We hosted several visits to DPAA facilities in Hawaii and Nebraska over the last three months. In addition to several Congressional Member and Staff Delegations, we were privileged to host the Secretary of the Navy; various Under and Assistant Secretaries within the DoD and Department of State; U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission to China; U.S. Defense Attaches. These visits enable us to inform them of our mission and build advocacy.

India Visit. In July, I had the privilege of visiting India to discuss renewing past agreements, resuming DPAA operations, and introducing the concept of private partner operations with government officials. They were very receptive and vowed their full support to DPAA resuming operations in their country. Based on these productive engagements, we are projecting four field activities in northeastern India later this year.

Corporate Engagement. In early June, I spoke at the corporate headquarters of Swift Transportation, the nation's largest trucking carrier. A significant recruiter of transitioning veterans and National Guard/Reservists, they unveiled a tractor-trailer painted with the POW/MIA motif; its driver is a 20-year Army Veteran. A unique opportunity to speak about this mission and the staunch advocacy of families and VSOs, it was also livestreamed to the company's affiliates and locations nationwide.

Vietnamese Visits. An 8-person Vietnamese delegation representing 3 ministries has had multiple visits in the U.S. The Director briefed them at the Pentagon and then participated in a panel discussion at the U.S. Institute for Peace. The delegation then had substantive visits to the Armed Forces DNA Identification Lab as well DPAA's Nebraska and Hawaii labs. They are gathering information to assist Vietnam's efforts to expand its remains recovery program. The US Agency for International Development is spearheading U.S. assistance, but the delegation is keenly interested in our scientific processes and best practices.

SE Asia Consultative Talks. Next week, we conduct the first of three Talks, in-person for the first time in three years. These discussions will primarily focus on finalizing FY 2023 field missions, addressing opportunities for future work, and discussing how to increase mission effectiveness and efficiency. We will host the Laos delegation in Hawaii after Labor Day weekend, which will be followed by Talks in Vietnam and Cambodia the following weeks. We look forward to the opportunity to reconnect in person and continue to further our already strong partnerships.

Scientific Summit. At the end of September, we will host a Scientific Summit in Hawaii, with 35 participants from 13 partner countries. The summit will provide a venue for DPAA and international counterparts to come together at a technical level to discuss and exchange best practices and methodologies in the areas of research, investigation, excavation, and human identification. The intent is to share professional requirements to ensure remains are handled properly and returned to the appropriate nation.

Leadership Change Euro-Mediterranean Directorate. Lastly, I want to extend a heartfelt thanks and farewell to Colonel Jon Lust, USA, who ably served as our Euro-Med Regional Director for the past two years. COL Lust was hand-picked to serve for the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7 in a capacity for which he is uniquely qualified. Even though this is a loss to the Agency, it is a fantastic opportunity for COL Lust and a fitting culmination of his life-long service in uniform. In the interim, Ms. Heather Harris will perform the duties of the EM Regional Director.

Regional Teams Overview

Indo-Pacific (IP) Region

IP Director Engagements: In May, the IP Director and DPAA Sergeant Major traveled to Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos where they conducted engagements with the detachments, U.S. Ambassadors, Thai officials, the Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons, Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology, PAVN Institute of Forensic Medicine, and the Vietnam Association of Veterans. They also visited investigation teams in Laos and Vietnam. Additionally, the IP Director and the DPAA Solomon Islands lead historian attended the 80th anniversary commemoration on Guadalcanal from 6 to 7 August. They attended commemoration events at Bloody Ridge, the Guadalcanal American Memorial, the Japanese, Memorial, and the Coast Watchers Memorial. The Deputy Secretary of State, Wendy R. Sherman, Ambassador Caroline Kennedy, and the Commander, Marine Forces Pacific provided remarks during the events at the American Memorial and Bloody Ridge. The IP Director and DPAA historian also met with Department of State and local representatives to coordinate future missions in the Solomon Islands.

