

DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY

## YEARIN REVIEW 2024

## RGOTTEN NEVER

#### DPAA ACCOUNTED FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024

This page lists the names of 128 of the 172 Americans accounted for by the DPAA in FY2024. The names of the remaining 44 are not included, as their families are still awaiting notification.

#### WORLD WAR II

#### Army

Pfc. Alcarió V. Flores Pfc. Bartholomew C. Loschiavo Pvt. Cecil T. Hinson Pfc. Charles R. Reiser Tech. Sqt. Charles E. Young Tech. 5 Clifford H. Strickland Pfc. Clossie D. Brown Pvt. Donald L. Shutts Pfc. Estle E. Corvin Cpl. Frank V. Benak Pvt. Harland J. Hennessey Pvt. Harold O. Poulter Tech. 5 Harold D. Pittis Pfc. Harry Jerele 1st Lt. Herman I. Sundstad Sgt. Howard L. Hasselkus Sqt. Jack Zarifian Pvt. Jacob Gutterman Pvt. James C. Loyd Pvt. James G. Loterbaugh Pvt. James S. Mitchell Pvt. Jeremiah P. Mahoney Pfc. Joseph C. Macdonald Pfc. Joseph C. Murphy Pvt. Joseph M. Cocco Pfc. Kenneth D. Burgess Pvt. Kwack K. Woo Pfc. Lemuel Dent Pfc. Leon R. Karwacki Pfc. Luther E. Bagley Cpl. Malcolm S. Webb Sgt. Mayburn L. Hudson

1st Lt. Nathan B. Baskind Sqt. Norman H. Drewes Cpl. Raymond N. DeCloss Cpl. Robert A. Bartlett Pfc. Robert L. Bryant Pvt. Robert L. Skaar Pvt. Rodger D. Andrews Sqt. Sam A. Prince Tech. Sqt. Thomas O. Moss Tech. 5 William E. Eby

#### **Army Air Forces**

2nd Lt. Alfred J. Hamwey

2nd Lt. Allan W. Knepper Tech. 5 Ballard K. Yeates Pfc. Bernard I. Calvi Pvt. Bernard J. Curran Pfc. David C. Hansen 2nd Lt. Donald W. Sheppick Staff Sqt. Edward K. Pyle Sqt. Edward S. Kovaleski Staff Sqt. Eugene J. Darrigan 2nd Lt. Francis E. Callahan Sqt. Frank J. Seiferheld Cpl. Glenn H. Hodak Tech. Sqt. Harold L. Seifreid Sqt. Henry H. Allen Staff Sqt. Hubert Yeary Sqt. Jack H. Hohlfeld Sgt. James H. Murray 1st Lt. Joe A. Dejarnette 2nd Lt. John H. Harris Staff Sqt. John A. Tarbert Staff Sqt. Loring E. Lord Tech. Sgt. Lynn M. Farnham

Pvt. Orville J. Cox

Staff Sqt. Ralph H. Bode Staff Sqt. Ralph L. Mourer 2nd Lt. Robert D. McKee 2nd Lt. Robert L. E. Porter Pvt. Robert W. Cash 2nd Lt. Thomas V. Kelly Pvt. Willard D. Merrill Tech. Sqt. William W. Bradner 1st Lt. Wylie W. Leverett

#### Marine Corps

Pvt. Charming W. Rowe Pfc. Erwin S. King Pvt George C. Browning Cpl. John E. Edwinson Pvt. Lewis O. McIntosh Pfc. Morris E. Canady Pvt. Randolph R. Edwards Pvt. Richard G. Wright

#### Navy

SEA1 Aaron L. McMurtrey MATT3 David Walker F1c Fred H. Boyer PhM3c Gilmore V. Rix Cox. Harley E. Alexander Lt. Jay R. Manown CEMP John J. Campbell PhM2c Merle C. Joseph Hillman SEA1 Richard M. Schuon RM2 Robert T. Duncan F3c Royle B. Luker

#### KOREAN WAR

Pfc. Arlie P. Barrett

#### Army

Cpl. Billie C. Driver Pfc. Bryan Myers Pfc. Charles A. Vorel Sqt. Charles E. Beaty Sqt. Clayton M. Pierce Cpl. Edward J. Smith Pfc. Floyd Schultz Sqt. 1st Class Israel Ramos Sqt. Jack M. Cash Pfc. lames C. Bowman Sqt. David E. Hardy Sqt. John P. Ryhter Cpl. John B. Miller Pfc. Joseph R. Travers Sqt. Kester B. Hardman Pfc. Lawrence H. Williams Sgt. 1st Class Raymond E. Hall Cpl. Richard Seloover Cpl. Robert P. Raess Master Sqt. Thomas Crayton Sqt. Thomas J. O'Brien Master Sqt. Wallace Simmons Sqt. 1st Class Walter A. Ross Pfc. Willard H. Edwards Pfc. William A. Wheeler Cpl. William Colby Cpl. Jesse L. Mitchell Cpl. Waymon Slaten

#### VIETNAM WAR

#### Air Force

Sqt. David S. Price Maj. John C. G. Kerr

#### Army

Warrant Officer 1 Albert R. Trudeau

#### **Marine Corps**

Capt. Ronald W. Forrester



OUN

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

MISSION: Provide the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel to their families and the nation.

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, thereby strengthening our collective 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 everything we do.

Pfc. Mose E. Vance



#### U.S. Marine Corps photos by Sgt. Morgan L. R. Burgess

## Neptune Energy Germany Visits Recovery

Dr. David Brown, scientific recovery expert, DPAA, left, greets Andrea Schenke of Neptune Energy, at the site during recovery operations in Germany, Oct. 12, 2023. The German company manages an energy line that is in close proximity to the excavation grid. Their representatives visited the site and examined how it affected the recovery mission. Operations were marked by good communication between the landowners, German officials, and the DPAA's European Detachment.



#### **Operations in Northern Germany**

Soldiers and Airmen, respectively from U.S. Army Europe and Africa and U.S. Air Forces in Europe units, augment a DPAA recovery team operating in northern Germany on Oct. 25, 2023. They worked together to move excavated materials and search for possible remains and other evidence.



OCTOBER 8

OCTOBER 12



OCTOBER 25



OCTOBER 30



#### **DPAA Provides Medical Care for Lao Citizens**

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Michelle Hernando, DPAA independent duty medical technician, and U.S. Army Dr. (Maj.) Philip Castañeda, a physician augmentee, conduct an ultrasound on a Lao citizen during a medical outreach period in the Lao People's Democratic Republic on Oct. 8. 2023. They provided care for approximately 200 people, interviewing them about medical issues and conducting physical exams and providing treatment. This effort is unique to Laos and complements the humanitarian support provided by the Lao Government and citizens since 1985.



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Stephen Holland

#### **Recovery Mission in** Vietnam

Agency personnel, U.S. military augmentees, and Vietnamese locals, constructed a cofferdam during a recovery mission in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on Oct. 30, 2023. The cofferdam is a watertight enclosure from which water is pumped to expose the ground and permit recovery operations.

### DOUBLE FUNERAL FOR WWII AIRCREW MISSING FOR 79 YEARS











by U.S. Army Sgt. Ashleigh Maxwell, DPAA Public Affairs

On Oct. 31, 2023, while many families worldwide were making lasting memories, two families with a bond nearly 80 years in the making came together at Arlington National Cemetery to lay their loved ones to rest in a double funeral.

"Second Lt. Pile and Tech. Sgt. Triplett flew together, died together, and now their families have chosen to have them buried side by side at Arlington," said Dr. Nicole Eilers, a Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency historical analyst for both cases. "I am honored to represent the many people behind the scenes who have worked for over a decade to bring these two men home."

During World War II, Tech. Sgt. James Triplett served as a radio operator aboard a B-24H Liberator bomber during a large mission to bomb the industrial city of Kassel in northern Hesse, Germany. Second Lt. Porter M. Pile, 24, of Harlingen, Texas, served as the navigator on the Sept. 27 mission. The aircraft encountered heavy resistance from enemy ground and air forces, resulting in the loss of 25 Liberators, including Triplett's and Pile's. Several crew members were able to bail out, but witnesses who survived did not report seeing Triplett or Pile escape the aircraft. Six of the nine crew members were killed, and the others were taken captive by German forces. Triplett's and Pile's bodies were not recovered after the war.

In 1944, it was a typical fall day for the Triplett family in Oregon. In a quiet corner of their house, high on a pantry shelf, sat a small, unassuming piece of the family's history. This heirloom would serve as both a reminder of loss and a beacon of hope for future generations: a plain, wooden box, untouched and unopened for over 30 years.

"The only time I remember him as my uncle was when I was three," said Tom Triplett, nephew of James. "What's clear is my memories of my family, their longing to see him again."

Tom grew up in Portland, Oregon, with little memory of his uncle. He often heard stories from his father and grandparents but mostly recalls the pain and loss his family endured after his uncle's death.

"[My grandmother] believed he would walk through the door until the day she died," Tom said. "The crew members who survived were held as prisoners, which fueled her hope."

Before learning of James' disappearance, his younger brother Bill assembled a box containing chocolates, cigarettes, and coffee, all items thought to be in short supply. Bill labeled the box, took it to the post office, and sent it to England, hoping his brother would receive it in time for Christmas.

