



**DPAA Family/VSO Quarterly Call and Update**  
**Thursday December 15, 2022, 1:00-2:00 PM EST**  
**‘Fulfilling Our Nation’s Promise’**



**Purpose:** 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
- National League of Families
- American Legion
- Disabled American Veterans
- Korean War POWMIA Network
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Vietnam Veterans of America

**Director’s Update**

**Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Congressional Matters.** Congress continues its deliberations of Defense Authorization and Appropriations legislation. The Authorization Conference Committee is finalizing their bill and may be sending it to the President this week. As with all Federal appropriations, DPAA’s FY 2023 appropriation is under a Continuing Resolution that expires December 16. Our budget request consists of \$150.2 million (M) of Operations & Maintenance and \$513,000 of Procurement.

**Indonesia Visit.** Our Principal Deputy Director (PDD), Fern Sumpter Winbush, was in Bandung the first week of December to attend the Indonesia-U.S. Security Dialogue and lead a discussion to secure Indonesia’s commitment to finalize the Memorandum of Arrangement to allow DPAA to conduct operations there. In helping to finalize a commitment Defense Minister Prabowo has made to Secretary Austin, this engagement contributed to a signing event being projected for January 2023.

**Outreach Opportunities.** In October, I had the privilege to speak at the Annual Meeting of the Korean War Veterans Association in San Antonio and the National League of Families’ Southeast Regional Meeting in Virginia Beach, while Colonel Brannen spoke at the Special Operations Association Reunion (SOAR) in Las Vegas. Our Principal Deputy Director spoke at the Vietnam Veterans Association Board of Directors Meeting in November in Silver Spring, MD. Connecting and communicating with these groups is a core element of our mission.

**Europe Trip.** My mid-November trip included multiple engagements with Host Nation and U.S. officials in Denmark and Poland. I had the chance to meet with, and thank, the Royal Danish Navy Dive Unit who have been especially helpful and generous on the successful investigation and

excavation of an underwater World War II (WWII) B-24 site. Officials in Poland offered a long-sought solution to the release of material evidence recovered from our excavations. Polish law has prevented us taking custody of these since 2019.

**USIP Conference.** DPAA was a major participant in the U.S. Institute for Peace-sponsored Vietnam War Legacies and Reconciliation Initiative Conference. From the U.S. were State Department, DoD, and U.S. Agency for International Development officials, Congressional staff, Non-governmental Organizations (including the National League of Families), academia, as well as foreign officials from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

**Vietnamese Accommodation.** My video call with the head of our Vietnamese counterpart resulted in his agreement of a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Stony Beach analyst being based in Vietnam. We and DIA have long advocated for this 2-3 year PCS arrangement versus the current short-term TDYs. Stony Beach analysts are dedicated solely to Vietnam War accounting and work collaboratively with our researchers.

**Four Key Personnel Changes.** Deputy Director for Operations (DDO) RDML Darius Banaji returned to Navy service in late October; the Acting DDO is Marine Colonel Matt Brannen. He was formerly the Director of the Indo-Pacific Directorate which is now led by Acting Director Chris Phelps. On December 5, our Senior Enlisted Advisor changed out from SGM Ron Gardner to MSG(P) Anthony Worsley, who had one previous tour with DPAA. And the most significant change is that after 47 years dutifully serving this mission, first as an Army officer and then a civilian, and in various capacities, Johnie Webb will retire from federal service on December 31.

### **Acting Deputy Director for Operations (DDO) Update**

**Operations Overview.** In the past 3 months, we deployed 25 DPAA and partner field missions to 17 countries. Field work in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Solomon Islands were the first since the outbreak of COVID-19. Disinterment operations occurred in Hawaii, Belgium, France, and Tunisia.

**Kiribati Return.** Among the 46 nations DPAA works in, Kiribati was the last to remove entry restrictions due to COVID-19. Collaborating closely with the U.S. Embassy, we made the compelling case to Kiribati government officials, which allowed our private partner, History Flight, to commence its year-around excavations in November and for DPAA scientists to soon conduct a Joint Forensic Review (JFR) of the significant amount of remains that were recovered prior to the pandemic.

**Annual Talks.** In September, successful Technical Talks were conducted with Vietnam and Consultations with Laos and Cambodia. Each country's delegations mostly consisted of officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and National Defense, with the respective U.S. Ambassadors also participating. In-person for the first time in three years, these annual consultations finalized FY 2023 field missions, addressed policy and operational initiatives, and explored how to increase mission effectiveness and efficiency.

