



DPAA

DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY

YEAR IN
REVIEW
2023



NEVER FORGOTTEN

ACCOUNTED FOR OCTOBER 2022 - SEPTEMBER 2023

WORLD WAR II

Army

Staff Sgt. Alvin Scarborough
Pvt. Daniel Moniz
Pvt. Earl Seibert
T/4 Elmo Hartwick
2nd Lt. Gene Walker
Sgt. George Bishop
Pfc. George Thomas
Sgt. Gregory Knoll
Staff Sgt. Harold Schafer
Pfc. Harry Hosfelt
Pfc. Henry Wade
Pvt. Homer Mitchell
Pfc. Hood Cole
Pvt. James McCartney
Pfc. James Harrington
Sgt. John Herrick
Sgt. John Radanovich
Cpl. Julius Wolfe
Tech. Sgt. Leonard Dettloff
Staff Sgt. Leroy Cloud
Pvt. Leroy Slenker
Pfc. Lex Lillard
Pfc. Manuel Trujillo
Pfc. Marcus Engesser
Tech. Sgt. Matthew McKeon
Staff Sgt. Max Thurston
Pfc. Noah Reeves
Pfc. Raymond Schlamp
Sgt. Richard Hammond
Pfc. Richard Pitsor
Pvt. Robert Hurst
Staff Sgt. Robert Rudd
Pfc. Thomas Brooks
Pfc. Thomas Long
Pvt. William Smith
Pfc. William Simon
Pvt. Wing Hom
Staff Sgt. Woodrow Gerdese

Army Air Forces

2nd Lt. Albert Stahl
1st Lt. Alfred Pezzella
2nd Lt. Arthur Blazis
Sgt. Arthur Van Kleek
1st Lt. Bruce Brown
1st Lt. Charles Reynolds
Pfc. Charles Powers
Cpl. Charles Eeds
Flight Officer Chester Rinke
1st Lt. Dan Corson
1st Lt. David Skjeie
Sgt. Donald Aiken
Tech. Sgt. Donald Banta
Pvt. Doyle Sexton
Staff Sgt. Edgar Mills
1st Lt. Edward McGuire
2nd Lt. Edward Barnett
Tech. Sgt. Elton Gomillion
Staff Sgt. Felix Shostak
Tech. Sgt. Frank Ferrel
Staff Sgt. Franklin Hall
2nd Lt. Fred Brewer
1st Lt. George Winger
1st Lt. George Reuter
2nd Lt. Gilbert Myers
Pfc. Glenn Harris
Staff Sgt. Henry Stevens
Pvt. Henry McConnell
Technician 4th Grade Herbert March

Sgt. Irving Newman
Staff Sgt. Jack Coy
Staff Sgt. Jackson Barbour
Cpl. James Hurt
2nd Lt. James Marrah
2nd Lt. James Litherland
1st Lt. James Deeds
Tech. Sgt. James Triplett
Tech. Sgt. John Holoka
Pvt. John Ropp
Tech. Sgt. Kenneth McKeeman
2nd Lt. Kenyon Brindley
Tech. Sgt. Lawrence Reitz
2nd Lt. Max Dailey
1st Lt. Noel Shoup
Tech. Sgt. Paul Eshelman
2nd Lt. Porter Pile
Staff Sgt. Raymond Kaudelky
1st Lt. Richard Kasten
Pfc. Robert Colter
Staff Sgt. Robert Ferris
Tech. Sgt. Robert Allen
Staff Sgt. Robert Elliott
Maj. Theodore Willhite
Tech. Sgt. Turner Johnston
2nd Lt. Walter Miklosh
Staff Sgt. Wesley Jones
Sgt. White Goings
Sgt. Willard Kendall
Tech. Sgt. William Leukering
1st Lt. William Montgomery
2nd Lt. William Scott
Staff Sgt. Willie Jones

Marine Corps

1st Lt. Alvin Cockrell
Pfc. Christopher Surber
Pvt. Eugene Miller
Sgt. Harold Hammett
Platoon Sgt. Harold Weaver
Pfc. John Reynolds
Cpl. Manuel Pimentel
Pvt. Robert Budd
Sgt. Robert Moon
Sgt. Robert Vanheck
Pvt. Thomas Phillips
Cpl. Welver Vaughan

Navy

Aviation Ordnanceman 1st Class Anthony Dipetta
Gunner's Mate 3rd Class Arnold Lyon
Aviation Radioman 1st Class Wilbur Mitts

KOREAN WAR

Army

Cpl. Adin Norris
Pfc. Albert Gosnell
Sgt. Allen Tuttle
Pvt. Alvin Thurman
Pfc. Anthony Lopa
Pfc. Billy Debord
Cpl. Carmen Carrillo
Pfc. Charles Dickman
Cpl. Charles Patten
Sgt. Cresenciano Garcia
Pfc. Dale Thompson
Cpl. Daniel Deanda

Master Sgt. David Sluder
Cpl. Dewey Rewis
Cpl. Donald Dupont
Capt. Erik Yde
Cpl. Eriverto Ortiz
Cpl. Gordon McCarthy
Pfc. Harold Wilder
Sgt. Howard Malcolm
Sgt. 1st Class James Dorrance
Sgt. 1st Class James Wilkinson
Pfc. James Miller
Pfc. Jimmy Smith
Cpl. John Spruell
Sgt. Lawrence Robidoux
Cpl. Lewis Hill
Cpl. Luther Story
Cpl. R.V. Short
Cpl. Ray Lilly
Cpl. Rex Powell
Sgt. Richard Crotty
Sgt. Richard Sharrow
Pfc. Robert Wright
Master Sgt. Roy Barrow
Sgt. Stanley Turba
Pfc. Thomas Smith
Cpl. William Herrington
Sgt. Willie Baty

VIETNAM WAR

Army

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Larry Zich

Air Force

Col. Ernest DeSoto
Capt. Frederick Hall

Marine Corps

Capt. Ralph Chipman



RESEARCH.



RECOVER.



IDENTIFY.



MISSION

DPAA is committed to providing the fullest possible accounting for missing personnel to their families and the nation. DPAA is equally dedicated to communicating to their families and the nation information about their loved one's loss and the service, sacrifice, and answers associated with that loss.

VISION

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

CORE VALUES

Compassion: We conduct our work and communication with empathy.

Integrity: We live our lives with truthfulness and objectivity.

Teamwork: We are committed and willing to do all we can to assist each other, strengthening our ability to partner with family organizations, veterans, public and private entities, foreign governments, and academia to achieve our mission.

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

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

158 ACCOUNTED FOR

OCTOBER



RECOVERY TEAM WORKING IN, XIENGKHOANG PROVINCE, LAOS

On the **left**, U.S. Air Force Tech Sgt. Cameron Farrell, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technician and a Short-Term Independent Augmentee (STIA) with DPAA, utilizes a specialized demolition hammer to break up concrete during a recovery mission spanning from September to October 2022.

On the **right**, Robert Ingraham, Anthropologist and Supervisory Scientific Recovery Expert (SRE), gathers dirt profile measurements for scientific and research evidence supporting a recovery operation on Oct. 3, 2022.



RECOVERY TEAM EXAMINES WRECKAGE IN MADANG, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Nicole Rhoton, DPAA historian, diligently cleaned a piece of aircraft wreckage during an investigation mission late-September 2022, in Madang, Papua New Guinea, correlating it to a crash site that could be proposed for a future excavation. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. John Miller)



U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION ENGAGES WITH RECOVERY TEAM IN LAOS

A delegation from the U.S. House of Representatives received a briefing about DPAA recovery operations and toured an excavation site in Xienghoang, Laos, on Oct. 11, 2022. The visit allowed the delegation to gain firsthand experience in DPAA field operations. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Edward Randolph)



PAPUA NEW GUINEA REPATRIATION

U.S. Service Members and civilians assigned to DPAA and U.S. Embassy Port Moresby participate in a repatriation ceremony at the completion of an underwater recovery mission off the coast of Papua New Guinea, Oct. 14, 2022. Civilian and military members of the Diplomatic Corps also participated. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Jack A. E. Rigsby)



Miller poses with members of the Chanthavong family, Oct. 16, 2022.

second child. Chinda cherished the thoughtful gift.

A year later, Harley returned to Laos for another recovery mission, excited to reunite with James and Chinda. While Cormier had moved on to a new assignment, Harley continued the tradition of giving candy to James. This time, James was accompanied by his newborn brother and cousins who eagerly joined in the excitement. Harley's dedication to fostering relationships with the local community inspired her teammates to follow suit. The small gesture of offering candy became a way to show goodwill and strengthen bonds.

As Harley reflects on her experiences, she finds fulfillment in bringing joy to others through these simple acts of kindness. Supporting DPAA's mission to account for missing personnel is not just a duty for her; it is an opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of families who have lost their loved ones.

Harley's candy-sharing tradition serves as a reminder that even the smallest gestures can create lasting connections. James has developed a fondness for Dum Dums, but it is the friendly face and positive disposition that truly make a difference. In Laos, candy has become a symbol of friendship, bridging cultures and hearts.



Miller gives candy to local children during a recovery mission in Laos, Oct. 14, 2022.