Research and Analysis. DPAA's family engagement program returned to near pre-pandemic levels over the past quarter, resulting in IP devoting significant resources to these efforts: 14 IP analysts and historians supported the virtual Boston Family Member Update (FMU), authoring 71 Case Summary Reports; for the virtual Vietnam War Annual Government Briefings, IP personnel authored 109 Case Summary Reports and conducted 61 review meetings; and 16 IP analysts and historians authored 324 Case Summary Reports and conducted 167 review meetings for the K/CW. Although IP historians have resumed their regular research at the National Archives in Maryland, and other regional repositories over the past quarter, they continue to experience challenges with appointment scheduling and access to certain archival holdings. As pandemic restrictions continue to ease nationwide, IP researchers are resuming their research travel. The Research team also continued to advance cases, releasing 47 field reports this quarter. In May, a Vietnam War Casualty Resolution Specialist (CRS) and DIA-SB analyst attended the Army Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Special Operation Forces reunion in Dallas, then traveled to Georgia to interview an ARVN veteran concerning his first-hand knowledge of a high interest incident. In August, they attended a 1-day event in California focused on the ARVN Strategic Technical Division and conducted research at the ARVN Museum. The Geographic Information System (GIS) team continues to provide spatial data services and map products to support research and field activities. Investigation and recovery team members received key GIS training prior to their deployments on two Joint Field Activities (JFA) to Vietnam to enable more accurate spatial data collection.

Field Operations. One joint investigation team (IT) conducted a series of investigation and surveys in Vietnam, after which 2 sets of remains from unilateral turnovers were repatriated. In August, we fielded 1 host nation team to conduct last known alive (LKA) advance work investigating 7 LKA incidents involving 9 unaccounted-for Servicemen; additional work on these cases is in progress. We were able to fund a short-notice HN recovery team (RT) in August after a Vietnamese landowner recovered aircraft wreckage, possible human remains, and life support items while digging a shrimp pond. A joint team conducted 13 investigations and surveys in Laos. In May, IP completed an investigation of 3 loss incidents in the Republic of Korea (RoK) and visited RoK counterpart operations on White Horse Hill in the DMZ.

Disinterment Operations. IP completed the North Korean portion of Phase Four of the Korean War Identification Project (KWIP) with 36 disinterments from the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP) in Honolulu between April and July. IP met the Agency's disinterment goal for FY 2022, with 164 Unknowns disinterred: 93 from the NMCP and 71 from Manila American Cemetery and Memorial (MACM).

Planned Field Operations. An underwater team will soon begin recovery operations and an IT will conduct site investigations for multiple World War II (WWII) crash sites in Papua New Guinea (PNG). An IT is also in the Solomon Islands to refresh sites and relationships that suffered due to the pandemic. Two recovery teams (RTs) will deploy to Laos in September to advance three different sites towards closure. From mid-October through mid-November, we plan to execute an underwater IT in PNG and an underwater RT in the Solomon Islands, subject to the availability of US Navy assets.

Planned Research. IP is working closely with our ROK counterpart to expand our annual bilateral meeting to allow for additional time to do more in-depth research and coordination.

Planned Disinterments. The South Korea portion of Phase Four of the KWIP is scheduled to begin at the beginning of FY 2023. We will begin our planned FY 2023 disinterment operations from the MACM in November.

Milestone Repatriation. In late May, our detachment in Thailand conducted a repatriation ceremony at Utapao Royal Thai Navy Airfield, ensuring proper transfer of material evidence and possible remains recovered in northern Thailand. This repatriation was the first conducted in several decades in Thailand and gained tremendous publicity in Thai and U.S. media.

Europe-Mediterranean (EM) Region

Research Activities. There has been no significant change to research activities at the National Archives Facility. We still have access to the records stored on-site and imagery records stored off-site in Kansas through their appointment system, but access has not been restored to pre-March 2020 levels. Additionally, we conducted archival research in Austria and France as well as research as part of IT missions.

Field Operations. Since the last update, we completed a field recovery in Great Britain and Germany; completed field investigation missions in the Netherlands; and deployed ITs to Italy, Germany, France, and Kuwait. We have resumed operations in Panama in search of two Navy aircrew members who went missing during a training incident in 1985. DPAA is conducting this work at the request of the Secretary of the Navy. Our work there began in mid-August and will continue through mid-December.