One day later, the doorbell rang at Bill's house. His wife, Eileen, answered the door to find a man holding the same wooden box.

"It had been sent back labeled 'addressee unknown," said Tom. "That was the very first indication that he was missing."

In March 2007, a team from the recovery mission met with a local historian regarding the Kassel mission. The historian took the team to a wooded area of Richelsdorf, where he believed the crash site of the B-24 Liberator that James was aboard was located. In 2009, investigators returned to a more specific location. A visual reconnaissance of the area revealed parachute fabric, Plexiglas, clothing, and aircraft wreckage. The site was recommended for archaeological excavation.

Three recovery teams performed excavation operations at the crash site in 2015 and 2016. During the dig, the team found an aircraft data plate with a number correlating to the tail number of James' aircraft. The team reached the end of its scheduled excavation before processing the entire site, so material evidence was transferred to the lab, and additional excavation was recommended.

A second recovery team resumed excavation in August 2015 and discovered an identification tag for one of the crew members aboard James' aircraft. The team also recovered potential osseous material and other material evidence, which were transferred to the lab.

Finally, a third recovery team returned in April 2016 and completed the excavation. Evidence from the site was transferred to the lab at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, where it underwent scientific analysis.

"[They] started telling us things in 2015," said Tom. "They told us they thought they found something."

In 2017, Tom provided a DNA sample in hopes his uncle could be identified. He also began communicating with the Pile family, who also gave DNA samples.

After 79 years of waiting, both families finally had their answers. They were notified in 2017 that their loved ones had been identified. Since they served on the same crew and were recovered together, the two families decided to hold a double funeral and honor both men.

Tech. Sgt. Triplett and Second Lt. Pile were given a proper funeral with full military honors and laid to rest alongside each other in Arlington National Cemetery on Oct. 31, 2023.

"It was a wonderful service," said Tom. "It brings a sense of answers."

#### TIMELINE NOVEMBER

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. David Owsianka



#### DPAA Participates in Veterans Day Ceremony

Agency personnel participate in a Veterans Day Ceremony at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii, Nov. 11, 2023. The unaccounted-for personnel that DPAA searches for are also Unreturned Veterans, so there is an affinity to Veterans Day honoring military veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.



#### The American Legion Joins DPAA in Vietnam Recovery Efforts

Dr. Rene Zielinski, DPAA scientific recovery expert, speaks with Daniel Seehafer, American Legion National Commander, in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Nov. 28, 2023. The American Legion Delegation visited the recovery team to show their support and better understand the fieldwork involved to better advocate for the mission to find their missing comrades-in-



## NOVEMBER 10



## NOVEMBER 11



## NOVEMBER 21

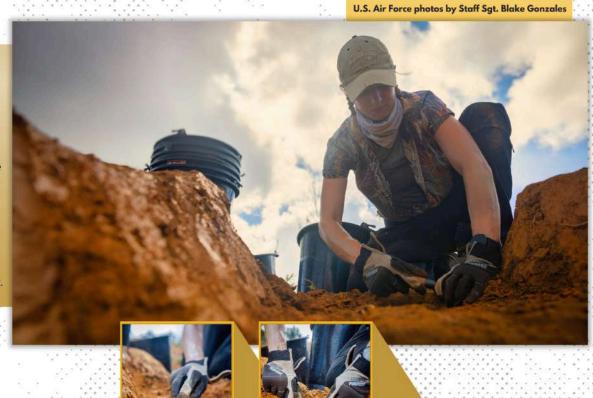


## **NOVEMBER 28**

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Therese Edwards

#### **Recovery Mission in** Laos

Dr. Janet Finlayson, DPAA scientific recovery expert, scrapes a layer of soil off the inside of an excavation unit during a recovery mission in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nov. 10, 2023. After determining the site perimeter, she established a grid system, sectioning the site with stakes and string before beginning recovery operations unit by unit.



#### 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Tarawa Commemorated in Kiribati

U.S. Marine Corps Col. Matt Brannen, DPAA Deputy Director for Operations, greets His Excellency Taneti Maamau, President of the Republic of Kiribati, after the 80th **Anniversary Commemoration of** the Battle of Tarawa on Betio Island, Nov. 21, 2023. DPAA and its partners have conducted year-round field operations on Betio to recover the remains of Marines and Sailors missing from the pivotal battle of World



## DPAA around the world during this fiscal year

This year, DPAA conducted 46 investigation and recovery missions that were augmented by an additional 52 private-partner-led investigations and recoveries.

### **Pacific**





























#### Asia





















## Americas



Europe/Africa















- Australia Brunei 🚤
- Cambodia 📺
  - China 📺
- Croatia ==
- France | Germany =
- Great Britain
- - Guam 0
- Hungary =
- India ==
- Indonesia -
  - Italy []
  - Japan 🔸 Kuwait **=**
  - Kiribati
- Laos 🗖
- Latvia = Luxembourg =
  - Malaysia 🕮
- Marshall Islands
- Northern Mariana Islands o
  - Palau 👩
  - Papua New Guinea 🔛
    - Philippines > Poland \_
    - Portugal [0]
    - Solomon Islands South Korea :
      - Sweden 🟭
      - Taiwan 💴
      - Thailand = Tunisia 👩
      - USA (Hawaii)
        - Vanuatu 🔀
        - Vietnam 👩

#### TIMELINE December







#### Repatriation Ceremony

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Travis Walter, DPAA Detachment 2 Commander, and Col. Nguyễn Bá Thắng, Vietnamese Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP), officiate a repatriation ceremony in Da Nang, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, on Dec. 7, 2023. The ceremony culminated the efforts of three recovery teams finding osseous material during the Joint Field Activity (JFA), and prior to the transfer to the DPAA Laboratory at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.





#### Funeral for Medal of Honor Recipient U.S. Navy Seaman 1st Class James R. Ward

DPAA Director Kelly McKeague presents the family of U.S. Navy Seaman 1st Class James R. Ward with a photo collage of his identification process during his funeral at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va., Dec. 21, 2023. Ward was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, during the Dec. 7, 1941 Japanese attack. The ship's capsizing resulted in the deaths of 429 crew members, of whom 394 were unidentifiable and buried as an Unknown until DPAA disinterred and identified 361 of them. Ward was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the attack.



### **DECEMBER 1**



## DECEMBER 7



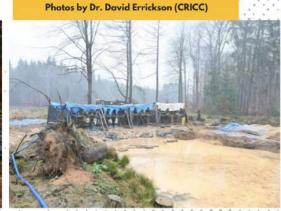


### DECEMBER 21

#### DPAA Partner Conducts Excavation at Crash Site in Germany

A Cranfield University Recovery and Identification of Conflict Casualties (CRICC) Team excavated a World War II plane crash site near Dreifelden, Germany, from Oct. 30 to Dec. 1, 2023. Based in the United Kingdom, the specialized team worked in challenging weather conditions, including wet screening the excavated soil in heavy rain and snow, searching for osseous and material evidence.







U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Cole Yardley

### Disinterment Ceremony under Double Rainbow

Together with cemetery staff,
DPAA Service members conduct
a disinterment ceremony at the
National Memorial Cemetery of
the Pacific, Honolulu, Hawaii, Dec.
19, 2023. Six caskets containing
the remains of casualties from the
Korean War who were buried as
Unknowns were transferred to
the DPAA laboratory where they
will undergo further scientific
analysis for the purpose of
identification.





# HOMECOMING The Unforgettable Return of a Tuskegee Airman

by U.S. Army Sgt. Jameson Harris, 22nd Mobile Public Affairs

On Dec. 6, 2023, U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Fred L. Brewer Jr., was laid to rest at Salisbury **National Cemetery in Charlotte, North** Carolina.

Brewer was a member of the renowned Tuskegee Airmen, African American military pilots who served in World War II. On Oct. 19, 1944, he flew a mission escorting bombers to enemy targets in Regensburg, Germany. Unfortunately, his aircraft encountered heavy cloud cover, and during an attempt to climb above it, the engine stalled, causing the crash. Brewer was subsequently declared missing in action.

After 79 years, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency identified exhumed remains from an Italian cemetery as Brewer's, using anthropological data and mitochondrial DNA.



Brenda Brewer, cousin of Lt. Fred L. Brewer Jr., receives a folded U.S. flag.

During the ceremony, Brewer's remains were escorted by a horse-drawn carriage to the gravesite. A U.S. Army honor guard carried the casket, and at 2 p.m., Brewer was laid to rest.

Brenda Brewer, Fred's first cousin, attended the service. She received challenge coins and the U.S. flag, symbolizing appreciation and sacrifice. Brenda had worked with the DPAA to recover her cousin's body and expressed bittersweet joy at his return.

"Fred was one of the smartest and nicest people I ever knew, and it is tremendous seeing him on American soil," said Mrs. Brewer. "I'm so thankful that everyone has come out to support Fred."

Tuskegee Airmen, the first African-American military aviators in the U.S. Armed Forces, were praised for their combat achievements. Original members, including Jerry Burton, attended Brewer's funeral.