It's 4:15 p.m. in Laos, and DPAA Mortuary Affairs Specialist Sgt. Harley Miller is heading back to her guesthouse after a day of screening and digging. As she takes her seat on the bus, she retrieves a few pieces of candy from her backpack. The bus arrives in the town of Ban Ban, where she is greeted by James, a local boy who eagerly awaits her return.

Harley and James share a special bond, having met during her first mission to Laos the previous year. Despite being new to the agency and the country back then, Harley embraced the opportunity to assist in any way she could. The stark contrast between life in Laos and the United States left a lasting impression on her.

During her initial mission, Harley met U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Reginald Cormier, who became both a mentor and a friend. Cormier introduced Harley to James and began the tradition of giving the boy American candy. Inspired by Cormier's gesture, Harley joined in, ensuring she always had candy to share with James. Cormier, a DPAA Life Support Investigator, had initiated this tradition back then.

James's mother, Chinda Chanthavong, was delighted to meet Harley and appreciated her kindness. Before Harley's departure, she and her teammates gathered baby clothes to give to Chinda, who was pregnant at the time with her

Miller wet-screens soil during her second recovery mission in Laos, Oct. 14, 2022.

"HE SEES ME EVERY DAY AND KNOWS, 'OH, THIS LADY'S GOT CANDY!'"



NOVEMBER



PLANS AND POLICY DIRECTOR SPEAKS AT LOCAL SCHOOL ON VETERANS DAY

Brian Pearl, DPAA Plans and Policy Director, delivered a speech at Jefferson High School in Springfield, Missouri, on Veterans Day, November 11, 2022, to commemorate missing personnel and honor those who have served in the military, particularly those unaccounted for from past conflicts. (Courtesy Photo)



DPAA AND NAVY JOIN UNDERWATER RECOVERY OPERATIONS NEAR SOLOMON ISLANDS

U.S. Navy divers assigned to the Mobile Dive Salvage Unit Company 1-6 prepare dive equipment for underwater recovery operations near the Solomon Islands on Nov. 17, 2022. (U.S. Army Photo by SFC Corey Idleburg)



In November 2022, a recovery team commenced a mission in Panama's remote and mountainous Santa Fe National Park. As requested by the Secretary of the Navy, the DPAA mission aimed to locate and recover evidence associated with the 1985 loss of two Naval Aviators from a training accident. The severe terrain and environmental challenges made this 12-day mission one of the most complex to plan and execute.

(Top left) U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Austin Jacobs ascends a high-angle rock face.

(Second) U.S. Army Capt. Kyle Meariman surveys the terrain.

(Third) U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class

Richard Soto, Team Sergeant, wet-screens soil.

(Fourth) The recovery team spent Thanksgiving Day in Panama enjoying a turkey dinner and all the trimmings.

(Right) U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Nathan Otterbacher awaits direction from team leaders before engaging in an ascent.



DPAA RECOVERY OPERATION IN PANAMA



FAMILY MEMBER UPDATES ARE BIGGER THAN EVER

Since 1995, DPAA has been a vital link for families of missing American Service Members, facilitating communication through regular updates. These gatherings inform families about the U.S. government's global mission to locate the missing. Families exchange insights and updates during these events. DoD officials guide these discussions, briefing families on the mission's objectives and providing updates on specific cases.

NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

In Norfolk, the Agency hosted its first Family Member Update (FMU) of Fiscal Year 2023. DNA contributions are crucial, shedding light on missing loved ones and their legacies. Janice Carr and Jeanie Corso's journey exemplified the impact of FMUs. Learning about their paternal uncle, Carr shared, "I was absolutely floored." Corso's father's DNA helped in the identification process.

ORLANDO, FLORIDA

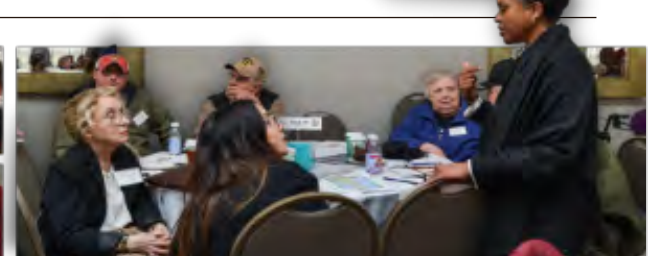
In Orlando, the DPAA held its second Family Member Update (FMU) of the fiscal year, demonstrating its ongoing dedication to establishing connections with families. The agency reiterated its focus on Service Members from various conflicts who are still missing. Among those honored was U.S. Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Pharis E. Weekley. His sister, Marva, attended the event along with five other family members. Her heartfelt words emphasized the importance of DNA contributions in identifying missing Service Members, a process that was instrumental in her brother's identification.

DALLAS

A record-breaking event in Dallas gathered over 360 family members, emphasizing the importance of good communication between families and the Agency. The event also highlighted the partnership with the Armed Forces Medical Examiners System, where they briefed about their advanced technology and collaboration.

CHICAGO

The final Family Member Update (FMU) of the year saw the Agency visit Chicago, with 345 family members in attendance to receive case updates from Department of Defense (DoD) experts. The Department and families continue their shared journey, ensuring no hero is forgotten. Each FMU is a platform for the free expression of emotions, displaying resilience and determination. Hopes are kindled as families share their generational grieving with each other and the DoD personnel who serve them.





DPAA PARTNERS CONDUCT MISSION IN INDIA

Dr. Gargi Jani, an NFSU program manager, along with four students from the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU)-Gandhinagar, collaborated with Dr. William Belcher, a former DPAA archaeologist, Dr. LuAnn Wandsnider of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), and Dr. Koel Mukherjee of the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) during an archaeological excavation at a World War II-era aircraft crash site in Assam State, India, on Dec. 2, 2022. The initiative aimed to explore and recover artifacts, advancing our understanding of historical events. (Courtesy Photo)



CEREMONY MARKS PHASE 4 COMPLETION OF KOREAN WAR DISINTERMENT PROJECT

Agency military personnel carry a casket during a disinterment ceremony at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii, on Dec. 5, 2022. The ceremony commemorated the conclusion of Phase 4, out of a total of 7 phases, within the Korean War Disinterment Project. Upon its completion, the project aims to unearth and identify the remains of Service Members buried as Unknowns from the Korean War. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Ariel Owings)



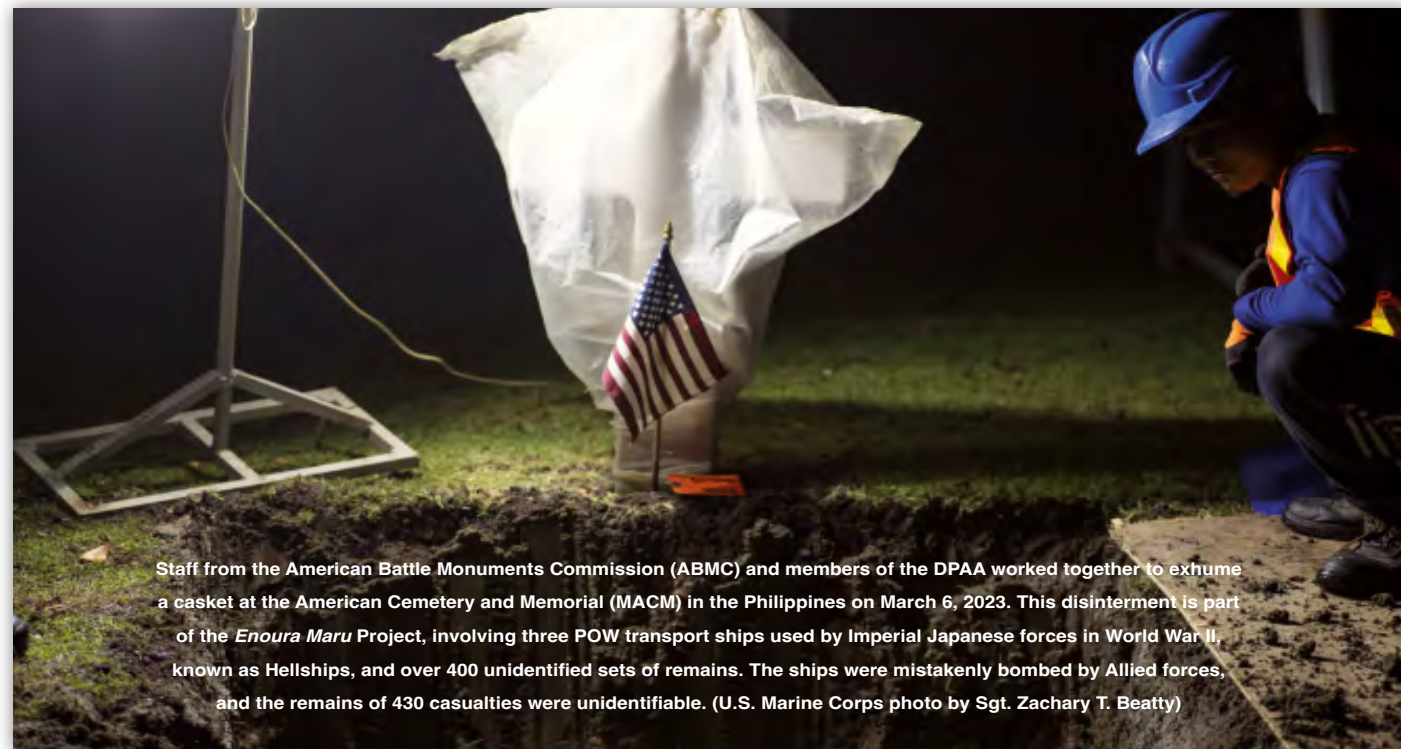
20TH INDONESIA-U.S. SECURITY DIALOGUE

Fern Sumpter Winbush, DPAA Principal Deputy Director (right), spoke during the 20th Security Dialogue in Bandung, Indonesia, on Dec. 2, 2022, reaffirming the agency's mission and the Department of Defense's commitment to establishing a strategic partnership. Maj. Gen. Bambang Trisnohadi, Director General of Defence Strategy for the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Indonesia, led the delegations for the IUSSD. The discussions, focusing on the ongoing recovery mission and the necessity to finalize a memorandum of arrangement to facilitate country access, aimed to strengthen the strategic partnership between the two nations. (DoD Photo by James Crow)