Planned Field Operations. While conditions for entry in our region remain favorable despite the general COVID situation, the weather window for our region is closing so there are no projected field recoveries until April and no projected field investigations until January.

Disinterment Operations. Since March, we completed 50 disinterments at American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) cemeteries in Italy, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the

Netherlands. We continue coordination with Tunisia and ABMC to execute 5 disinterments at the North Africa American Cemetery and are prepared to execute in September, if conditions allow. We are also projecting to receive the last two unknowns associated with losses of U.S. Army Air Forces crew members who went missing during Operation Tidalwave. These two unknowns will mark the last accessions into our Offutt laboratory of remains associated with the Ploesti project.

U.S.–Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs (USRJC). The two chairmen talked in May and again at the end of August to continue to determine the conditions that would enable the execution of USRJC Working Groups to progress cases and potential field activities. At the end of August, the U.S. Side Chairman, Gen (ret.) Foglesong, met with U.S. Side Commissioners to consolidate our approach to continuing the humanitarian, core national interest work of the USRJC. Research in Russian archives continues, and in mid-August, after much interagency coordination, Mr. McKeague signed a Terms of Reference which spells out the support DPAA provides to the U.S. Side of the USRJC. and we Also in August, we on-boarded the new Chief of the Joint Commission Support Division and new Korean War analyst in September, returning staffing of the Joint Commission Support Division to full strength.

Partnerships and Innovations (PI)

Despite continuing Covid-related challenges, PI oversaw 12 field missions and worked on 60 separate research projects during the quarter. Partner field missions included RTs in Italy, Austria, Germany, and Belgium; IT in France; underwater ITs in Vietnam, Palau, and Belgium. Possible human remains and other evidence were found at several of these. We have 7 teams in the field right now executing missions, with 16 more preparing to launch over the remaining months of this FY. Around 90 percent of these partner teams have previously conducted field work for us, showing the experience we are also developing even as we add new partners.

We also executed 8 MOUs to either initiate a new partner or renew an existing partner and continue to build a healthy “bench” of vetted and, when possible, experienced partners to expand partnering options for the future. We currently have 117 existing or developing partnerships and an additional 85 potential partners that we are actively evaluating. Some of the notable new partners are the EOD Warrior Foundation in Florida, Institute of Western Maritime Archaeology in California, Trident Archäologie in Germany, Heartland Technical Solutions in Missouri, and Maritime Archaeology Seat Trust in the United Kingdom.

As a mitigating factor regarding COVID, we are adding more international partners to our bench. In addition to the reduction in transportation costs from partners who are closer to recovery sites abroad, international partners also are able to execute some missions that we could not otherwise pursue because of COVID travel restrictions.

We initiated or continued working more than 60 research projects with our research partners, having recently initiated 4 more research projects and reviewing or developing 29 additional efforts. Our research partners supporting this effort include The Ohio State University, the University of Wisconsin, Texas Tech, Texas A&M, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the National WWII Museum.

As we've built our out partnering activities vastly increased the number of partners, and been developing our programs and procedures, we want to be sure we thoroughly assess how we work with partners and ensure we are utilizing and sharing best practices. To that end, we recently held our first partner symposium, which was attended by more than 30 partners and allowed them to let us know what we're doing right, and what we need to do better.

On the innovation side, we are developing a very robust strategic and collaborative program for the Agency that harnesses the innovators inside DPAA who have great ideas for future improvements. In addition, we are leveraging the creativity and technological advances of partners and other external entities to address areas that the Agency has identified as innovation priorities to increase our capacity and capabilities, to include taking advantage of available technology in areas such as deep-water robotics, machine learning potential for site identification, and data analytics, while evaluating the potential offered by creative new developments such as underwater robotics.

Scientific Analysis (SA) Update

To date, there have been 250 accessioning events into the Laboratory System of skeletal, dental, and/or material evidence. An accessioning event is when the lab receives a container(s) of evidence for a discrete action (i.e., excavation, unilateral turnover, disinterment).

In total for the year, there have been 142 identifications leading to 137 newly accounted for Service members: 110 are from WWII, 25 from the Korean War, and 2 from the Vietnam War. Disinterments produced 117 of these identifications, followed by unilateral turnovers (10), DPAA excavations (8), partner activity (1), and one identification where the source of evidence originated from both a disinterment and a unilateral turnover.