"There are a lot of American soldiers that are buried in Europe that may never return to American soil," said Mr. Burton. "We are grateful that 2nd Lt. Brewer was among the few that were able to finally make it home. It's a moving experience seeing everyone that came out today in support of our fallen soldier."



Ret. service members Brig. Gen. Enoch Woodhouse and Lt. Col. George Hardy, Tuskegee Airmen, attend Lt. Brewer's funeral.

 Tuskegee Airman Service: Fred Lorenzo Brewer served as a pilot with the Tuskegee Airmen during World

War II as part of the 100th Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group.

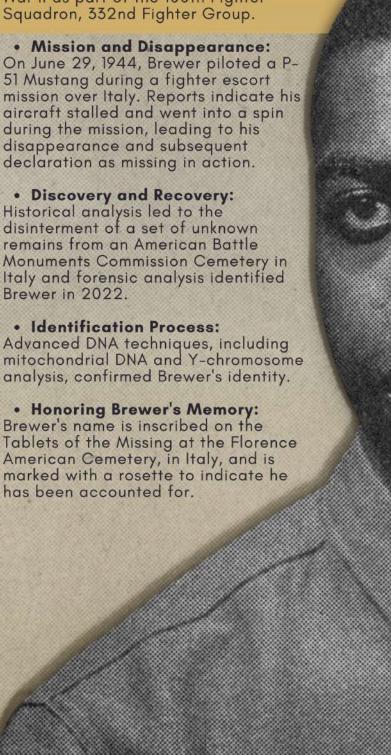
 Mission and Disappearance: On June 29, 1944, Brewer piloted a P-51 Mustang during a fighter escort mission over Italy. Reports indicate his aircraft stalled and went into a spin during the mission, leading to his disappearance and subsequent declaration as missing in action.

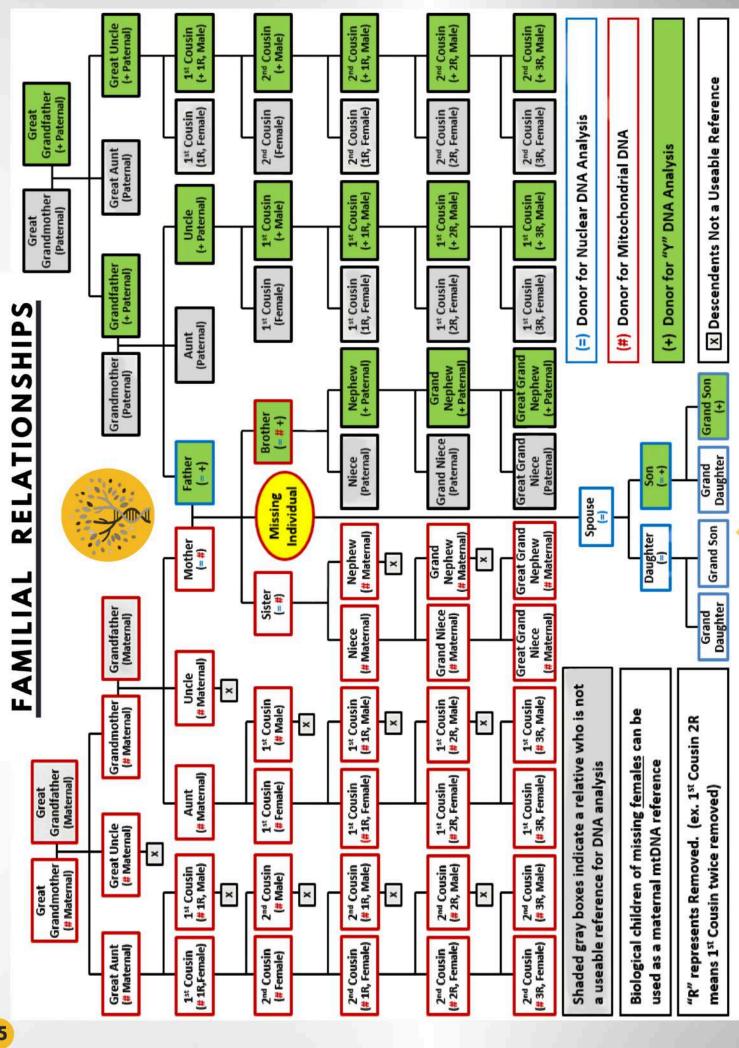
• Discovery and Recovery: Historical analysis led to the disinterment of a set of unknown remains from an American Battle Monuments Commission Cemetery in Italy and forensic analysis identified Brewer in 2022.

• Identification Process: Advanced DNA techniques, including mitochondrial DNA and Y-chromosome

 Honoring Brewer's Memory: Brewer's name is inscribed on the Tablets of the Missing at the Florence American Cemetery, in Italy, and is marked with a rosette to indicate he has been accounted for.

**B**0







DOVER AIR FORCE BASE, Del. - For the first time ever, a past accounting identification was presented to a family at the **Armed Forces Medical Examiner System's Armed Forces DNA** Identification Laboratory. Throughout the year, AFDIL supports roughly 200 identifications of service members from past and current conflicts. Very rarely are families afforded the unique opportunity to see the lab for

"This is exciting because, usually, we only see families at Family Member Updates," says Dr. Tim McMahon, Director, Department of Defense DNA Operations, "so the chance to invite Sergeant Frank J. Seiferheld's primary next-of-kin to our facility was one we really looked forward to."

In January 1945, a B-17 from the 348th Bomber Squadron, 99th Bomber Group, Heavy Bomber Crew left formation to return to Italy due to engine trouble. The plane is assumed to have crashed into the Adriatic Sea between Italy and the Balkans. All ten crew members including Sgt. Seiferheld were declared missing. Over the next six months, five of the missing aircrew washed ashore and were identified. In May of 1945, the remains of an unknown American were recovered in the waters of Italy and were buried as an unknown. According to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency historians, roughly 30 warplanes crashed in this area during World War II, creating a unique challenge for their forensic anthropologists and historians. Based on recovery locations, and circumstantial evidence, the information collected, and analysis by the historians, they lowered the number of potential Service members associated with these unknown remains to seven.

#### That's where AFDIL's Family Reference Section or FRS section comes in.

"Familial DNA reference donors are identified through two primary methods; genealogical searches and regional family member updates," explains Dr. McMahon. Viable Familial DNA donors, when identified, fill out a donor consent form and then provided 3 cheek buccal swabs. "These DNA cheek buccal samples are used to develop a DNA profile that is entered into the FRS database to be used to associate unknown service members' remains with a known family reference. AFDIL's past accounting casework scientists use various extraction and forensic DNA testing methods to develop a DNA profile from the unknown remains. That DNA profile is then searched against the FRS database."

Once the identification is confirmed, AFDIL will provide the DPAA with a DNA comparison report that is used to identify the missing Service members. After an identification is made, the DoD services' casualty offices will notify the families that their missing Service member has been identified. Sgt.Seiferheld's family was first notified by a U.S. Army service casualty office representative, where it was determined, due to their proximity, they would travel to Dover Air Force Base for the official identification briefing.

"We couldn't accomplish what we do without the help of all our partners across the world. We face challenges head-on, together, and do our best to make sure the fallen make their way back home," McMahon said. "This mission is one of a kind, we bring closure to some of those who truly need it most."

















#### A COMMITMENT TO FINDING ANSWERS

Top photo: Dr. McMahon explains the identification process to the family of U.S. Army Air Forces Sgt. Frank J. Seiferheld.

Second and third rows: Ashley Doran, Quality Control Analyst, and Nyla Ngegba, DNA Technician, conduct essential DNA analyses.

Last row: Cole Kruszka, DNA Analyst, performs a toothdrilling procedure as part of the laboratory's identification



#### Improved Communication Technology Showcased

U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Christine Abercrombie, DPAA team leader, gives a briefing during the Case Management System (CMS) Strategic Expo at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, Jan. 25, 2024. Abercrombie gave an overview of Starlink from a logistical perspective, including transportation contingencies to consider when incorporating the advanced satellite communications capability in recovery operations. The expo allowed senior leadership to look at new and improved satellite-enabled communications technology and its ability to provide seamless communications.

#### U.S. Air Force photos by Staff Sgt. Jonathan McElderry



## Honorable Carry Ceremony aboard USNS Mercy

DPAA Principal Deputy Director, Fern Sumpter Winbush, and U.S. Marine Sgt. Cheyenne Hopkins officially accepted the transfer of presumed human remains during a ceremony aboard the hospital ship, USNS Mercy, docked at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam on Jan. 31, 2024. The USNS Mercy crew transported the remains following the recovery and repatriation from the Solomon Islands.

## JANUARY 22



JANUARY 30





#### **U.S. Ambassadors Visit DPAA**

While attending the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's Regional Ambassador Conference in Hawaii, nine U.S. Ambassadors (to the People's Republic of China, Republic of India, Republic of Indonesia, Kingdom of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Republic of Papua New Guinea, Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Brunei Darussalam) visited DPAA's forensic laboratory. Each of them appreciated DPAA's contributions to the U.S. Embassy's mission in their respective country and reinforced their support for the agency's humanitarian efforts.