A LEGEND RETIRES

Johnie Webb, Outreach and Communications Deputy Director, retires from his 28 years of civil service to the POW/MIA mission during a ceremony held on Dec. 15, 2022. Coupled with his 28 years of service in the U.S. Army (10 years in the POW/MIA mission), then-Lt. Col. Webb led a small team to conduct the first field activity in Vietnam, 10 years after the war's end. Webb's career reflects the enduring commitment and sacrifices made by agency personnel and partners in their efforts to honor and bring closure to fallen comrades, their families, and this nation (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Ariel Owings)



Staff from the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) and members of the DPAA worked together to exhume a casket at the American Cemetery and Memorial (MACM) in the Philippines on March 6, 2023. This disinterment is part of the *Enoura Maru* Project, involving three POW transport ships used by Imperial Japanese forces in World War II, known as Hellships, and over 400 unidentified sets of remains. The ships were mistakenly bombed by Allied forces, and the remains of 430 casualties were unidentifiable. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Zachary T. Beatty)

DPAA BEGINS MULTI-YEAR “HELLSHIP” ACCOUNTING PROJECT

Story by U.S. Army Sgt. Ashleigh Maxwell

In a significant endeavor, the DPAA has embarked on a multi-year mission to try to identify the remains of 431 Unknowns associated with the *Enoura Maru*, a WWII cargo vessel employed by the Imperial Japanese Navy for transporting prisoners of war (POWs). This mission is vital, as nearly 1,000 Service Members are still unaccounted for from this incident.

The project's genesis involved collecting DNA family reference samples (FRS), a prerequisite for proposing disinterment. "An important part of the project is that we cut a small piece of the bones," affirmed Carrie LeGarde, project lead and forensic anthropologist at DPAA's Nebraska Lab. "Then, that needs to be compared to a FRS to figure out who it is, so the DNA we get from living biological relatives is really important."

Upon accumulating sufficient FRS and obtaining Department of Defense approval, DPAA commenced the Disinterment process. This task has been complicated by the wartime circumstances; many casualties were either buried at sea, cremated during the ship's voyage, or commingled with other remains. "The remains were mixed up so part of what we need to do is figure out which bones belong together and represent one individual," explained LeGarde, acknowledging the formidable nature of this project.

Fortunately, DPAA's experience from previous undertakings like the *USS Oklahoma* Project has proven invaluable. "The *USS Oklahoma* was another large, commingled human remains project, so I am fortunate to be able to take the lessons we learned from that project

and apply [them] towards the *Enoura Maru* Disinterment Project," LeGarde highlighted, stressing the project's scale and complexity.

The historical context of the *Enoura Maru* incident reveals the grim plight of over 20,000 Allied POWs transported by Japanese "Hellships" in 1944. These vessels subjected POWs to horrendous conditions, including crowding, starvation, poor sanitation, and maltreatment by Japanese soldiers. Many POWs also faced death as they were abandoned at sea or ordered to swim towards land under the threat of Japanese gunfire.

Numerous POWs succumbed to illness and malnutrition. Several hundred who managed to survive embarked on a harrowing voyage aboard the *Enoura Maru*.

Tragically, the ship was not marked as a POW transport and was mistakenly targeted by U.S. aircraft, leading to a devastating explosion that resulted in the loss of more than 300 lives. The survivors endured additional adversities, with a handful

eventually reaching Japan aboard the *Brazil Maru*.

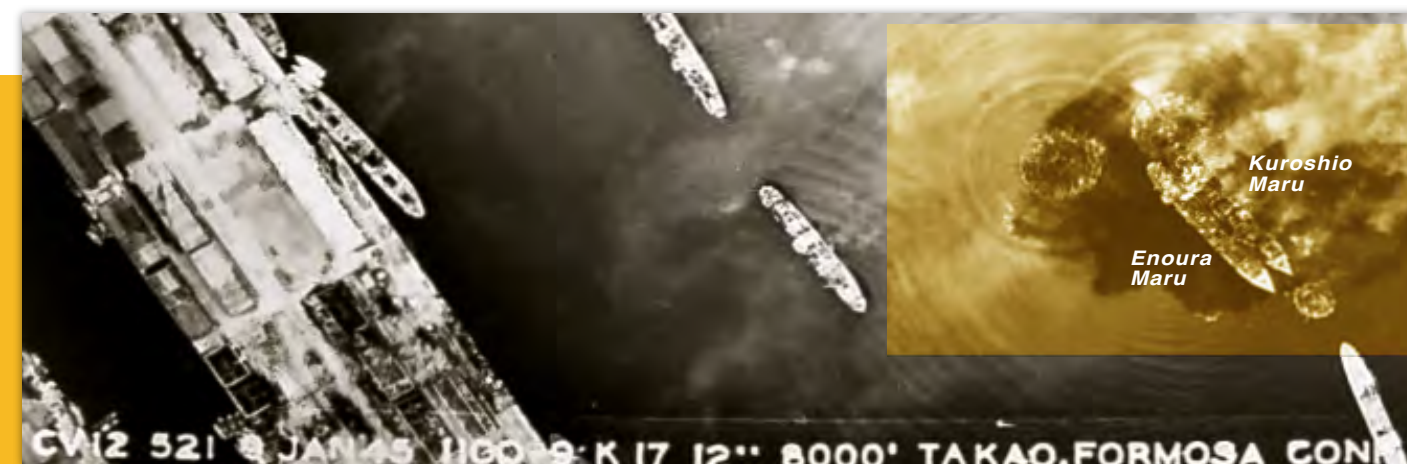
Dr. Greg Kupsky, lead historian for the project, acknowledged the courage of those who endured these adversities. "These guys held out for months against pretty tough odds and they did a lot of heroic acts in the process," he remarked.

Given the magnitude and intricacies of the project, the initial analyses and DNA testing are projected to take several years. Despite its complexity, DPAA is steadfast in its

mission to provide long-sought answers to *Enoura Maru* families whose loved ones are unaccounted-for.



National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP) staff disinter World War II caskets before a disinterment ceremony at the NMCP, Honolulu, Hawaii, June 12, 2023. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Ariel Owings)



A photograph taken by an aircraft from the *USS Hornet* captured the devastating attack on the *Enoura Maru* on January 9, 1945. The ship was anchored at the harbor of Takao in Formosa, now known as Kaohsiung in Taiwan. The *Enoura Maru* was sharing its mooring buoy with the Japanese tanker *Kuroshio Maru*, making it a prime target for the attack. As a result of the assault, a bomb hit the forward hold of the *Enoura Maru*, leading to the tragic loss of approximately 300 POWs on board. This event marks a somber moment during World War II, shedding light on the harsh realities POWs faced during their transport to Japan.



U.S. AMBASSADORS VISIT DPAA LABORATORY IN HAWAII

Above: Dr. Jennie Jin, laboratory manager, briefed U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea (ROK), Philip Goldberg, in front of the storyboard of Service Members identified from the Battle of Tarawa during his visit to the laboratory on Jan. 19, 2023. Ambassador Goldberg's visit was part of his attendance at the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's Chiefs of Mission Conference in Hawaii, where he learned about DPAA's robust partnership with its ROK counterpart. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jonathan McElderry)

Below: Dr. John Byrd, Scientific Analysis Director, briefed Ambassadors Marc Knapper and Peter Haymond, U.S. Ambassadors to Vietnam and Laos, respectively, in the laboratory display room on Jan. 19, 2023. The ambassadors commented on the significant contributions the POW/MIA mission makes to bilateral relationships in both countries. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Cole Yardley)



RECOVERY MISSION IN LAOS

From left to right: U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Theodore Fioto, an augmentee on the DPAA team, examines evidence at a screening station during a recovery in Houaphanh Province, Laos, on Jan. 21, 2023. U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Chilcote, team sergeant, and local workers wet screen soil during the same mission. U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Jake Bryan, an explosive ordnance disposal technician, and U.S. Army Sgt. Avonte Payne, an augmentee, excavate an archaeological unit during the mission on Jan. 19, 2023.