The Nebraska Lab identified 3 crewmen from separate B-17 losses who died in the Stalag Luft 6 POW Camp in German-occupied Lithuania during WWII. DPAA researchers located a civilian cemetery that potentially contained the remains and through the assistance of the Lithuania Government, they were disinterred and repatriated last year. With these identifications, there are no unaccounted-for Americans in Lithuania.

The Vietnam War Identification Project (VWIP) produced two first-time identifications this quarter. In addition, three more additional portion identifications were produced, bringing the FY 2022 total to 7. To date, 40 accessions have been closed (CIL Portions, Admin Fiats, and Identifications), while 25 new accessions have been added to VWIP this FY. Of the new cases added, 8 contain possible human remains while the rest include material evidence and life support. Histological and DNA testing are underway on these cases.

In late July, a board-certified forensic anthropologist from the DPAA Laboratory participated in a Field Forensic Review (FFR) conducted in the Republic of Palau in conjunction with the Japanese Association for the Recovery and Repatriation of War Casualties (JARRWC). The FFR team reviewed 28 cases in total. A three-person Field Forensic Review team from the DPAA Laboratory is scheduled to deploy to Tarawa next month to review remains that were recovered prior to loss of country access due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier this month, the Nebraska lab hosted 20 anthropologists from Colombia to provide forensic best practices. The Department of Justice requested the 2-day workshop under their International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program.

We continue to work with the Defense Health Agency (DHA) to add an extension of the Medical Community of Interest Network into the DPAA lab spaces in Hawaii and Nebraska. This extension effort will allow for more efficient file transfers and analyses with radiographic software in support of our chest x-ray comparison program. We plan to go live at both locations next quarter.

FY 2022 Identifications

Total IDs = 142 (Newly accounted for = 137 / Previously accounted for = 5)

WWII = 115

Korean War = 25

Vietnam War = 2

Additional Portion IDs = 68

Armed Forces Medical Examiner Systems–Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory

As the FY comes to a close, the AFMES-AFDIL received \$18.6M of our requested \$19.2M operational budget. This allowed us to replace essential instrumentation and purchase all critical supplies and reagents. COVID and other world factors are affecting production and distribution problems, but to date, this has not affected mission production. For example, one critical chemical needed to obtain DNA from the bone has been on back order since June and AFMES-AFDIL modified procedures to use a 100 ml bottle instead of the 500 ml bottle; this has prevented processing stoppage.

In December 2021, DPAA asked us to increase Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) casework processing from 50 samples per month to 100 samples per month. Projecting achieving this goal by this December, the higher throughput NextSeq instruments were fully integrated into the mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) NGS workflow and increasing the number of fully trained staff allowed us to report out 100 NGS samples per month since March.

AFMES-AFDIL's Emerging Technology Section, which develops and optimizes DNA testing methods to work with DPAA samples, competed for and was awarded a 3-year project to expand forensic whole mitochondrial genome databases by the National Institutes of Justice. The goal of this project is to increase the number of whole mtDNA genome sequences in forensic databases, and to assess the ability to use whole mtDNA genome sequencing to distinguish between non-family members who have a common mtDNA control region sequence. Additionally, we completed a study with the Max Plank Institute that demonstrated that the DNA from chemically treated samples and those that are highly degraded due to fire, etc. are in worse shape than 40,000-year-old Neanderthal DNA.

FY 2022 Statistics

DNA Results Reported: 3,064 (on track to hit 3,700 analyses per year goal)

NGS Tests Reported: 834

First-time Named Believed-to-Be Reports: 95 (supporting new identifications)

Outreach and Communications

FMUs. On May 21, we conducted the Boston FMU virtually due to COVID restrictions in the area. We had 186 family registrants, 97 of whom were first-time participants. Our live and archived video reached over 996 people. Our next FMU will be on September 10 in Denver, which we are planning to be in-person.