### Thailand Mission Operations

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Neil London, an independent duty medical technician augmentee on the DPAA recovery team, conducts field operations in the Kingdom of Thailand, Jan. 30, 2024. Primarily assigned for his specialized skills to provide basic medical care to the team, he also participates in various excavation tasks such as digging and soil screening.



## DPAA CONDUCTS KEY MISSION IN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA



BY U.S. ARMY STAFF SGT. JOHN MILLER, DPAA PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency completed a site survey in the People's Republic of China on Jan. 19, investigating two previously surveyed sites related to World War II aircraft losses.

The mission aimed to locate a C-47 Skytrain and a P-40 Warhawk that went missing. The team, consisting of seven members, visited the provinces of Guangxi and Hunan, equipped with specialized skills to navigate challenging winter terrain efficiently.

This undertaking marked the agency's first activity in the PRC since the onset of COVID-

"The PRC delegation recognized the humanitarian nature and people-to-people opportunities of our mission and pledged continued cooperation to include sustaining both the annual archival exchanges and field missions. The evidence recovered from the field survey at two World War II crash sites is being analyzed in our laboratory," said Kelly McKeague, DPAA Director.

Supported by the United States Embassy in Beijing, the People's Liberation Army Archives, and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the team interacted with local leaders and received assistance from host nation workers.

During their stay, the team interviewed five people, including a 90-year-old eyewitness who shared valuable insights. The team acknowledged the enthusiastic support received from the local community, emphasizing their eagerness to assist.

"The experience was humbling. The locals, so eager to provide any sort of assistance in our search for our fallen, cared for us and those we were searching for. This says something about the human spirit," said U.S. Army Capt. Jordan Smith, mission team leader.

Fellow investigative team members embraced the opportunity to look for any clue on their lost comrade in arms from decades ago.





"I'm thankful to have had this chance to interact with our host nation counterparts and work together toward finding answers for these families of the fallen," said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. John Miller, DPAA forensic photographer.

A crucial outcome of the mission was the reestablishment of ties between the DPAA and its PRC counterparts.

"A major contributing factor for the mission being such a success was that I was very fortunate to work with two incredible teams out there - our U.S. team composed of DPAA personnel and several members from the U.S. Embassy, and our PRC counterparts," said Dr. Willa Trask, DPAA scientific recovery expert for the team. "Our team was incredibly hardworking, and their assistance, skill, and professionalism proved a crucial asset for executing two successful site surveys. Furthermore, the enthusiastic cooperation and hospitality shown to us by the People's Liberation Army Archives, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and local officials and hosts was invaluable."

The successful partner-building efforts with People's Liberation Army Archives, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs counterparts aligned with DPAA's commitment to achieving the fullest possible accounting for missing and unaccounted-for personnel. DPAA continues its search, and this mission was another step forward, paving the way for future cooperation.



#### U.S. Marine Corps photos by Sgt. Morgan L. R. Burgess

## U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand Visits Recovery Team

**TIMELINE** FEBRUARY

Robert Godec, U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, participates in a DPAA recovery mission in the mountainous regions of Northern Thailand. During his visit, the Ambassador assisted at the dry screening station where he was harnessed for safety purposes by U.S. Army Sgt. Brandon Valverde, a DPAA mountaineer; thanked the federal, regional, and local Thai Government officials; and conducted interviews with Thai media.





#### **Swim Qualification**

U.S. Marine Corps Instructors of Water Survival lead DPAA personnel through basic and intermediate swim qualifications, essential for supporting DPAA missions. Swimming proficiency is critical especially when conducting underwater searches for missing personnel and aircraft. The training covers tasks such as a 250-meter swim, gear shedding, and treading water using various techniques.







### FEBRUARY 16

## FEBRUARY 27









#### Investigating the Waters of the Republic of Fiji

U.S. Navy Chief Erik Muniz, a DPAA explosive ordnance technician, participates in an underwater survey during an investigation mission in the Republic of Fiji, Feb. 2024 (left photo). Working alongside a joint, multinational team, they searched for evidence of aircraft lost during World War II and the missing aircrew associated with those losses. Matthew DeFelice, DPAA forensic archaeologist, collaborates with a partner from the Fiji Museum to review survey data (top middle photo).

#### Mission in Brunei

After being approved by the Sultan of Brunei, the first-ever DPAA mission in that country took place Feb. 11-17, 2024. As part of a broader investigative mission on the Island of Borneo, primarily in Malaysian territory, a six-person team conducted interviews with Bruneian residents, scuba divers, fishermen, and mariners who may have knowledge of three cases located in Brunei Bay. involving a total of eight missing personnel. The team included U.S. Army Capt. Patrick Anderson, Poul Graversen, and Audrey Scott.



## TOOLS OF THE TRADE



#### MUNSELL COLOR CHART

Scientists at DPAA utilize soil data to aid in the recovery of any potential skeletal remains belonging to American Service members who have gone missing.



#### **VENTURI VACUUM SYSTEM**

The vacuum system is essential for underwater recovery missions. It works using the Venturi Effect, which is a principle of fluid dynamics, by pushing water out through a nozzle, creating a low-pressure area that helps suck up sediment from the ocean floor.



#### GEOSPATIAL DATA RECEIVER

Essential for collecting and analyzing location-based data in diverse environments—urban, remote, or coastal—this device captures real-time GPS information, aiding precise mapping and navigation for field teams. By integrating with other technologies, it enhances recovery operations, ensuring accurate tracking of progress and locations of interest.



## AT THE SCREENING STATION

#### **Purpose and Function:**

During recovery missions, screening stations serve as critical hubs for meticulous examination. Whether in Thailand, Papua New Guinea, or Germany, these stations are essential for DPAA personnel to screen through sediments, looking for osseous material, aircraft wreckage, and life support equipment.

#### **Dry Screens or Wet Screens:**

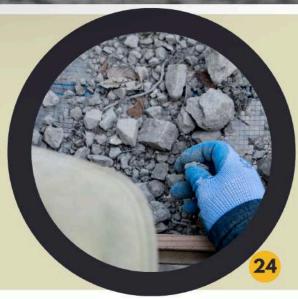
Screening stations can be either dry screens or wet screens. In both cases, soil is screened through the quarter-inch steel mesh. Recovery team members meticulously remove non-evidentiary material while searching for crucial clues.

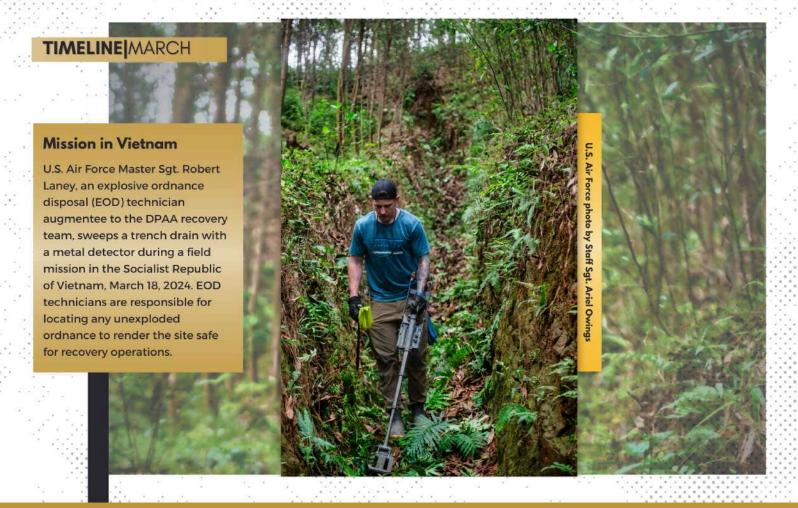
#### **Collaboration and Dedication:**

DPAA members work alongside local villagers at these stations with the shared purpose of bringing answers to families and honoring the fallen.



During recovery missions, soil screening is conducted in a designated 4x4-meter area. Excavated soil is transported to a station where personnel sift through it, meticulously inspecting for potential osseous material, artifacts, or evidence related to the missing person. Items of interest are carefully segregated, documented, and preserved for further analysis in the DPAA Laboratory.







#### Partner Operates in Cambodia

From Jan. 30 through March 23, 2024, Ohio Valley Archaeology, Inc. (OVAI), a private partner of the DPAA, conducted field operations in the Kingdom of Cambodia at the site of a Vietnam War-era aircraft crash. In an effort to search for and recover Service members still unaccounted for, partners like OVAI contribute their capabilities and dedication to the mission.

MARCH 18

MARCH 22

MARCH 21



MARCH 23

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Cole Yardley



#### **DPAA** Recovery in the Kingdom of Thailand

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Blake Garab, DPAA recovery team sergeant, discards soil from his screen during a recovery mission of a World War II crash site in the Kingdom of Thailand, March 22, 2024. Recovery teams can screen hundreds of buckets of soil per day in the process of excavation, depending on soil conditions.

#### **DPAA Visits National** Headquarters

Dan West, National Adjutant General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. (VFW), briefs Fern Sumpter Winbush, **DPAA Principal Deputy** Director, during a visit to the VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, March 21, 2024. This engagement was one of several leading up to the Kansas City Family Member Update. The VFW continues to be a steadfast supporter and advocate of the POW/MIA mission.