PARTNER CARRIES OUT INVESTIGATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Christopher Topales, a UIC mountaineer from The University of Illinois at Chicago's Center for the Recovery and Identification of the Missing (UIC-CRIM), a DPAA partner, examines potential aircraft wreckage with villagers in Pugo, Philippines on Jan. 29, 2023. The aim of the investigations is to locate the remains of missing Service Members from World War II-era aircraft crashes in the Philippines. (Courtesy photo by James Meierhoff, UIC)



DPAA AND KUWAIT NAVY JOINT EFFORT

Matthew DeFelice, DPAA Underwater Scientific Recovery Expert (SRE), U.S. Navy CDR Jaren Patterson, DPAA Underwater Planner, and two colonels from the Kuwait Naval Forces convene at Mohammed Al-Ahmed Naval Base on Jan. 8, 2023. They are reviewing investigation maps for an upcoming underwater mission with the objective of locating missing U.S. Service Members from Operation DESERT STORM. (Courtesy)

CASE PROGRESSION

Every American unaccounted for from past conflicts is assigned an individual case. Compiled within each case are the person's military records, historical archives, any preliminary research, and information from families.

CASE INITIATION



Once a case is deemed viable, teams formulate a mission plan. This involves determining the appropriate investigative and recovery strategies, allocating resources, and assembling the required personnel, equipment, and expertise for the mission. Mission planning includes logistical arrangements and coordination with relevant stakeholders.

MISSION PLANNING



Following the recovery of any material or osseous evidence, the DPAA's two forensic laboratories conduct various analyses utilizing scientific methods such as anthropological, odontological (dental), histological (tissue), isotopic (chemical), genetic (DNA sampling), and radiographic analyses. Multiple lines of evidence undergo assessment before an identification is established.

EVIDENCE ANALYSIS



CASE REVIEW & ASSESSMENT

Researchers conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of the case to gather all available information, including historical records, archival data, eyewitness accounts, and military reports. This step helps determine the case's viability and the potential for investigation, recovery, and identification.

FIELD OPERATIONS

Trained teams of experts conduct field operations, which can involve investigations, site surveys, or archaeological excavations. The multidisciplinary teams can be composed of researchers, archaeologists, linguists, medics, explosive ordnance technicians, life science investigators, mountaineers, divers, communications personnel, and photographers. They follow established procedures and protocols to optimize their mission objectives.

DATA INTEGRATION

Data is integrated along every step of the process from research to identification. DPAA experts synthesize and interpret data from archival records, maps and other contemporary sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of each casualty loss, to plan for safe and productive field activities, and conduct scientific analysis of evidence received in our laboratory. DPAA data is an important tool for making meaningful connections across our complex problem set and is instrumental in facilitating the identification process.

RESEARCH RECOVER IDENTIFY

FEBRUARY



U.S.-REPUBLIC OF KOREA REPATRIATION CEREMONY

A repatriation ceremony was held at the Ministry of National Defense Agency for Killed in Action Recovery Identification (MAKRI) headquarters in Seoul on Feb. 23, 2023. During this ceremony, Kelly McKeague, DPAA Director, accepted the remains on behalf of the United States. This ceremony is part of the ongoing efforts to account for more than 7,400 American Service Members still missing from the Korean War. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Corey Idleburg)



TEAM CONDUCTS INVESTIGATION IN THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. David Talmage, a pararescueman augmenting the DPAA team, digs a test pit with Thai Government forest rangers during an investigation mission in Lampang, Thailand, on Feb. 11, 2023. Conducted at a World War II-era aircraft crash site, this mission set the conditions for a future recovery mission. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. John Miller)



RECOVERY OPERATIONS IN LAOS

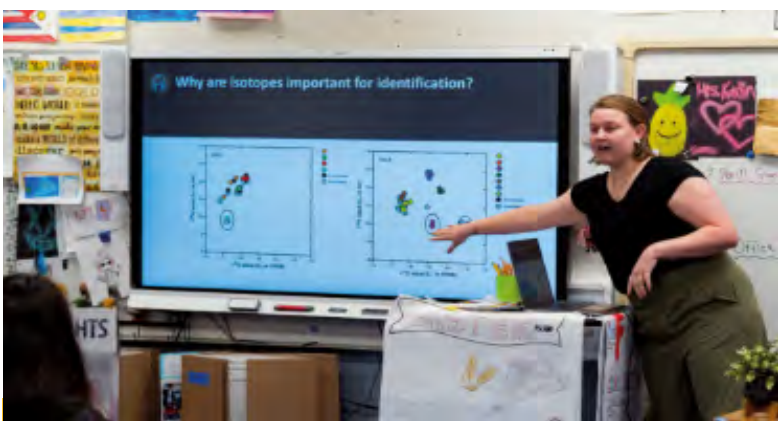
Blake Ayala, a scientific recovery expert, records data during a recovery mission of a Baron 52 aircraft crash site in Salavan Province, Laos, on Feb. 12, 2023. The depth of the excavation illustrates the complexity of the operation. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Morgan L. R. Burgess)



Gregory Hayes (right), a DPAA External Relations Specialist, discusses the DPAA mission with Edward Viveiros (center) and Robert Marino (left), members of Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Rhode Island chapter, who were attending the DAV and DAV Auxiliary National Convention in Atlantic City on Aug. 7, 2023. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Annaliss Candelaria)



U.S. Marine Corps Col. Matt Brannen, DPAA Deputy Director of Operations, and Tim Disher, Director of International Programs at the U.S. Naval Academy, discuss partnerships during a visit to the Annapolis, Maryland, campus on Aug. 16, 2023. (DPAA photo by Sun Vega)



Stephanie Hartley, DPAA Forensic Anthropologist, explains field recovery techniques during the Career Day Event at Aliamanu Middle School in Honolulu, Hawaii on Feb. 10, 2023. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Edward Randolph)

GETTING OUT THE MESSAGE



Kelly McKeague, DPAA Director, was interviewed by Kim Henderson of World Magazine for a podcast episode during the Dallas Family Member Update. Henderson, a reporter and a family member of a missing Vietnam Service Member, leveraged her personal experience with the loss of her cousin, Danny Entrican, to narrate the story of DPAA and the families of the missing through a written story and podcast. (DPAA photo by Ashley M. Wright)

Fern Sumpter winbush, DPAA Principal Deputy Director and Franklin Damann, Deputy Lab Director, emphasize the importance of DPAA's mission in an on-camera interview with local media near Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska. This collaborative initiative serves to deepen comprehension of DPAA's mission significance and bolster transparency. The agency's public affairs team diligently disseminates DPAA's narrative across diverse media channels, striving to engage the broader American public and communities within operational countries. This concerted approach amplifies DPAA's message, ensuring wider reach and resonance.



Members of the DPAA Scientific Analysis and Human Capital teams engage with attendees at the 75th Conference for the American Academy of Forensic Sciences in Orlando, Feb. 13-17, 2023. Agency scientists lead workshops, make presentations of their work, and further their professional development. The human resources personnel leverage the conference as a recruiting opportunity for potential volunteers, interns, and employees. (DPAA photo by Ashley M. Wright)

[Note - Displayed bones are replicas used for training purposes.]



Dr. Debra Zinni, Deputy Director of DPAA Hawaii Laboratory, presents at a "DPAA Then and Now" panel discussion at the Central Florida Tech Grove, a technology innovation center in Orlando, Feb. 24, 2023. (DPAA photo by Sun Vega)



MARCH



VFW COMMANDER HELPS RECOVERY EFFORTS

Mr. Timothy Borland, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Commander in Chief, places potential evidence into a bucket at a wet screening station in Nghệ An Province, Vietnam, during a field visit on March 29, 2023. During his visit, he witnessed the efforts to recover the remains of U.S. Service Members unaccounted for during the Vietnam War. The VFW historically sends its national leaders to Southeast Asia to meet with host nation officials, participate in DPAA field missions, and engage with DPAA recovery team members. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Cole Yardley)



MEDICAL PREPAREDNESS IN LAOS

A DPAA recovery team practices a medical evacuation at an excavation site during a mission in Laos, March 3, 2023. With a mountain site preventing a helicopter landing, the team is responsible for transporting injured personnel to the bottom of the mountain for medical airlift. (Courtesy photo East Carolina University)



UNDERWATER PARTNERS IN SAIPAN

Divers from East Carolina University and Task Force Dagger Special Operations Foundation, a non-profit utilizing rehabilitative adaptive events for Wounded Warriors, conducted an underwater investigation of a World War II crash site in Saipan on March 15, 2023. (Courtesy photo East Carolina University)



NATIONAL VIETNAM WAR VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

A ceremony held at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. on March 29, 2023, commemorated National Vietnam War Veterans Day. During the ceremony, U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Anthony Worsley, DPAA Senior Enlisted Advisor, presented a Vietnam War Commemoration pin to Ronnie BoisClaire, the Gold Star Son of U.S. Navy Petty Officer Ronald BoisClaire, in honor of his and his family's sacrifice. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ashleigh Maxwell)

DOD RECOGNIZES OPERATION HOMECOMING 50TH

DPAALSO REMEMBERS THOSE
STILL UNACCOUNTED



Operation Homecoming guest speaker Johnie Webb shares his experiences with attendees during DPAA's 50th-anniversary remembrance ceremony held on Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, March 28, 2023. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. David Owsianka)