**Disinterment Milestones.** On December 5, we disinterred 4 Korean War Unknowns from the

National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP), and thus completed Phase 4 of the major disinterment project. In addition, we received approval of the *Enoura Maru* Project, of which 430 Unknowns are associated with WWII casualties from the Japanese Hellship. Three of the total 40 caskets were disinterred to enable the labs to assess the condition of remains and required forensic analyses, from which planning for the remainder of the project will be optimized.

**Southeast Asia CODELs.** Led by Rep. Wenstrup (R-OH), who also serves as a physician in the Army Reserve, a Congressional Delegation visited our Detachment in Hanoi where the team provided them a mission update. Another CODEL, consisting of Rep. Bera (D-CA) and four other Members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, spent time with the Recovery Team (RT) operating in Laos.

**Key Leader Engagements.** We were privileged to host the Secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission; U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines; Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs; and Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. These visits provide an opportunity for the Agency inform our shared stakeholders about our mission and build advocacy.

## **Regional Teams Overview**

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

**Research and Analysis.** IP researchers compiled materials for 79 cases for the September Denver Family Member Update (FMU) and 108 cases for the November Norfolk FMU, and conducted archival research at the Army Heritage and Education Center, the MacArthur Memorial Library, the National Archives, and the U.S. Marine Corps Archives. Vietnam War analysts interviewed Special Operations Association participants to gain both case-specific and general information, continued to advance cases, and released 32 field reports. IP researchers look forward to working with the National League of Families' Archival Research Team on coordinated research efforts following the recently signed partnership between the two organizations.

**Field Operations.** Vietnam War. Two RTs excavated three sites in Laos, with one yielding osseous material, another material evidence, and the third site unfinished due to weather. In November, DPAA and DIA-Stony Beach analysts held the first in-person Last Known Alive meeting in 3 years in Hanoi, discussing the next steps for 28 LKA incidents. WWII. In PNG, an underwater RT operated in a remote swamp where it proved to be one of the most technically challenging missions in recent history and repatriated osseous material. Working aboard the Navy's USNS *Salvor*, DPAA teams executed back-to-back underwater missions in PNG and the Solomon Islands, the latter recovered osseous material. Korean War. In November, a DPAA team synchronized research and operations with DPAA's South Korean counterpart. Australia's Office for Unrecovered for War Causality-Army was also in attendance and all three nations discussed creative ways to leverage and coordinate one another's capabilities.

**Disinterment Operations.** Four disinterment ceremonies totally 32 disinterments were conducted at the NMCP, and underway at this time is one mission at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial where 35 Unknowns are planned to be disinterred.

**Planned Field Operations.** In January, a follow-up investigation team (IT) will conduct a trilateral investigation in Cambodia of one LKA incident while another IT will operate in Thailand. Throughout January and February, 5 RTs (DPAA and partner) and 1 IT are scheduled to deploy to Laos on 2 joint field activities (JFAs) excavating a total of 5 sites and investigating over 12 incidents. In February, we plan to deploy 2 RTs and 1 IT in Vietnam excavating 2 sites and investigating 12 incidents. In February, underwater RTs will operate in PNG and the Solomons and an IT at 4 sites in Kiribati.

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

**Field Operations.** On our previous call, we mentioned several investigation missions being conducted throughout Europe. All of them were successful, in that all will result in the addition of sites to our master excavation list for future recovery, but one was uniquely successful in that, in addition to conducting the work to verify sites associated with incidents involving unaccounted-for Army Air Forces personnel, the team recovered possible human remains at 3 of the 5 sites investigated. As we closed out our FY 2022 field activities in September, we repatriated 28 transfer cases of remains from Germany to our Nebraska lab via a C-17 aircraft. The remains came from both field recoveries and disinterments throughout Europe.

During a joint Field Forensic Review in Poland in November at the Polish exhumation of a cemetery abandoned shortly after WWII, the DPAA team recovered material evidence and remains strongly associated with four U.S. Army Air Forces casualties. This week, we also completed a 4-month recovery mission in Panama that began in early August in the mountainous jungles of Panama. Our efforts to recover two Navy aircrew members who went missing during a training accident in 1985 is at the request of, and through resourcing provided by, the Secretary of the Navy.

**Planned Field Operations.** EM has no new field missions during the month of December. The next field investigation, concerning an underwater loss associated with an Operation DESERT STORM air loss, is slated for January 2023 in Kuwait.