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Blake Gonzales



#### USS Oklahoma iilor Accounted For irom World War II

## FAMILY MEMBER MEETINGS

The Agency conducts regional updates and annual government briefings for families of missing personnel.

These events are designed to keep family members informed of the U.S. government's worldwide mission to account for those still missing and to discuss the latest information available about their specific cases.

- At these meetings, speakers include senior government officials and past conflict personnel accounting experts; there are formal presentations, question and answer sessions, and individual case summary reviews.
- These meetings have been conducted since 1995, reaching more than 17,000 family members face-to-face. Four times a year, regional meetings are held for family members who live within a 350-mile radius of major metropolitan areas across the country. Two annual government briefings are held in the summer for Vietnam War families and for families whose loved ones are missing from the Korean/Cold War.
- Family member meetings are live-streamed to the DPAA website and social media pages. Past meetings can be viewed at <a href="https://www.dpaa.mil/livestreams">https://www.dpaa.mil/livestreams</a>.

































## WWII VETERAN ATTENDS FAMILY MEMBER UPDATE IN BILLINGS, MT

U.S. Air Force Story by Staff Sgt. Blake Gonzales, DPAA Public Affai







Of all family members in the crowd, one stood out at the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's Family Member Update in Billings, Montana, William Sivelle, a 98-year-old World War II veteran. He attended with his wife, Leigh, on May 18, 2024, seeking information about his cousin, U.S. Army Air Forces Pfc. Richard J. Sivelle, a World War II POW declared a casualty on August 8, 1942.

"We grew up together," said Sivelle. "My family was in a little town called Henry, Illinois. Richard's family had a pretty good-sized apple orchard, and we'd go in and mix cider and pick apples. He enlisted in 1939."

Sivelle joined the U.S. Navy Reserves in 1944, a week out of high school, and became an Aviation Machinist's Mate 3rd Class. He was assigned to the USS *Detroit*, which survived Pearl Harbor and supported major Pacific War operations, including Iwo Jima and Okinawa. The USS *Detroit* also witnessed the Japanese surrender.

"We were in Iwo Jima until the end of February 1945," said Sivelle. "We went back to Ulithi and stayed in that area until April Fool's Day, the Battle of Okinawa. When the Japanese surrendered, we were ordered into Tokyo Bay. We were next to the USS *Missouri* during the ceremonies."

After the war, Sivelle learned Richard was taken prisoner by Japanese forces in the Philippines and died in a POW camp.

Decades later, Sivelle's son, Charles, a genealogist,

renewed hope for answers about Richard. Sivelle learned about the Family Member Update through Charles and decided to attend.

At the Family Member Update, Sivelle, one of 66 firsttime attendees, received updates on DPAA operations and shared his story during a remembrance ceremony.

"My dad served in the U.S. Navy," said Sivelle. "My brother served on a destroyer, and my kid brother was an aerial photographer. Quite the family."

U.S. Marine Corps Col. Matt Brannen, DPAA Deputy
Director for Operations, emphasized the mission's
importance: "We view this mission as a sacred obligation
and a moral imperative. This is about keeping the
nation's promise to never leave a service member
behind."

Grateful for the DPAA's efforts, Sivelle continues his search for Richard. "I hope and pray for a perfect identification. That's my goal. These guys have done a hell of a job."

Approximately 72,000 personnel remain unaccounted for from World War II, with about 39,000 recoverable.

"We are here to provide answers," said Brannen. "In my 26 years of service, this has been one of the most noble and honorable missions I've been a part of. Our personnel work with passion, vigor, and enthusiasm to account for as many as we can."

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Cole Yardley

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Anthony Todd



## Site Preparations in Italy

U.S. Army Sgt. Hunter
Champe, a recovery specialist
augmentee, assembles a wet
screening station prior to
recovery operations
commencing in Italy, April 15,
2024. For most recovery
missions, DPAA teams are
tasked with setting up site
infrastructure themselves,
relying on the expertise of
team members with
construction backgrounds to
ensure safe and effective
structures.



U.S. Air Force photo by Melanie Rodgers Cox

#### DPAA Director Engagement at Maxwell AFB

Seth Carpenter of WSFA-NBC (Montgomery) interviews Kelly McKeague, DPAA Director, at the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, Apr. 24, 2024. The interview preceded McKeague's speaking engagement with Air University students and employees of the Air Force Culture and Language Center, which has provided translators for missions DPAA conducts in 46 nations around the world.



APRIL 15

APRIL 16



#### MI-17 Remembrance Ceremonies

Service members and civilians paid their respects at Mi-17 Memorial Ceremonies at the DPAA facility, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, and at the Detachment 2 compound in Hanoi, Vietnam (inset), on April 5, 2024. Each year, DPAA commemorates the tragic helicopter crash in Quang Binh Province, Vietnam, where seven Americans and nine Vietnamese personnel were killed on April 7, 2001, while en route to survey some fieldwork sites.



### Recovery operations in France

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Raul Castillo, a DPAA life support investigator (LSI), cleans off a piece of aircraft wreckage during a recovery mission in France, April 16, 2024. LSIs like Sgt. Castillo assist scientific recovery experts in identifying life support equipment and aircraft parts found during excavations, aiding in correlating the search parameters and protocols of the recovery site.



U.S. Air Force photos by Staff Sgt. David Owsianka

## DPAA BRINGS PARTNERS TOGETHER FOR 3RD ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

by Sean Everette, DPAA Public Affairs

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and 30 partner organizations met in New Orleans, Louisiana, April 16-17, 2024, for their annual Partner Symposium to build relationships and exchange ideas about their common goal of finding and recovering those still missing from our nation's past wars and conflicts.

This was the third year of the symposium and was the largest yet.

"The Partner Symposium is an effort to get our partners to connect with each other, to stimulate conversation about current trends in field archaeology and historical research, and discuss their best practices and lessons learned," said Rocky Gillette, DPAA's Acting Director of the Partnerships and Innovation Directorate. "They can then learn from each other and find things other partners are doing that could assist them in some capacity. This is really an opportunity to network, connect, and to create that inter-connection between the partners so they can generate new ways of doing things, new approaches, and thereby increasing even more of what they're bringing to the table by sharing their knowledge.

For many of the attendees, it was also about finally meeting face-to-face with people they regularly only see on a screen or hear through a

"I'm one that believes that face-to-face discussion is a lot better than distance communication of any kind, even with advanced technologies," said Dr. Derek Abbey, Project Recover's President and CEO. "This helps our relationships, not only with DPAA but bringing in so many partners together, it's also an opportunity for us to engage with people we might not be communicating with, build relationships with them, explore new ideas, and learn new things."

The event also served as a way to share the motivation that keeps DPAA and its partners hard at work to fulfill our nation's promise.

"That's kind of the beauty of this event is everyone has the same fire," said Chuck Konsitzke, the University of Wisconsin's MIA Recovery and Identification Project team lead. "It's a multiplier of drive, and when you can at least show who you are to individuals at DPAA, they learn more about you. It's a multiplier of one, knowledge; two, passion; three, company."

DPAA's partners have increased the agency's ability to achieve its ultimate goal: provide answers to families and bring their loved ones

"It's become clear over the years that the partners have added significantly to our capabilities and capacity," said Gillette. "When we are able to actually expand on that and have them bringing more to the table by helping each other improve and learn from one another, we get even more return on our investment. We see better results, and of course, ultimately all of this goes to helping the families."







## What the Soil Leaves Behind: A Friend's Journey for Bernie and the Fallen

by U.S. Navy Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Annaliss Candelaria, DPAA Public Affairs

On March 13, 2024, retired U.S. Navy Cmdr. Thomas Eugene Wilber observed a Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency recovery team working diligently in Vietnam. The team, sweating and covered in mud, was digging through soil alongside local workers searching for clues. This visit, coinciding with a friend's daughter's wedding, held special significance for Wilber, who had deep connections with the locals from years of searching.

Wilber's father, retired U.S. Navy Capt. Walter Eugene Wilber and Lt. j.g. Bernard Francis "Bernie" Rupinski were involved in a combat air patrol over the Gulf of Tonkin on June 16, 1968. A MiG-21 missile hit their McDonnell F-4J Phantom II. Walter ejected, but Bernie's seat malfunctioned, leaving him unaccounted for. Captured by enemy forces, Walter returned in 1973, haunted by his friend's fate.

Wilber began his search in 2014 and said, "What inspired me was just wanting to kind of complete the picture because I thought... there's something more we could find." His efforts led to renewed investigations and excavations by DPAA. Wilber's dedication continues to drive the search for Bernie.

The search is ongoing, driven by the commitment to honor their service and sacrifice and bring answers to their families and this nation.

This is a shortened version of the original story. Full details can be viewed by scanning the QR code.









## EXPANDING HORIZONS

#### DPAA'S OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENTS

by DPAA Public Affairs

DPAA's mission extends beyond the primary task of accounting for Americans missing from past conflicts. The agency places significant emphasis on active communication and engagement throughout the year. This includes a range of activities such as interviews with local, national, and international media; and speaking at Veterans Service Organization National Conventions, and military and civic events. These engagements are vital for keeping stakeholders and the public informed about DPAA's mission and ongoing efforts.