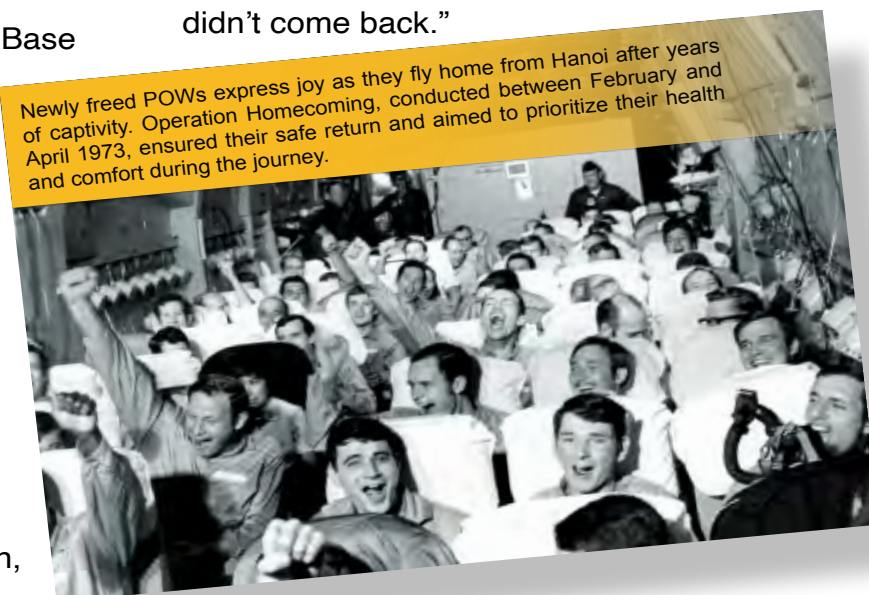
DPAA Deputy Director of Operations, emotionally reflected on the event, stating, "My dad was a Vietnam War veteran — it really is very emotional and an honor to be a part of [the ceremony]. The POWs' indomitable spirit, courage, sacrifice, and the hardships they endured serve as an example for us to follow."

Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Johnie Webb, former DPAA Deputy Director for Outreach and Communications and a Vietnam veteran himself, shared his personal experiences from the Vietnam War as a guest speaker during the ceremony. He said, "It's an extraordinary thing to remember. I think this is most appropriate and especially to have it here at DPAA where we're still trying to carry on the work to bring all those men back home that didn't come back."

A ceremony was held on March 28, 2023, at the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency at Joint Base

Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Operation Homecoming. This operation, which took place from Feb. 12 to April 1, 1973, marked the return of 591 POWs to U.S. soil for the first time since their captivity during the Vietnam War.

U.S. Marine Corps Col. Matt Brannen,



Newly freed POWs express joy as they fly home from Hanoi after years of captivity. Operation Homecoming, conducted between February and April 1973, ensured their safe return and aimed to prioritize their health and comfort during the journey.



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Nicolas Peterson (right) and Senior Airman Alexander Sauerwein, both crew chiefs from the 860th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, hang a POW/MIA flag aboard a C-17 Globemaster III at Travis Air Force Base, California, on March 24, 2023. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Traci Keller)

Gold Star Daughter Natalie Rauch, daughter of U.S. Air Force Col. Warren Anderson, unaccounted for from the Vietnam War, emphasized the importance of remembering and honoring those who served. She said, "[The anniversary] puts the POW/MIA mission back on the — not necessarily on the front page, but in a way on the front page because people don't know this. Even some active duty don't know this mission goes on."

Since the end of the war, more than 1,000 missing Service Members have been accounted for and received a burial with full military honors in the United States. Rauch underscored the significance of remembering the 591 POWs returned 50 years ago and how it serves as an educational moment for younger Service Members about the sacrifices made by those before them.



U.S. Air Force Col. Ryan Garlow, left, 60th Air Mobility Wing vice commander, and Maj. Vitaliy Benz, 21st Airlift Squadron C-17 Globemaster III pilot, fly the aircraft from Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, to Travis Air Force Base, California, March 29, 2023. The flight was part of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Operation Homecoming. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Traci Keller)



U.S. AND SOUTH KOREA PRESIDENTS MEET GOLD STAR FAMILY

President Joe Biden, First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, and South Korean First Lady Kim Keon Hee held a private meeting with Judy Wade at the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., on April 25, 2023. Earlier that day, both presidents announced the accounting of U.S. Army Cpl. Luther Story, a Medal of Honor recipient and Wade's uncle, from the Korean War. U.S. Army photo by Henry Villarama)



RECOVERY OPERATIONS IN HUNGARY

A recovery team consisting of DPAA personnel and military short-term individual augmentees fill sandbags during an excavation mission in Gordisa, Hungary, April 26, 2023. The sandbags were used to stabilize the site where a U.S. Army Air Forces aircraft crashed during World War II. U.S. Service Members assigned and attached to the DPAA participated in filling sandbags during a recovery operation in Gordisa, Hungary, April 26, 2023. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Zachary T. Beatty)



MI-17 CRASH REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY

Personnel from DPAA's Detachment 2 and the Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons pay tribute to the seven Americans and nine Vietnamese who perished in a helicopter crash in Vietnam's Quang Binh Province on April 7, 2001. Situated within the detachment's compound, the monument serves as a memorial to those who sacrificed for this noble mission. (Courtesy photos)



U.S. NAVY COMMANDER FREDERICK SCHRADER INTERRED

Barbara Canavan, daughter of U.S. Navy CDR Frederick Schrader, receives a flag from U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Paula Dunn at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP), Honolulu, Hawaii, April 13, 2023. Schrader, an F6F-5 Hellcat pilot, was shot down in October 1944 over Formosa (now Taiwan) and interred as an Unknown at the NMCP until identified by DPAA in 2022. The teddy bear Barbara is holding was a gift from her father before he left for the war; she was 2 years old at the time. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. David Owsianka)

Recovered!
**A HISTORIC
UNDERTAKING:
THE RECOVERY OF
'HEAVEN CAN WAIT'**

Story by: NAVSEA Office of Corporate Communication

Beneath the waves of Hansa Bay, a story of valor and sacrifice has lain dormant, waiting to surface. Embark with us on a journey into history as we delve into the monumental mission of unearthing "Heaven Can Wait."

A team of divers from the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) Navy Experimental Diving Unit (NEDU) recently supported a Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) mission near Papua New Guinea to recover remains of Service Members lost in World War II.

The NEDU team, consisting of around 15 divers from NEDU's Saturation Detachment (NSD), joined forces with two Navy divers from the Undersea Rescue Command to aid DPAA in the recovery efforts. Their mission focused on the wreckage of a B-24 bomber named "Heaven Can Wait," with the aim of making a comprehensive accounting of 11 U.S. Army Air Forces Service Members who were lost on March 11, 1944, during a WWII bombing run.

Planning for this mission began in 2018 when NEDU discussed its saturation diving capabilities with DPAA. This conversation initiated the mission, and NEDU worked with DPAA planners to develop a detailed plan.

Despite several challenges, including delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricane Michael, the mission preparations continued. The actual operation took place in February 2023, with NEDU deploying its Saturation Fly-away Dive System (SATFADS) to Singapore from Florida. SATFADS allows for saturation diving down to the equivalent of 1,000 feet of seawater

for up to 30 days, providing unique capabilities for deep-sea missions.

The divers underwent extensive training, including equipment familiarization, maintenance, watch supervision, simulated dives, and underwater work with hydraulic cutting tools, rigging gear, and dredging equipment.

During the mission, NSD divers used cutting-edge techniques and equipment to conduct underwater crane and lifting operations and complex hydraulic cutting operations of the aircraft wreckage on the sea floor. The operation set several records, including being the longest working saturation mission in the last two decades, totaling 37 diving days, over 367 hours of working "bottom time," and 102 diver excursions.

Despite these technical achievements, the divers remained focused on their role in supporting DPAA's mission to provide closure to the families of missing personnel. They saw their mission as a tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice and expressed a deep sense of honor in contributing to this mission.

The NEDU mission concluded with two repatriation ceremonies, one in Papua New Guinea and another in Singapore, where possible remains found during the mission were returned. The recovered material evidence will undergo analysis at DPAA labs, opening doors to recover unaccounted-for Service Members from previously challenging underwater locations.

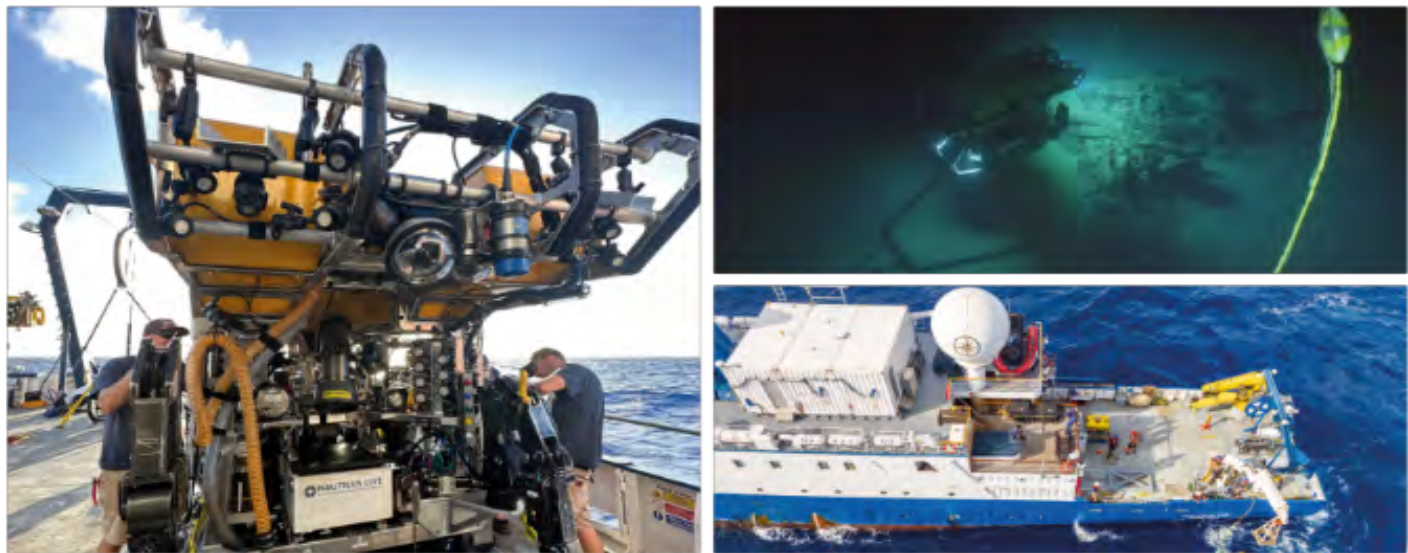
Overall, this mission demonstrated the effectiveness of saturation diving in recovering evidence from unprecedented depths and has paved the way for future missions targeting previously considered unrecoverable locations due to water depth.





VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION WELCOME HOME EVENT

Dr. Tim McMahon, the Director of DNA Operations for the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES), explains the process of DNA extraction to a group of cadets at the Vietnam War Commemoration Welcome Home Celebration on the National Mall, Washington, D.C., May 11, 2023. Honoring veterans who returned from the war and those who did not, the event was part of the multi-year 50th-anniversary commemoration of the end of the Vietnam War. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ashleigh Maxwell)



JOURNEY OF THE ROV HERCULES

The Hercules (**lower left**) is a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) equipped with cameras, sensors, and survey instruments. It was launched from the back deck of E/V Nautilus (**lower right**) and operated by scientists and engineers (**top**) of Ocean Exploration Trust, a DPAA partner. The ROV conducted a survey of the World War II-era crash site of an A-20 Havoc off the coast of O'ahu, Hawaii, on May 11, 2023. (Courtesy photos Ocean Exploration Trust)



UNDERWATER UNDERTAKING

U.S. Army Sgt. Taner Trujillo, an augmentee diver with the U.S. Army 7th Engineer Dive Detachment, prepares to descend during recovery operations off the coast of Nha Trang, Vietnam, on May 25, 2023. The recovery mission employed various dive and underwater archaeological techniques. Service Members from the 7th Dive Detachment and the U.S. Coast Guard Regional Dive Locker West, under the guidance of a DPAA underwater archaeologist, conducted operations throughout the 75-day mission. They were in search of six missing crewmen from a 1971 U.S. Army CH-47 helicopter crash. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Morgan L. R. Burgess)



MILITARY FINAL HONORS FOR U.S. ARMY AIR FORCES STAFF SGT. ROY CARNEY

Soldiers from the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) conduct military funeral honors with funeral escort for U.S. Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Roy Carney at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia, on May 17, 2023. Carney was killed in action during Operation TIDAL WAVE, which was the August 1, 1943 bombing of synthetic oil refineries around Ploesti, Romania. After the recovery and subsequent identification process, his remains were interred at Arlington National Cemetery following his identification on Aug. 17, 2022. (U.S. Army photo by Elizabeth Fraser)



Dr. Debra Zinni, DPAA Deputy Lab Director, spoke at a Memorial Day event held at the Massachusetts National Cemetery Complex in Bourne, Mass., on May 28, 2023. (Courtesy photo)

MEMORIAL DAY ENGAGEMENTS

Arkansas: Fayetteville, Fort Smith
California: Arvin, Santa Nella, Riverside
Colorado: Colorado Springs, Denver
Connecticut: Lebanon
Florida: Tallahassee
Illinois: Elwood, Lake Forest, Springfield
Maryland: Rockville
Massachusetts: Bourne
Michigan: Augusta
Nebraska: Omaha
New Mexico: Santa Fe
New York: Calverton, Farmingdale
North Carolina: New Bern
Oklahoma: Fort Sill, Fort Gibson
Oregon: Roseburg
Pennsylvania: Bridgeville
South Carolina: Beaufort
Tennessee: Mountain Home, Nashville
Virginia: Leesburg
Wisconsin: Milwaukee

MEMORIAL DAY 2023: CONNECTING DPAA'S MISSION

On Memorial Day, our nation pays tribute to Americans who made the supreme sacrifice in combat by giving their lives. The agency provided speakers for Memorial Day commemorations at 26 National Cemeteries and four other events across the nation to ensure the 81,000 unaccounted for Americans are not forgotten.



U.S. Marine Captain Jordan Underwood, Executive Officer of the Indo-Pacific Directorate, spoke at the Fort Sill National Cemetery commemoration in Oklahoma, on May 29, 2023. (Courtesy Photo)



Jeremy Mathieu (second from left), 2022 Michigan State Society Children of the American Revolution (MSCAR) President, was inspired by a DPAA lab visit and for his MSCAR project, raised nearly \$12,000 for DPAA's mission. He presented Josh Fennell (3rd from left), Europe-Mediterranean Historian, the check on May 27, 2023, at Pine Grove Park War Memorial, Mich. Josh spoke the next day at nearby Fort Custer National Cemetery. (Courtesy Photo)



Fern Sumpter Winbush, DPAA Principal Deputy Director, presents a token to Cpl. Luther H. Story's niece, Judy Wade, during his military honors burial at Andersonville National Cemetery, Georgia, on May 29, 2023. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Woodlyne Escarne)



Brian Pearl, plans and policy director, speaks at the Tallahassee National Cemetery in Tallahassee, Florida, on May 29, 2023.



JUNE

DOD UNVEILS ANNUAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY POSTER

The Honorable Christine Wormuth, Secretary of the Army, and retired U.S. Air Force Col. Michael Brazelton, a former Vietnam War POW, unveil the 2023 National POW/MIA Recognition Day poster at a ceremony in the Pentagon's POW/MIA Corridor, Arlington, Virginia, on June 22, 2023. Designed by DPAA photographers U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Corey Idleburg and U.S. Navy Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Annaliss Candelaria, the poster is striking and is mailed worldwide to commemorate the day recognizing the sacrifices of former POWs and current MIAs, as well as their families. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ashleigh Maxwell)



VIETNAM RECOVERY MISSION

From left, U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Ashley Gomez, Short Term Individual Augmentee; U.S. Air Force Tech Sgt. Thao Bui, DPAA linguist; and Blake Ayala, DPAA Scientific Recovery Expert, dig in an excavation unit during a recovery mission in Quang Binh Province, Vietnam, June 9, 2023. Throughout the mission, local Vietnamese workers supported the DPAA team by screening soil, resupplying fuel, and moving tools and equipment around the site. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Jonathan McElderry)



COMMEMORATING VIETNAMESE MILESTONES

This year marked two key Vietnamese anniversaries – the 50th establishing the Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP) and the 35th of sustained joint field activities searching for and recovering Americans unaccounted for from the Vietnam War. At the June 8, 2023, gala in Hanoi, Vietnam, Kelly McKeague, DPAA Director and Marc Knapper, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, joined Vietnamese Government officials, including several former Vietnamese Ambassadors to the U.S., to commemorate the milestones. (Courtesy photo)



JAPANESE OFFICIALS VISIT LABORATORY

Lesley Chesson, the Isotope Program Manager at DPAA, provided insights to officials from the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (MHLW) on employing stable isotopes in forensic analysis to refine potential geographic origins of individuals, on June 8, 2023. Additionally, during their visit to DPAA's Hawaii Laboratory, the MHLW officials gathered samples from remains linked to the Battle of Tarawa, which were integrated into the laboratory's holdings and potentially of Japanese descent. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. David Owsianka)

80TH ANNIVERSARY OPERATION HUSKY

Story & photos by
U.S. AIR FORCE
STAFF SGT.
BLAKE GONZALES

On July 10th, 1943, the Allied Powers readied over 3,000 ships, 150,000 troops, and 4,000 aircraft for a major invasion of Sicily, then under Axis Powers control. This assault aimed to remove Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and begin liberating Italy from fascism, was known as Operation HUSKY.

Fighter and bomber groups had a dual mission: to disrupt the enemy and protect the southern invasion forces.

One American bomber, manned by six Airmen, failed to return to its Tunisian airfield. It crashed north of Sciacca while targeting the "Phantom" airport, with no survivors.

Operation HUSKY aircrew, along with around

29,000 American, British, and Canadian allies, paid the ultimate price for Sicily's Operation HUSKY. Although the Italian conflict continued, this marked a significant victory. However, a month later, the focus shifted to accounting for those lost in action, a crucial aspect of achieving victory.



One crew member's remains were buried by locals in a Sicilian civilian cemetery in

September 1943 and found, thanks to the

American Graves Registration Service (AGRS). But recovering the

other five crew members proved challenging in the aftermath of the crash, and these Airmen remained missing in Sicily as the war raged on.

Recovering the missing crew members proved challenging, as only fragments of the crash



Dr. Clive Vella, a DPAA Scientific Recovery Expert (SRE), examines a piece of aircraft wreckage during the recovery mission, June 28, 2023.

remained two months later. These five soldiers remained in Sicily as the war raged on.