**Disinterment Operations.** In September, EM closed out its disinterments for FY 2022 with 5 Unknowns that represent the first-ever exhumations at the American Battle Monuments Commission's (ABMC) North Africa American Cemetery in Tunisia. This feat was made possible through years of negotiations between DPAA, the Department of State, and the Government of Tunisia. ABMC leadership and cemetery staff were instrumental in securing permits, equipment, vehicles, and coordinating movement with the Tunisian authorities. Those remains are in the Offutt Lab undergoing analysis. The FY total for EM disinterments was 55. We also completed coordination of our FY 2023 proposed schedule with ABMC and expect approval to disinter 50-75 Unknowns from 9 ABMC cemeteries in Europe next summer.

**US–Russia Joint Commission (USRJC).** The U.S. and Russian Chairmen held telephonic discussions in September and in November. These centered on planning a way-ahead to allow the USRJC to continue progressing cases within the humanitarian exemption that permits interactions with Russia. Although field activities in Russia are currently restricted, research in the Russian archives continues. The U.S. Chairman, General (ret) Foglesong, is meeting with two of the four Congressional Commissioners in mid-December to provide them updates.

## **Partnerships and Innovations (PI)**

The PI team oversaw 20 field missions launched in the past quarter: RTs in France, Poland, Italy, Belgium; an IT in Laos; underwater RTs in Italy and Denmark; and underwater ITs in Vanuatu, Guam, France, Trinidad and Tobago, Croatia, and Poland. We currently have 5 teams in the field executing missions, with 71 more preparing to launch over the rest of the FY. We also conducted collaboration meetings with existing partners to continue to refine our programs and processes.

We concluded 8 Memoranda of Understanding to either initiate a new partner or renew an existing partner as we continue to build partnering options for the future. We currently have 121 existing or developing partnerships and an additional 86 potential partners we are actively evaluating. Some of the notable new partners are: National League of Families, St. Mary's University, Heartland Tech Solutions, OceanMind, Codifi LLC, Maritime Archaeology Sea Trust, and Diving with a Purpose.

We continued working more than 60 research projects and added 6 more with our research partners that primarily include The Ohio State University, the University of Wisconsin, Texas Tech University, Texas A&M University, the University of Illinois Chicago, and the National WWII Museum.

On the innovation side, we proposed three potential initiatives and continue to develop collaboration within the Agency that harnesses its innovators 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 the Agency has identified as innovation priorities that take advantage of available technology and creative new developments in areas such as deep-water robotics, machine learning potential for site identification, and data analytics.

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

There were 300 accessioning events into our laboratory system of skeletal, dental, and/or material evidence for FY 2022, and 50 accessioning events to date for FY 2023. An accessioning event is when the lab receives a container of evidence for a discrete action (i.e., excavation, unilateral turnover, disinterment).

In total for FY 2022, there were 172 identifications leading to 166 newly accounted for Service members, which are displayed by conflict below. Disinterments produced 142 of these identifications, followed by 13 from unilateral turnovers, 7 from DPAA excavations, 1 from a partner activity, and 3 where the source of evidence originated from both a disinterment and a unilateral turnover. To date in FY 2023, there have been 15 identifications leading to 15 newly accounted for Service members.

The Vietnam War Identification Project (VWIP) produced one first-time identification and one additional portion identification during the first quarter of FY 2023. Recovery teams operating in

Southeast Asia repatriated three accessions thus far, all of which are currently undergoing forensic testing.

DPAA hosted 30 participants from 11 countries for the first in-person Scientific Summit, after several postponements due to COVID-19. They were from countries searching for missing persons from past conflicts as well as from host nations where the missing are being sought. The summit's goal was to discuss and exchange scientific best practice methodologies in research, investigation, excavation, and human identification. We were extremely pleased with the outcomes and envision this being the first of many to come in future years to better leverage collaboration. One of the most successful outcomes was a trilateral forensic review between scientists from Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and DPAA of remains associated with the Battle of Tarawa that were concurrently reviewed with agreed upon course of action for next steps.

Since the beginning of the FY, four JFRs have been conducted by board-certified forensic anthropologists from our lab and participants from Poland, Japan, ROK, and the Philippines. At each of these JFRs, potential American remains were reviewed.

The SA team successfully completed our annual assessment by the ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB), which evaluates the competence of the DPAA Lab and conformance with all applicable accreditation requirements under the ISO/IEC 17025:2017 (General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Labs) and ANAB AR 3125:2019 (Forensic Science Testing and Calibration Laboratories Accreditation Requirements). The ANAB assessment team found zero nonconformities and recommended continued accreditation of the lab.