Corey Idleburg, DPAA external relations specialist, **left**, and U.S. Navy Lt. Doug Wojciechowski, DPAA research analyst, **middle**, engage with a veteran attending the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, Aug. 4, 2024. A POW/MIA Seminar during the convention afforded attendees more details about DPAA's mission.

The agency also focuses on inspiring the next generation of leaders and innovators. By participating in events like Nebraska's Science Fair, engaging with cadets at military academies and universities; and presenting research at professional association conferences, DPAA strives to foster interest in science, history, and military service. Through these outreach efforts, the agency not only advances its mission, but also motivates and educates future scientists,

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES AND INSPIRING FUTURE GENERATIONS





Guests visit the DPAA booth at the Defenders of Freedom Air and Space Show, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, on Aug. 24, 2024. The booth featured a hands-on display of artifacts recovered from excavation sites, for the purpose of informing the public about the agency's mission and scientific methods.



U.S. Air Force Capt. Jennifer Vella, DPAA external relations specialist, answers questions from a member of the American Legion during the Legion's 105th National Convention in New Orleans, Aug. 23, 2024



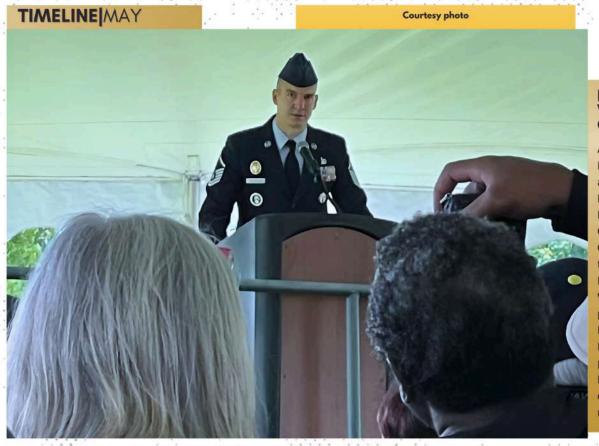
DPAA Principal Deputy Director Fern Sumpter Winbush discusses the agency's global mission and international partnerships with foreign defense attachés at the United Kingdom Embassy in Washington, D.C., Sept. 10, 2024.

Kelly McKeague, DPAA Director, speaks to members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) at the 125th VFW National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, on July 28, 2024, providing them mission updates.





DPAA scientists delivered 16 poster and podium presentations at the Annual Conference of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences in Denver, February 2024. At the agency booth, Annie Shih, Kristin Bukovec, and Dr. John Byrd, left to right, engage with one of over 250 visitors, with many expressing interest in the agency's internship program and job opportunities.



#### **DPAA Honors Veterans at Ohio** Ceremony

Air Force Master Sgt. Igor Pogrebnyak, DPAA research analyst, speaks at the Dayton National Cemetery during a Memorial Day Commemoration in Dayton, Ohio, May 27, 2024. Attending the ceremony was Lt. Albert Brown, a 101-year-old World War II veteran and former prisoner of war. Master Sgt. Pogrebnyak was one of 32 DPAA military and civilian personnel who supported Memorial Day speaking engagements across the nation.

#### **Funeral Honors in New** Hampshire

U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia Joey Hood, right, a N.H. native, speaks with Frederick Seavey, left, nephew of Army Sgt. Richard Hammond, a tank crew commander killed in February 1943 in Tunisia, who was being buried in his hometown of Northwood. Buried as an unknown in the North Africa American Cemetery, Hammond was identified by DPAA and was the first to be identified under an access agreement with the Tunisian Government, Sgt. Hammond's final letter to his mother inquired whether his sister had given birth to this nephew, who received the U.S. Flag in his honor, 80 years later.



MAY 24

**MAY 27** 

**MAY 27** 

## MAY 30

#### **Recovery Operations in** Germany

A DPAA recovery team operated near Gerstungen, Germany, in May 2024, U.S. Air Force Capt. Malachi Sparling, DPAA team leader, left; and U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Madison Cook, a DPAA recovery specialist, screen dirt that was excavated from the site. In the center, Mayor Daniel Steffan visited the site and spoke with team members on May 24, 2024. Local government officials are helpful in supporting DPAA fieldwork with facilitating access and permits.







#### **Recovery Team in** Bosnia and Herzegovina

A DPAA recovery team led by Dr. Laurel Freas, center, scientific recovery expert, works at an ossuary in Bosnia and Herzegovina, May 30, 2024. The team was searching for the remains of a U.S. Army Air Forces pilot who was killed during World War II and buried by Jewish Partisans. Although his remains were not found, the team provided a platform to improve the ossuary space. There are 12 missing personnel in Bosnia and Herzegovina.





Refueling Wing, Royal Air Force Mildenhall, commemorated the 80th anniversary of the crash of found, the remains of some crew members, including the B-17 Flying Fortress "Little Boy Blue" with a memorial service at the crash site near Bury St. Edmunds. The aircraft, on its 67th mission, fell on July 19, 1944, during a bombing raid over Germany.

The ceremony honored the 10-man crew, of whom only two survived. Little Boy Blue, part of the 560th Bomb Squadron, was returning from a mission targeting industrial complexes in Schweinfurt. Germany, when it suffered a malfunction and was hit by another bomber, resulting in a mid-air collision.

Patrick V. Hagerty, son of Staff Sgt. Harold "Hal" Hagerty, the right waist gunner, spoke at the event. Hagerty survived by parachuting from the damaged plane after witnessing the horrific crash. His father's parachute saved his life, opening at 2,500 feet.

The other survivor, tail gunner Staff Sgt. James Matthew "Jim" Bennett, also escaped, despite being severely impacted by the collision. He managed to jump from the tail section, which helped slow his

Recent recovery efforts, led by the U.S. Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, the U.K. Ministry of Defence, and volunteers from Operation Nightingale, uncovered additional wreckage and personal artifacts from the crash site. These findings included dog tags of co-pilot Aaron Brinkoeter, who perished in the crash.

personnel, worked meticulously to identify the

remains of the crew, bringing closure to their families. While most of the aircraft wreckage was navigator Flight Officer Leo D. Ramos and were not recovered.

The memorial service, attended by descendants of the crew and local volunteers, was organized to fulfill a long-held wish expressed by Ronald Grey's family. Rosanna Price, Cotswold Archaeology reconnecting with the families and honoring the crew's legacy.

The ceremony also recognized the emotional impact Frank McCluskey, nephew of ball turret gunner

#### The honored crew of Little Boy Blue includes:

Lost: 2nd Lt. Walter Harry Malaniak (pilot), Flight Officer Aaron Lewis Brinkoeter (co-pilot), Flight Officer Leo D. Ramos (navigator), 2nd Lt. Amos Laddie "Bing" Force (bombardier), T/Sgt Ronald Grey (radio operator), T/Sgt Norris Wilson Thomas (engineer), S/Sgt John McCluskey (ball turret gunner), S/Sgt William W. Klemm Jr. (left waist gunner).

Returned: S/Sgt Harold Vincent "Hal" Hagerty (right waist gunner), S/Sgt James Matthew "Jim" Bennett (tail gunner).

served in WWII.









### PI Directorate Reaches Milestones in Efforts to Account for Missing Personnel

by Ashley M. Wright, DPAA Public Affairs -

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's Partnership and Innovations Directorate recently hit a pair of milestones that showcase its ability to not only act as a multiplier for the agency's mission to account for missing personnel, but also strengthen the agency's reputation as being on the forefront of science and research.

The directorate began with three partners just a few years ago and now works with more than 100 active partners, who recently completed 250 field missions and started more than 100 research

"With more than 81,000 missing personnel from past conflicts, the Defense Department could never build an agency large enough to tackle this problem set alone," said Fern Sumpter Winbush, DPAA Principal Deputy Director. "Our ability to partner with leading scientific and historical research institutions worldwide amplifies our mission to bring answers to families about their missing loved

A key aspect to the success of the partnership program is its global appeal. Currently, there are 25 foreign partners on board.

"Foreign partners often can offer lower costs when they are located closer to sites and often are able to assist with facilitating host nation communications regarding permitting, obtaining owner permissions, and more," said Rocky Gillette, PI director.

Innovation is also key to the success of the directorate. Samples of success included finding a suitable partner for a complex crash site that required extensive engineering, building a barge in an inland waterway, and utilizing cofferdams for a challenging wetlands site on an island off the coast of Italy.

In addition, the directorate has taken the agency to new depths in the rising field of underwater archaeology by overseeing the deepest underwater recovery effort ever at a depth of more than

Another vital element to the partnership program is the nationwide Hub & Spoke research program, which now has 17 fellows at 16 museums and academic institutions across the United States.

"Our research partners likewise bring experience, resources, and creative approaches that can enhance the Agency's capacity and capabilities to conduct case progression and foundational research," Gillette noted. "Most of our partners utilize researchers who have postgraduate degrees in military history and related fields, and they have proven adept at providing research support that is responsive to the Agency's needs, effectively serving as a force multiplier to DPAA researchers and analysts."

Research partners authored 372 case summaries, 162 case narratives, and researched over 20,352 unaccounted-for cases.