Now, on the 80th anniversary of Operation HUSKY, a DPAA team returns to the crash site with a singular mission: locate the missing crew members. This effort is part of DPAA's broader initiative to find and identify the approximately 29,000 Service Members still unaccounted for from World War II.

Dr. Clive Vella, a DPAA Scientific Recovery Expert (SRE) and Forensic Archeologist, explained, "In 2017, researchers revisited the site and recommended excavation. In 2023, we're back to excavate the remaining area."

The recovery team spent six days preparing the site and began a 50-day excavation. They meticulously searched for evidence related to the bomber crash and focused on material evidence, life support equipment, and any potential remains of the missing crew.

U.S. Army Capt. Kyle Meariman, DPAA team

leader, highlighted the dedication of the diverse team, including medics, explosive ordnance disposal technicians, and linguists, all working long hours to achieve their excavation goal.

As the team persevered in their search for the last missing crew members, they remained acutely aware of the significance of Operation HUSKY and their work's implications. Dr. Vella noted the scale of World War II and the

importance of finding answers for families whose loved ones are still missing from the war.

For the team, recovering evidence is a powerful motivator, especially during challenging days under the scorching sun. Dr. Vella shared, "The work we do pales in comparison to the sacrifices made. On tough days, I remind myself of that moment when we can bring a possible case home, offering hope to families. We're here because others sacrificed for our nation, a fact that never escapes me."

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Erik Merrill, DPAA Life Support Investigator, and U.S. Air Force Capt. Rob Perryman, a Physician Assistant augmenting the DPAA team, screen soil at the crash site, June 28, 2023.



ON THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION HUSKY, A DPAA TEAM RETURNS TO THE CRASH SITE WITH A SINGULAR MISSION: LOCATE THE MISSING CREW MEMBERS.

AGENCY PARTICIPATES IN THE 124TH VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION

Fern Sumpter Winbush, DPAA Principal Deputy Director, addresses members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) during the 124th VFW National Convention at the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, on July 25, 2023. Sumpter Winbush provided updates to VFW members regarding the current status and progress made by DPAA this year. DPAA's primary mission is to provide the fullest possible accounting of missing personnel to their families and the nation. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Ariel Owings)



HONORABLE CARRY CEREMONY HELD AT OFFUTT

A group of transfer cases containing osseous material sit on a C-17 Globemaster III cargo bay at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, July 30, 2023. The possible human remains were recovered from DPAA field missions in Europe and were Unknowns disinterred from American Battle Monuments Commission cemeteries in Europe. After the Honorable Carry ceremony, scientists at the Offutt Laboratory accessioned the remains and began extensive forensic analyses. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Blake Gonzales)



ROK VICE MINISTER OF DEFENSE VISIT

Kelly McKeague, DPAA Director, provides a briefing to the Honorable Shin Beom-chul, Vice Minister of Defense for the Republic of Korea (ROK), regarding DPAA's mission and collaboration with its ROK counterpart at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam on July 24, 2023. Accompanying the Director was U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Martine Kidd, Director of Logistics United Nations Command, seen to the right of the Director in the photo. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. David Owsianka)



RECOVERY FIELDWORK

Archaeology student Baillie Brandt, Volunteer Hannah Hughes and Archaeology students Joseph Edwards, Tanner Bell, Isaac Kern, Bryce Thomas, Haley Purifoy, and Croatian Archaeologist Natasa Cvitanovic (left to right) excavate at the crash site of a World War II-era bomber in Croatia, July 23, 2023. From July 17 through August 15, 2023, Cedarhawk Enterprises, LLC, partner of DPAA, conducted excavations in an effort to find U.S. aircrew lost over Croatia during World War II. (Courtesy photo by Rick Weathermon)



DPAA AND ROK CONDUCT REPATRIATION CEREMONY IN HONOR OF THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMISTICE

Story by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jonathan McElderry

On July 25, 2023, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) held a repatriation ceremony at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, to transfer remains and commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Armistice between the U.S. and the Republic of Korea (ROK).

According to Shin Beom Chul, Vice Minister of National Defense, representing South Korea, "The Republic of Korea government and the Ministry of National Defense shall never forget and forever be indebted to our fallen veterans who sacrificed their lives for the freedom, peace and prosperity we enjoy today. We will

make sure to faithfully return our seven heroes to the Republic of Korea with highest courtesy."



Over 200 sets of remains of ROK Service Members were obtained from various sources

and analyzed in DPAA's laboratory. These remains were repatriated through the United Nations Command to the ROK in ceremonies held in 2012, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2021. In this particular ceremony, seven sets of remains were repatriated, one of which was positively identified.

ROK Navy Senior Petty Officer Ho Jong Choi, the nephew of the identified individual, Pfc. Im Rak Choi, attended the ceremony and escorted his uncle's remains home. U.S. Navy Adm. John C. Aquilino, commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, stated, "Pfc. Choi and the other six ROK Soldiers' conviction to give the ultimate sacrifice symbolizes our ironclad ROK-US Alliance."

Kelly McKeague, DPAA director, emphasized the importance of the continued partnership between DPAA and the Ministry of National Defense Agency for KIA (Killed in Action) Recovery and Identification (MAKRI),



saying, "The inordinate sacrifices made in the Korean War were not in vain when one considers the peace, security, stability, and prosperity that blesses South Korea and its citizens today. For the tens of thousands who sacrificed their lives in defense of liberty and remain missing, the United States and the Republic of Korea value and prioritize the search, recovery, and repatriation of our countrymen. We cannot, we must not, forget the supreme sacrifice made by our compatriots nor the answers and closure owed to their families."

The seven ROK flag-draped transfer cases containing the remains were placed on a ROK aircraft and returned to South Korea. The President of South Korea received the remains in South Korea on the 70th Anniversary of the Armistice between the U.S. and ROK.

A Brother's Tribute to Service and Sacrifice

In a heartfelt letter, Choi Yong expresses profound gratitude to his older brother, Pfc. Im Rak, for selflessly serving their country during the war. Im Rak's ultimate sacrifice contributed to their nation's freedom and prosperity. At the Seoul Air Base ceremony, Choi Yong read aloud this letter when his own son, Senior Petty Officer Ho Jong Choi, proudly returned to South Korea with his brother's remains. ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol and senior military officials fittingly honored the arrival of PFC Choi and the other six sets of remains on July 27, 2023. This date marked the 70th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice and the beginning of the U.S.-ROK Alliance.

CHOI YONG'S LETTER TO HIS BROTHER
Dear Brother Im Rak,

My heart is full. Thank you very much for coming home after such a long time. You endured hardship during childhood yet joined the military to save the country. The country you sacrificed for became a free and prosperous nation. I hope you feel restful in the arms of my son, a Navy Sailor. Brother, do not worry about our country, and rest in peace. I will continuously be grateful to the Republic of Korea, who brought you back home.

Your younger brother,
CHOI Yong

AUGUST

DPAA SUPPORTS MAUI WILDFIRE RESPONSE



In response to Hawaii's plea for aid, the DPAA dispatched personnel to assist in recovery and identification efforts following the destructive wildfires on Maui. Anthropologists, odontologists, an X-ray technician, and mortuary affairs Soldiers were deployed to Lahaina, offering their specialized expertise to the Maui Police Chief and Maui Medical Examiner. The team's invaluable contributions were commended not only by local officials but also by the Secretary of Defense.



MAKRI TOURS DNA LAB

Senior members of the Republic of Korea's Ministry of National Defense Agency for Killed in Action Recovery Identification (MAKRI) visited the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory on Aug. 15, 2023, at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. The group received a laboratory tour from Dr. Tim McMahon (middle), Director of DNA Operations, in addition to meeting with DPAA officials about furthering the partnership and joint activities between the two agencies. (Courtesy Photo)



PARTNER PERFORMS RECOVERY FIELDWORK IN POLAND

Team members from Alta Archaeological Consulting (ALTA), a DPAA partner, screen sediment excavated from a unit at the site of a World War II-era bomber crash in Poland on July 20, 2023. From July 17 through Aug. 9, 2023, ALTA conducted excavations to locate U.S. aircrew lost over Poland during World War II. (Photo courtesy of ALTA)



U.S. AIR FORCE MAJ. RONALD MAYERCIK

VIETNAM WAR FAMILIES, DPAA REMAIN COMMITTED TO FINDING ANSWERS

Story by: U.S. Army Sgt. Ashleigh Maxwell

On Thanksgiving Day in 1967, the Mayercik family gathered in New Jersey, surrounded by the aroma of a hearty meal and the joy of familial bonds. Amidst the festivities, a solemn knock disrupted their celebration, heralding two uniformed men with life-altering news.

Maj. Ronald Mayercik, a navigator aboard an RF-4C Phantom II during the Vietnam War in 1967, disappeared along with the aircraft's pilot, Col. Brendan Foley, during a nighttime reconnaissance mission over North Vietnam. Despite an extensive aerial search and rescue operation, neither wreckage nor crew was ever found, and Mayercik remains unaccounted for to this day.

Traci Wood, Mayercik's niece, lamented the absence of closure, stating, "There's no grave to go visit. There's no 'what happened to him?' or 'what did he go through?'" For 56 years, Mayercik's family has clung to hope, waiting for his return.