Recognition Day Posters. We unveiled this year's National POW/MIA Recognition Day Poster at the VFW National Convention. It promotes the September 16 commemoration and the mission. Thousands of posters were handed out at the VFW, DAV, and American Legion conventions. There are two sizes of posters which can be ordered from the DPAA website

Media Roll-up. DPAA media coverage reached new heights this quarter with a potential 7.4 billion reach. We were featured in news articles in 40 different countries to include India, Thailand, and South Korea. Major domestic coverage included Yahoo, AP, and Stars and Stripes, as well as extensive hometown media of the individuals accounted for. The highest number of articles centered around Memorial Day. In addition, DPAA personnel were featured on an episode of Star Talk with Neil Degrasse Tyson (one of the Top 10 most downloaded podcast); RDML Admiral Banaji on the Navy Museum podcast; and a DPAA panel on the VFW podcast to commemorate Former POW Day and the 80th Anniversary of the Bataan Death March. The staff produced 43 news releases and stories on our website and captured 517 images and videos which are published on the Defense Visual Information Distribution Services site.

Community Outreach. Speaking engagements for Memorial Day included: the Luxembourg American Cemetery and Vietnam Veterans of Baltimore (both by the Principal Deputy Director; the Omaha National Cemetery (by the Director of the Nebraska Lab); and at a dozen libraries across the US (mostly virtual). The PDD also conducted multiple engagements in Kennebunkport, ME where several partners were conducting an investigative mission looking for a lost WWII aircraft off the coast.

News Articles of Note.

[Offutt lab IDs MIA Medal of Honor recipient from 1943 raid on 'Hitler's Gas Station' > Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency > Recent News & Stories \(dpaa.mil\)](#)

[Thai archival find may resolve fate of missing WWII US flyer \(via AP\) > Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency > In The News \(dpaa.mil\)](#)

[U.S. Air Force lieutenant killed on D-Day laid to rest in Normandy "with full military honors" nearly 80 years later \(via CBS News\) > Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency > In The News \(dpaa.mil\).](#)

[Home again: Korean War vet's remains delivered to Hagerstown \(via The Frederick News-Post\) > Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency > In The News \(dpaa.mil\)](#)

Questions & Answers

Coalition of Families: *As I understand it, the U.S. Ambassador to China has been tasked with moving the U.S./China archival agreement into discussions related to operations inside the DPRK during the Korean War. (In particular, information related to POW Camps, air losses, the capture of U.S. personnel, etc.) Has Ambassador Burns made any progress on this initiative? If so, what is the status?*

Answer: First, Ambassador Burns is a staunch advocate of our mission and has continued to seek opportunities to leverage it as a viable channel of communications and tool of diplomacy. Since his arrival in Beijing six months ago, he has continued to re-engage the PRC on issues of common interest, including our information exchanges on the MIA mission. Lingering impacts of COVID and world events have slowed progress. Dialogue with the PRC has been suspended following Speaker Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, but we are hopeful that Ambassador Burns will be able to set conditions for DPAA to resume dialogue with the PLA Archives in the future.

What, if any, initiatives are being considered within DoD, the State Dept &/or the White House to break, or work around, the current stalemate between the U.S. and N.K.? If the plan is to sit back and wait for North Korea to respond in terms of diplomatic ties in general, has DPAA or the State Dept considered having discussions with a third country about a potential bi-lateral initiative for getting inside the DPRK to look for information, especially with regard to air losses and related grave sites? Can we pursue private partners on our own?

Answer: State Department and other government officials have made multiple overtures, including humanitarian ones, to the DPRK without conditions, but also with no success. They are aware that repatriations and the resumption of field operations would serve as a tool of diplomacy. It is likely the State Department would be open to a third party performing this work because they have approved travel permits for a U.S. private party to travel to North Korea to survey a crash site. The DPRK has denied that request citing COVID-19 restrictions.

Given the war in Ukraine and tensions between the U.S. & Russia, what's the status of the USRJC's work? Are they moving forward with archival research? Is there a report as to the latest findings re: the live transfer issue?