A final key element of the directorate is the innovation program, which acts as an accelerator for seeking novel and effective technology, processes, and equipment to enhance the agency's accounting mission capacity and capabilities.

Under this program, the agency is conducting 10 studies to test, verify, and validate innovative solutions for the agency. One example includes the Laser Induced Breakdown Spectroscopy (LIBS), which is testing the use of a handheld laser device to detect whether material from an excavation site is possibly human osseous material.

"We have developed a strategic and collaborative innovation program that builds on and enhances the innovation culture within the agency," said Dr. Jesse Stephen, the new PI Chief of Innovation. "We are soliciting innovative ideas and input from our subject matter experts within DPAA and are pursuing creative proposals for new approaches, technology, equipment, and processes provided by entities outside the agency to be sure we bring to the Agency the best tools available to help in our accounting mission."

Gillette summed up the progress of the directorate as part of the obligation the nation owes its fallen heroes who never returned home from war.

"This is a period of amazing developments that offer great potential for the agency – the key is to pursue the most effective new innovations in the most efficient manner." Gillette said. "This we owe to the families of the missing, and we are committed to that

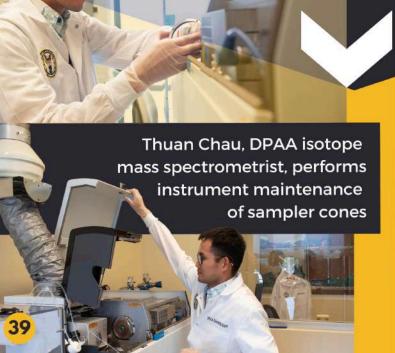


## Inside a DPAA Lab

From left to right: Dr. Janet Finlayson, Dr. Rene Zielinski, and Justin Pyle, DPAA scientific recovery experts, discuss the visual representation of commingled remains recovered from the Cabanatuan Project at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, May 6, 2024.

Forensic anthropologists are responsible for the analysis of potential osseous material and material evidence, such as military uniforms and personal effects.

The DPAA laboratory is the largest and most diverse human skeletal identification laboratory in the world and is staffed by more than 150 anthropologists, archaeologists, forensic odontologists, and support personnel.







#### **2024 POW/MIA** Recognition Day Poster Unveiling Ceremony

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff U.S. Air Force Gen. Charles Q. Brown, Jr., was the keynote speaker at the 2024 National POW/MIA Recognition Day Poster unveiling at the Pentagon, Arlington, Va., June 20, 2024. Distinguished visitors attending the ceremony included a former POW, MIA family members, and representatives from family groups and veterans service organizations. Designed by DPAA members, the poster raises awareness of the sacrifices of American POWs and MIAs, emphasizes efforts to recover missing personnel, and recognizes families of those still unaccounted for.

#### DPAA Recovery Operations in South Korea

Sun Chan An, Ministry of National Defense Agency for Killed in Action Recovery and Identification (MAKRI) investigation leader, and Nicole Rhoton, DPAA historian, clean a piece of aircraft wreckage during a recovery mission in the Republic of Korea, June 24, 2024. DPAA and MAKRI have partnered on joint field work, research, forensic reviews, and repatriations for over 20





★ JUNE 2

JUNE 20

**30%** JUNE 24

## JUNE 28

#### **Vietnam Recovery Operations**

A team composed of DPAA members and augmentees from four military services, and local Vietnamese workers wet screen excavated soil during recovery operations in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, June 2, 2024. Depending on the size and complexity of the site, DPAA can employ over 100 Vietnamese workers who are coordinated by the Vietnam Office of Seeking Missing Persons and provincial and local government officials.



#### U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ashleigh Maxwell



## Navy Casualty Officer Consoles Family at Arlington

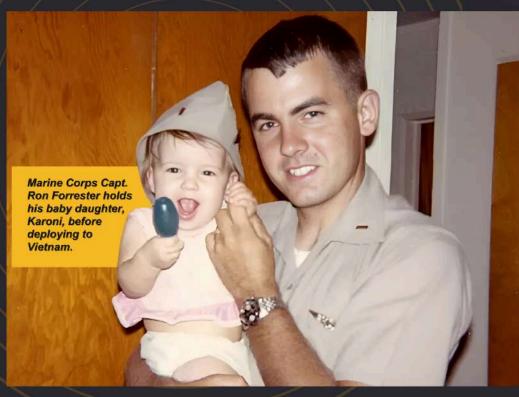
U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer DeShannon Beaty, Navy service casualty officer, speaks with the family of U.S. Navy Seaman 2nd Class Challis R. James during his funeral at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia, June 28, 2024. James was killed aboard the battleship USS Oklahoma on December 7, 1941. Along with 394 of his shipmates, his remains were unidentifiable when they were recovered from the righted ship, then buried as an unknown. After all the unknowns were disinterred, James, and 361 other Sailors and Marines were accounted by the end of the sixyear project.

## FOR VIETNAM'S MISSING, HOPE OF ACCOUNTABILITY REMAINS

Vietnam War Annual Government **Briefings** 

DPAA hosted the 2024 Vietnam War Annual Government Briefings (AGB) in Washington, D.C., June formal presentations from U.S. and foreign government officials; question and answer sessions. and one-on-one discussions that provided families with an update

By Katie Lange, DOD News



Karoni Forrester was 2 when her father, Marine Corps Capt. Ron Forrester, was shot down in an A6A Intruder over North Vietnam on Dec. 27, 1972. He and his pilot, Capt. Ralph Chipman, were both declared missing in action.

Their cases remained that way for more than half a century until late last year, when their remains were finally identified.

"I got a text message from my casualty officer saying, 'Give me a call. I have something positive to report," a tearful Forrester remembered of the day she was notified. "I just knew, but I also thought, 'What?!?' My daughter was home, and my husband was working from home ... so the three of us got to be together while we heard him say, 'We made a positive match."

That's the mission of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency — to bring unaccounted service members home. Recently, the agency held its annual government briefing for Vietnam families in Washington, D.C., to update them on what the government is doing to bring their loved ones home

Since 1995, the Defense Department has conducted annual and periodic updates across the country for families; however, this is only the second year that the DPAA has hosted the event for Vietnam families all on its own.

Rob Goeke, the DPAA's chief of family support, said that anytime work is done on a particular service member's case, they'll send a finished report about that work to the family. The annual meetings are a chance for families to ask more in-depth questions during one-on-one sessions, as well as to hear from civilian and military experts to learn more about the complicated process.

"I had my case summary review this morning, and there were some findings," said John Kerr, whose older brother, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Ernest Kerr Jr., was aboard a UH-34D Choctaw Medevac helicopter when it crashed into water in South Vietnam on March 26, 1968. "They've identified three large chunks of metal ... they did that with sonar scanning. So, there's hope that, at some point, they'll be able to do further investigation and see if it actually is the



Army Staff Sgt. Andrew T. Brassfield has been missing since April 6, 1970, when the Special Forces unit he was with inside Laos was attacked.









searching for their loved ones since they disappeared more than 50 years ago. But Goeke said a lot of first-time families showed up to this year's event.

Some families have been proactively

"We asked for a show of hands, and it was surprising how many first-time families were showing," Goeke said, later confirming that 56 attendees were firsttimers. "They're picking up the mantle and they're running with it because they're not going to give up. ... So, it's inspiring that they're carrying on for their mothers - their grandfathers in some cases - to bring back their loved ones."

Michael Brassfield and Stephanie Bentley were two of those first-time attendees. Brassfield's father, Army Staff Sgt. Andrew T. Brassfield, has been missing since April 6, 1970, when the Special Forces unit he was with inside Laos was attacked. Records show Brassfield was mortally wounded during the firefight, and despite his team's best efforts, they had to leave his body behind. Searches to locate him after the war were unsuccessful.

Michael Brassfield said he was 9 when that happened. The government has kept his family updated on the mission to find his father since then, but it was only in recently years that he gained an interest in coming to the family updates "I didn't know initially that I could request to ask questions.

"Even though it's been 50-some years, I feel that they're going to find something when they go in there. I've got a lot of hope that they're going to find something," said Brassfield, who's now 65. "They're on his case now. ... We're going to be on it, and I know my niece is. She's been vocal."

Bentley is that niece to whom he was referring. Since she picked up the search for her grandfather, she's learned from other families of the missing that it's important to stay on top of the DPAA and be persistent.

"I do think that, because a lot of new "I don't know that I believe in closure," technology has come onboard from 50some years ago, there's going to be a lot more that's discovered because of it," she

#### After 50+ Years, The Search Is Over

For the first time in her 53 years of life, Forrester got to be one of the few attendees at this year's annual government briefing who could tout a success story instead of seeking answers.

Forrester started questioning what happened to her dad as a teen. She went to a few regional family updates before attending her first annual government meeting when she was just 16.

"From age 2 to 14, I felt really isolated. No one else had a dad that went to war and just didn't come home. So, it was a real game-changer for me to meet other families," said Forrester, who has attended nearly every annual government meeting since. "It helped me realize I wasn't totally

Forrester has spent her life involved in not just her family's search, but the search for

"It became about all of our missing for me," she said. "I wanted to find them all. So, we've celebrated every answer, and for a long time, I just said, 'It's not my family's turn yet.' And then it was, on December 5,

After she got the call positively identifying her father, a DPAA team and the director of the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory - which provides the DNA tests that support the identification of remains explained the findings to her so she could understand exactly how they came to their

one of the scientists to come to the house when they did my ID review," she said. "I think that's something important for many families to know. You can request a scientist because the casualty officers can't speak to DNA."