Since the early 2000s, they have turned to the Department of Defense for answers. Attending DoD events, such as the Vietnam War Annual Government Briefings (AGB), their family received updates and information on the search efforts to bring Mayercik home. In June 2023, Woods joined over 150 other family members at the briefing held at the historic Mayflower Hotel in downtown Washington D.C.

These meetings involve senior government officials, researchers, scientists, and other experts working on the personnel accounting mission of past conflict. The gatherings feature formal presentations, Q&A sessions, and individual case discussions between DoD officials and family members.

Wood expressed her enduring hope, saying, "He deserves to come back here and be buried on U.S. soil with his family." William (Buddy) Newell, the research analyst assigned to Mayercik's case, shares her commitment. He vows to persist until Mayercik is found and identified.

Since 1994, American and Vietnamese personnel have jointly conducted 27 investigations and 18 excavations in missions seeking any remains of Col. Foley and Maj. Mayercik. Except for an identification tag for Maj. Mayercik and life, service, and support material evidence recovered on previous missions, both Airmen remain unaccounted for.

The Mayercik family remains resolute in attending the Vietnam War AGB until he is accounted for. This year marks the 35th anniversary of sustained joint U.S.-Vietnam field activities in the search for and recovery of the remains of Americans missing from the Vietnam War. In the fiscal year, the DoD conducted 15 investigations and 9 recoveries, accessioned 200 evidence items, and accounted for four Service Members.

FAMILIES OF WAR MISSING ARE STILL HOPEFUL

By David Vergun

DOD Editor/Writer

Over 500 families of U.S. Service Members missing in action during the Korean War and the Cold War recently gathered in Arlington, Virginia. They were seeking updates on their loved ones from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), which has been briefing families annually for 30 years. Each family receives an individual case summary on their missing loved one's status and is encouraged to provide DNA samples to aid identification.

The agency faces challenges due to the lack of access to North Korea for remains searches since 2005. North Korea had turned over some remains five years ago, but this cooperation ceased.

Attendees shared their personal stories. For example, one visitor, Knox, visited North Korea in 2001, where a North Korean soldier pointed to her father's crash site. She recalled a poignant moment when a crane flew alongside her departing plane, a symbol of eternal life.

Another attendee, Eugene Fulmore, nephew of Army Cpl. Bannie Harrison Jr., mentioned his uncle's sacrifice as an inspiration for his own military service in Vietnam.

Cynthea Grisham lost her father, Air Force Capt. David H. Grisham, in 1950, and John Zimmerlee's father, Air Force Capt. John Henry Zimmerlee Jr., disappeared in 1952. Both remain missing, prompting ongoing searches for closure.

Kelly McKeague, DPAA director, noted that



7,491 Service Members are unaccounted for from the Korean War, with 666 identified. Around 5,300 are believed to be in North Korea. Some remains turn out to be of Chinese, South Korean, or North Korean soldiers. While North Korea shows little interest in repatriating its soldiers' remains, China and South Korea have been more cooperative.

The agency recently returned the remains of a South Korean soldier, hosting a repatriation ceremony attended by the South Korean president and the soldier's nephew, a chief petty officer in the South Korean Navy.

South Korea invites U.S. families of Korean War MIAs to visit, expressing gratitude for U.S. Service Members' contributions to their nation's democratic prosperity.

McKeague emphasized that the agency's mission extends beyond the Korean War, encompassing wars like World War II and Operation Iraqi Freedom in 45 nations. Connecting with and communicating with families of the missing remains a crucial part of their mission.

SEPTEMBER



SEARCH FOR USAF CREW IN GERMANY

A recovery team composed of DPAA civilian and military members, and augmentees from other military units excavate a crash site near Wistedt, Germany, on September 12, 2023. The team was searching for biological and material evidence associated with the crew of a U.S. Army Air Forces B-24H shot down in April 1944. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Jack A. E. Riggsby)



DPAA HOSTS ANNUAL TECHNICAL TALKS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Kelly McKeague, DPAA Director, and Lê Thanh Tùng, Vietnamese Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP) delivered opening remarks at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., during the annual technical talks between DPAA and VNOSMP on Sept. 13, 2023. These discussions serve as a platform for representatives from both agencies to address joint field operations for the upcoming year, policy and operational initiatives, and methods to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of missions in accounting for U.S. personnel still missing from the Vietnam War. (DoD photo by Sun L. Vega)



ACTING USD(P) VISITS DPAA'S HAWAII TEAM

The Honorable Sasha Baker, the Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Department of Defense senior official overseeing DPAA, visited the Hawaii team and laboratory at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam on September 13, 2023. During her visit, Baker recognized a diverse group of civilian and military personnel for their contributions to DPAA's global mission and support provided during the Maui recovery efforts following the wildfires. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Ariel Owings)



FIRST USE OF DRONE TO SUPPORT JOINT ACTIVITIES

In early September, personnel from DPAA's Detachment 2 in Hanoi and the VNOSMP conducted the first-ever survey using aerial drone capabilities in Vietnam. The drones utilized high power photography, videography, and LiDAR sensors. This historic survey came about after several years of coordination and is another way the Agency uses innovation to improve its field work. (Courtesy photo)



NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY

Story by: U.S. Navy Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Annaliss Candelaria



On Sept. 15, 2023, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks and retired Air Force Col. Michael Brazelton, a former Vietnam War prisoner of war, attended the 2023 National POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Alexander Kubitza)

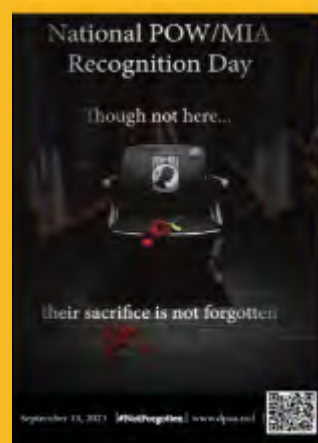
The DPAA hosted a National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP), Honolulu, Hawaii, on Sept. 15, 2023.

National POW/MIA Recognition Day began in 1979. Every year since, the President of the United States issues a proclamation commemorating the day on the third Friday of September. This year's ceremony saw more than 300 attendees, including Service Members and civilians from across the island, gathering to honor the sacrifices of former American prisoners of war and those who are still missing in action.

After the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific Band played the national and state anthems of Hawaii, Joseph Dunbar, DPAA Logistics Management and Budget Analyst, delivered a proclamation signed by Governor Josh Green, commemorating National POW/MIA Recognition Day.

"As we gather on these hallowed grounds here at the beautiful Punchbowl, we demonstrate heartfelt appreciation to those who sacrificed greatly for our nation, our ideals, and to protect our allies," said Fern Sumpter Winbush, DPAA Principal Deputy Director. "We also take this moment to ensure that this generation and the generations to come remember the consequences of war, the individual stories of those who never returned, and to show appreciation to every former POW who endured horrific

Since 1999, the Department of Defense has annually produced a poster in commemoration of National POW/MIA Recognition Day. The imagery and message of the 2023 poster are striking.



circumstances while in captivity. We must never take for granted what they who came before us did."

Sumpter Winbush also highlighted the significance of DPAA and its continuing promise.

"Since the end of the Vietnam War, DPAA and its predecessors have managed the recovery, identification, and return of thousands of our missing

Americans to their families who have actively sought answers," said Sumpter Winbush. "We have been our nation's promise keepers, not only to those we continue to search for but for those who are serving today, that should you go

missing and do not return, we will come for you."

Following her speech, Sumpter Winbush introduced the keynote speaker, Allen Hoe, a Vietnam veteran, Gold Star father, and veterans advocate. Hoe conveyed to the crowd that no matter what, no one is truly gone as long as they are held in our memories.

"I will never stop caring for those who wear our nation's uniform in my defense," said Hoe. "At the rising of the sun and its going down, we will remember them. At the beginning of the year, and when it ends, we will remember them. As long as we live, they too will live. They are a part of us. We will remember them. We will not forget. Thank you."



Honor guardsmen march in formation during the 2023 National POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., Sept. 15, 2023. (U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Alexander Kubitza)



Fern Sumpter Winbush, DPAA Principal Deputy Director, gives remarks during the National POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony hosted by the DPAA at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Honolulu, Sept. 15, 2023. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Annaliss Candelaria)



A soldier from The Old Guard salutes fallen comrades Accounted For in FY 2023, depicted in a moving composite graphic with DPAA's accounted individuals, symbolizing our ongoing commitment to honoring their memory.


FACEBOOK
INSTAGRAM
LINKEDIN
WWW.DPAA.MIL

FOLLOW DPAA TO KEEP UP TO DATE

FAMILY MEETINGS SCHEDULE: NOVEMBER 2023 – AUGUST 2024

Mark your calendars for upcoming family meetings:

November 4: Atlanta, Georgia (Virtual)

February 24: Phoenix, Arizona

March 23: Kansas City, Missouri

May 18: Billings, Montana

June 27-28: Arlington, Virginia

(Vietnam War Annual Government Briefings)

August 15-16: Arlington, Virginia

(Korean/Cold War Annual Government Briefings)

*Please be aware that the four Regional Family Member Updates may be subject to change due to evolving circumstances. Please monitor the DPAA website for up-to-date information. We greatly appreciate your understanding and flexibility.