**FY 2022 Identifications:**

Total IDs = 172 (Newly accounted for = 166 / Previously accounted for = 6)

WWII = 134

Korean War = 30

Vietnam War = 2

Additional Portion IDs = 71

**FY 2023 Identifications to date:**

Total IDs= 15 (Newly accounted for = 15 / Previously accounted for = 0)

WWII= 9

Korean War= 5

Vietnam War= 1

Additional Portion IDs= 3

**AFMES-AFDIL Update**

The Armed Forces Medical Examiner System-Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory continued to support the DPAA with the identification of missing Service members in FY 2022. The FY continued to provide challenges due to post-pandemic shortages in essential lab supplies, but due to strategic planning and ordering, these shortages did not affect casework throughput.

The Past Accounting Section continues to report out 100 Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) samples per month, which it achieved in April 2022, 7 months ahead of schedule. The Family Reference Section has implemented an automated whole genome mitochondrial DNA NGS method for maternal references that allows for 90 samples to be processed at a time. After training and certification, scientists these first 90 in September.

The new FY started with a challenge due to the national shortage of a critical chemical used in the extraction of DNA. Through the assistance of the Defense Logistics Agency, we were able to obtain deliveries of this chemical to continue laboratory procedures. To prevent this in the future, we have developed another extraction method that does not use this chemical and will bring it on-line in January.

### **FY 2022 Statistics**

DNA Results Reported: 3,618

NGS Tests Reported: 1,022

First-time Named Believed-to-Be Reports: 119 (supporting new identifications)

### **FY 2023 Statistics**

DNA Results Reported: 588

NGS Tests Reported: 152

First-time Named Believed-to-Be Reports: 14 (supporting new identifications)

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

**POW/MIA Recognition Day.** On September 17, the Secretary of Defense hosted and was the keynote speaker at the Pentagon Ceremony; there were 16 foreign Ambassadors who attended, the most ever. DPAA hosted the ceremony in Hawaii at the NMCP where a Vietnam War family member, Natalie Rausch, provided the keynote. Both ceremonies were viewed by more than 5,000 online. U.S. Embassies in Bangkok and Vientiane hosted ceremonies there while our Detachment in Hanoi hosted a ceremony which included the repatriation of remains recovered by Vietnamese teams and our Detachment hosted a ceremony in Cambodia in conjunction with the annual Consultations.

**Family Member Updates.** On September 10, we hosted our second in-person FMU since February 2020 in Denver. We had 137 family members attend; 92 were first-time attendees. Of the 77 cases represented, 67 were from WWII, 20 from the Korean War, 17 from the Vietnam War, and 1 from the Cold War. Throughout the day, DPAA analysts/historians and Service Casualty Officers met individually with the family members of 47 missing Service members to update them on their loved one's loss. The AFMES-AFDIL team collected DNA family reference samples (FRS) from 14 of the 16 family members who were lacking an FRS on file. On November 19, we hosted the first of 4 FMUs for the FY in Norfolk. There were 186 family members who attended, of which 133 were attending for the first time. They represented 90 cases -- 68 from WWII, 16 from the Korean War, 6 from the Vietnam War, and 86 families received an individual Case Summary Review. AFMES-AFDIL was able collect needed FRS from 25 families.

**VSO Visits.** In the last few weeks, the National Commanders of the VFW and American Legion visited our Hawaii team; the respective delegations also included the National President of the VFW Auxiliary and the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary and National Commander of the Sons of the American Legion. These visits enable the new Veteran Service Organization (VSO) national leaders to receive current mission updates and a tour of the forensic lab.

**Public Affairs.** Concurrent with the Denver FMU, we met with Cadets at the Air Force Academy and the Aurora Veterans Committee; family members were recognized at the Colorado Rockies Major League Baseball game. In Norfolk, there were engagements with the local VA Hospital. DPAA personnel had 15 speaking and other engagements in conjunction with Veterans Day. In the last quarter, the OC team had 58 news releases on IDs and published 824 stories, photos, and videos. DPAA's social media accounts continued to build relations generate sharing of our posts. All factsheets on our website will be revamped into a user-friendly format by the end of the year.