Answer: USRJC communications continue with quarterly calls between both Chairmen, but activities mainly consist of the three DPAA-affiliated researchers based in Moscow who request and review unclassified documents from the Central Military Archives of the Ministry of Defense. These documents include the records of the 64th Fighter Aviation Group for the Korean War, and a broader array of unclassified records related to Soviet participation in WWII. This effort was at risk when President Putin directed contracts involving U.S. employment of Russian nationals to end. Working with the Russian Side and making the case of a humanitarian "carve out", we were able to obtain an exception to keep operating. We have no findings regarding live transfers and have neither found nor been provided any official Russian archives/records that directly or indirectly indicate U.S. POWs were transferred to the Soviet Union.

*Has DPAA's regular access to the National Archives been restored? [Also asked by **Vietnam Veterans of America**]*

Answer: Our access to the National Archives is greater than it was during the pandemic, but not as broad as it was before then. As NARA opened back up, they also began implementing a series of

changes to their processes and policies governing access to their facilities. So far, the result for DPAA researchers is that it takes longer to request and receive records, and an overall slowdown in productivity. We have regained access to documents stored at NARA II related to all conflicts and are again able to request delivery of historical aerial imagery they store at a facility in Kansas.

National League of Families: *With an expected CR, does that mean DPAA's budget will be \$131M to start FY23 instead of \$146M?*

Answer: Yes, under Continuing Resolution Authority, we will be operating with the lower FY22 Appropriation until a budget is passed, then the additional \$15M will be added.

DAV: *We are encouraged by the overall efforts of DPAA. The comment about more involvement on LKA cases got my attention. Anything to add? We appreciate Kelly McKeague's participation and speaking at our convention – thank you.*

Answer: We were able to fund the current LKA missions in Vietnam and they are working those 7 cases which are associated with 9 individuals. There are 41 individuals in Vietnam and 16 in Laos. We are also working trilateral missions with Cambodia to bring in Vietnamese witnesses and officials for those cases there. Our Detachment 2 analyst in Vietnam works LKA cases throughout the year and outside of our JFA windows. We are working hard to prioritize these cases to progress them to resolution.

Korean War Veterans Assn: *Appreciate Donna's questions. We are holding our annual meeting in October and sent an invitation to Mr. McKeague or his designated representative to speak; did you receive the invitation?*

Answer: We received the invitation and will participate; thank you for the invitation.

I use the DPAA Fact Sheet to write an update for our magazine published six times per year; would you please send an updated one? Our membership appreciates DPAA's work

Answer: We will get an updated fact sheet posted on our website.

How are your DMZ operations coordinated with North Korea or is it just the ROK side of the DMZ?

Answer: Our operations in Korea are first coordinated with the United Nations Command (UNC), who has primary responsibility for remains associated with the Korean War. Our joint activities with MAKRI on the ROK side of the DMZ are then worked with their Ministry for National Defense. The North Korean Army stopped communicating with us in March 2019 and other than the initial demining operation with the ROK in fall 2018, they have neither observed nor participated in ROK efforts in the DMZ.

National League of Families: *Is it possible to get the Terms of Reference for the USRJC?*

Answer: The recently approved Terms of Reference will be posted to the DPAA website.

What are you looking for with respect to partnerships for the Vietnam War?

Answer: We will share notes from the Director's June trip to Southeast Asia as well as the results of the three Technical Talks in September Tech. In each case, we advocated for increased use of partners to expand DPAA activities.

Coalition of Families: *Why has there been a delay in the starting Phase 5 of the Korean War*

disinterment project?

Answer: The scheduling of each phase has been based on ensuring both the DPAA and AFDIL Laboratories have available capacity and capabilities with which to begin sampling, testing, and analysis soon after the remains are accessioned. The on-going Phase 4 effort was distributed across several months to accommodate these criteria. DNA analysis is the driving factor as four samples are tested per reference, which is further compounded by the chemically treated remains, which are more difficult to yield than 4,000-year-old Neanderthal remains.

Does that mean you have adequate funding, equipment, supplies, etc?

Answer: DPAA's budget has been flat since we were established in FY 2015. The \$15M annual increase we received from DoD in FY 2023 was 25% of the overall funding request we presented to the Department and allows targeted. [Note: AFMES funding is separate from DPAA so the \$15M increase was to DPAA's budget.]