**Media.** The 3,200 external media stories included CNN, Washington Post, and MSN, with a potential reach of 7.9 billion. Media upticks occurred during the funeral of Medal of Honor recipient, Lt Col Addison Baker, POW/MIA Recognition Day, and Veterans Day. Two stories to highlight are:

After almost 80 years, a Chicago man killed in World War II finally laid to rest via CBS News <https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/remains-of-lt-col-addison-baker-of-chicago-identified-after-his-plane-was-shot-down-in-world/>

Veterans and scientists fulfill 'no man left behind,' returning long-lost American remains from lonely Pacific WWII battlefield via CNN <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/3216949/veterans-and-scientists-fulfill-no-man-left-behind-returning-long-lost-american/>

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## Questions & Answers

**American Legion:** No questions

**DAV:** *Regarding the LKA conference in Hanoi and another coming up, what came out of the conference in Hanoi?* **Answer:** There were 28 cases reviewed during which analysts talked about interviews that were conducted, updated the case files, and addressed the way forward for the coming year to address new leads, etc. For LKA cases in Cambodia, a similar process will occur. Stony Beach is integral to the process and will be conducting interviews to advance the LKA cases.

**VFW:** *No questions*

**VVA:** *No questions*



**SOA/SFA:** *What percent of DPAA's budget is earmarked for Vietnam War activities?* **Answer:** It constitutes 80% of the IP Directorate's budget; for the two regional directorates, the allocation is 75%. These figures do not include the Detachment costs or the partner initiatives dedicated to the Vietnam War nor the funding for longer term projects and research activities. Over 55% of the personnel in the IP Directorate work solely on the Vietnam War. From an overall budget perspective, because of the advocacy of the family groups and VSOs over the years, Congress provided program increases of \$25-30M in FYs 2018-2021, all of which was put in the operational budget; there were no increases FY 2200 nor are there any in the FY 2023 budget.

*Of the 60 PI research projects, how many are specifically related to Vietnam War investigations and recoveries?* **Answer:** Ten are specifically related. Others are providing new methodologies that could be applied to Vietnam War accounting – GIS and data analytics are examples. The emerging partnership with the National League of Families' Archival Research Committee will also add to the research efforts. During the Technical Talks in Vietnam, potentially partnering with Vietnamese universities was raised to which they said they would consider it.

*When is the Stony Beach office in Vietnam expected to begin operations? Will they be co-located with the DPAA team?* **Answer:** This issue has been worked for several years, and last month, the Director of Vietnamese Office of Seeking Missing Persons agreed to a permanent presence of Stony Beach personnel, which we expect to commence in a couple months. The person will operate out of our detachment in Hanoi.

*I have a notebook received from the GEN Robert Kingston family that has notes, rosters, and other information pertaining to the initial activities of JCRC to include and after-action report on the killing of CPT Rees in December 1973. I would like to donate it.* **Answer:** The Joint Casualty Resolution Center was where this mission originated and has great historical significance. We would like our IP analysts to meet with you in DC to determine if any material is actionable for us, and then suggest these archives be turned over to the new Army Museum.

**Collation of Families:** *When is Phase 5 of the Korean War disinterments going to begin?* **Answer:** With the recent completion of Phase 4 and on-going analyses at both the DPAA Lab and AFDIL Lab, the capacity of each factors into the start of the Phase 5. We are ready to proceed to Phase 5 and will begin the notification process to the Office of the Secretary of Defense to begin the next phase after the New Year, after which the first disinterments should occur in the spring.

*Did the family contact information from the K/CW annual meeting go out?* **Answer:** OC will be providing this information to the Service Casualty Offices to distribute.

*Russian Archives --- can someone share in writing what kind of documents are expected to come out of these archives? Just would like to know what we may expect to find.*

**Answer:** DPAA does still have access to the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense located at Podolsk, which was formally approved and renewed in writing for 2023. Research there focuses on the Korean War and WWII. For the former, our contract researchers have access to the records of the 64<sup>th</sup> Fighter Aviation Corps, which contains combat reports detailing shootdowns and reports of

search groups sent to crash sites which could be located. For WWII, researchers have access to a broad array of unclassified or declassified documents related to Soviet participation in the war. We have successfully used both sets of records to develop leads for crash site investigations. For the Korean War, exploration of those leads must wait for access to North Korea; for WWII, we have successfully used information gleaned from the records to confirm information in U.S. records and to hone our field investigations in former Soviet Republics.

*Is there a Cold War update --- anything going on you can share?* **Answer:** There are no specific Cold War activities. There is one active Cold War case involving an underwater investigation off the coast of Latvia.

**National League of Families:** *I heard the Russian Side of the USRJC was being forced out of the U.S. on 31 December?* **Answer:** We have been advocating for Visa extensions for two individuals and the State Department plans to extend them for a year. We expect resolution before their Visas expire.