"I just wanted to make sure I knew what we were burying," she continued. "It's your one chance to get it right."

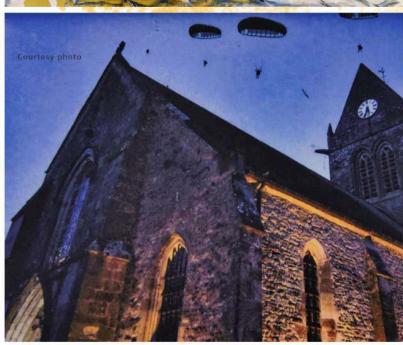
Nearly 52 years after his death, on Oct. 7, Ron Forrester will finally be buried in Arlington National Cemetery. While it might be the end of his long saga, his daughter said she doesn't quite feel the closure that many thought she would.

Karoni Forrester said. "But the torment is gone. ... There's this emotional torment about what happened to your loved one, and that's gone. It's so cool, and I want that for everybody."

Marine Corps Capt. Ralph Chipman, who was declared missing alongside Ron Forrester after their fatal 1972 crash, was positively identified on Aug. 2, 2023. However, there are still 1,576 U.S. personnel unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.







# RECOVERY TEAM SEARCHING FOR MISSING D-DAY AIRCREW By David Vergun, DoD News

In the early morning hours of June 6, 1944, a C-47A aircraft from what was then U.S. Army Air Corps' 304th Troop Carrier Squadron, 442nd Troop Carrier Group, participated in the D-Day airborne operation in France.

The aircraft carried a crew of five, along with 14 paratroopers from the Army's 82nd Airborne Division.

All 14 paratroopers exited the aircraft, but minutes later, the airplane was presumably shot down by German antiaircraft fire in the Normandy region. All five crew members were killed. The remains of two were later recovered, but the other three have remained missing for the last 80 years.

Now, a 25-member team from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency is at the site of the crash, searching for the missing three and helping to fulfill the nation's promise to account for all of those who are missing and return them home.

Except for a scientific recovery expert, all members of the team are soldiers and airmen, most of whom are stationed in Europe. All volunteered for this mission, which entails excavating the site situated on a farm.

Team members include specialists with a variety of skills, such as a medic, explosive ordnance disposal expert, translator, logistician, forensics photographer and a noncommissioned officer in charge.

A life-support equipment expert is also on site to identify things like pieces of uniform; personal effects like rings, watches and coins; and other items that might tie the effects to a particular service member.

Besides using their expertise for this mission, all team members also participate in carefully sifting through tons of soil by digging and screening plots of dirt in hopes of uncovering the missing, said Air Force Capt. Brian Foxworth, team leader and logistician.

This mission, which started in early April, could last until the end of this month, with digging going on eight to 10 hours daily, he said. In some other missions, work has sometimes been suspended due to a variety of factors, and return trips are made. In other cases, recovery is deemed successful, and the site is returned to the way it was before the excavation, Foxworth noted.

"In this mission, the excavated holes will be filled, and the topsoil will be returned to where it was so that the farmer can continue using it as before," he said, noting that the landowner was extremely cooperative and took a personal interest in the agency's work.

One of the nearby residents was 8 years old when the plane crashed, and he still recalls seeing it, Foxworth mentioned.

Foxworth, who has also been on recovery missions in Vietnam and the Solomon Islands, said that a lot of preparatory work goes on in the weeks, months and years before a mission.

Many factors are related to how recovery sites are prioritized. Weather, terrain challenges, site accessibility, and various logistical and operational concerns help determine the planning and staging of recoveries.

Agency officials are also required to routinely carry out technical negotiations and talks with representatives of foreign governments in order to ensure positive and safe in-country conditions for agency service members.

The agency makes every effort to reach sites in jeopardy as soon as possible, and that, too, is a factor in prioritization. Some sites are in danger of being lost due to urbanization and/or environmental, regulatory or political issues beyond the control of the agency.

When remains are uncovered, they are sent to one of the DPAA laboratories. Foxworth said these remains will be sent to Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska. The other lab is at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

At the lab, there are anthropologists, archaeologists, forensic odontologists and others who specialize in identifying the remains.

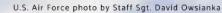
At the lab, forensic anthropologists are responsible for the analysis of human remains and material evidence, such as military uniforms, personal effects and identification tags.

The forensic anthropologist who's assigned to work on the case in the laboratory is not the individual who completed the recovery in the field. This entire procedure is carried out in the "blind," meaning the anthropologist in the lab does not know the suspected identity of the person under analysis, so that an unbiased assessment is made.

Scientists use a variety of techniques to establish the identification of people who are unaccounted for, including analysis of skeletal remains and sampling mitochondrial DNA. They also analyze material evidence, personal effects and life-support equipment. The medical examiner evaluates these overlapping lines of evidence in an effort to identify the remains.

DPAA continues to build on investigative efforts with partner governments worldwide. Each year, DPAA plans multiple investigations of World War II loss sites to collect evidence, investigate leads and conduct excavations.

Since the renewal of U.S. POW/MIA recovery efforts in the 1970s, the remains of nearly 1,000 U.S. service members killed in World War II have been identified and returned to their families for burial with full military honors. This number is in addition to the roughly 280,000 whose remains were identified in a massive effort immediately after the war.







#### Ceremonial Exchange of **WWII Evidence**

Col. Astrophile Mwele, left, of the Vanuatu Mobile Force presents possible osseous material evidence to U.S. Navy Capt. Mark Asunción, Senior Defense Official, during a ceremonial exchange at the Efate Port Vila War Memorial, Port Vila, Vanuatu, July 17, 2024. The ceremony occurred the day prior to the opening of U.S. Embassy Port Vila and was attended by the DPAA recovery team and representatives from the U.S. State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development, Australian High Commission, and Vanuatu National Cultural Council. The evidence was recovered from a U.S. Navy PBY-5 Catalina crash site in Vanuatu from World War II.

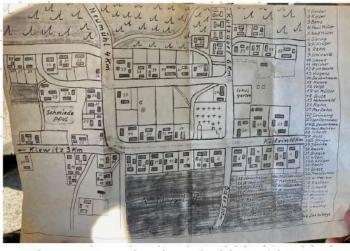
#### **Poland Investigation Uncovers Key WWII Sites**

DPAA historian, Dr. Nicole Eilers, led an investigation team in Poland that advanced over a decade of research from a World War II friendly fire incident involving 15 U.S. soldiers. A surviving German resident returned to the area for the first time since 1945, traveling 400 miles to provide a hand-drawn map confirming the massacre and burial sites. Separately, a Polish resident identified a previously unknown Russian field hospital, potentially linked to unaccounted-for American personnel.









★ JULY 9



JULY 17

JULY 18



JULY 30

#### Vietnam Underwater Recovery

U.S. Army Sgt. Devin Rhodes, right, DPAA diver, exits the water onto a dive barge in support of recovery operations at 1971 helicopter crash site off the coast of Nha Trang, Vietnam, July 9, 2024. The joint multinational team's mission spanned 60 days.



#### U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Caitlin Flynn





#### U.S. Air Force photos by Staff Sgt. Ariel Owings





#### **Naval Academy** Midshipmen Assist **Recovery Team**

Four midshipmen and one staff member from the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) were augmentees on the DPAA recovery team operating in Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands in July 2024. USNA midshipmen and cadets from the U.S. Military Academy have participated in DPAA missions in the past, but this time they deployed for the 45-day period, during which time they assisted with site set-up, digging, and screening. Midshipmen from the USNA also assisted a recovery team in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam earlier in the year from May to June.



## DPAA AND MAKRI HOST THIRD INDO-PACIFIC SCIENTIFIC SUMMIT IN SEOUL

U.S. Air Force Staff Sqt. Blake Conzales, DPAA Public Affairs

DPAA and the Ministry of Defense Agency for Killed in Action Recovery and Identification (MAKRI) hosted the third Indo-Pacific Scientific Summit in Seoul, Republic of Korea, June 10-14, 2024.

With over 60 participants from 11 different countries in attendance, the summit invited experts in forensic anthropology, DNA analysis, and isotope testing, to share and discuss the innovations and insights impacting the scientific community on an international scale. The event also sought to foster cooperation between partner nations with the hope of contributing to and improving the forensic methods used to identify missing POW/MIAs.

This year is our third meeting of this type for the Asia-Pacific region, and this is the largest participation we've had so far," said Dr. John Byrd, DPAA laboratory director. "The reason we have this summit is because there are many missing POW/MIAs that need to be found. If we want to be able to reach a closure on these cases, we need to bring the best scientific work to the game that we can. That's really what this summit is about."

The summit also allowed DPAA and MAKRI to demonstrate the benefits of international cooperation, through which the identification goals of both organizations are not only recognized but shared.

"I think we are performing the same national mission and obligation to return the people who sacrificed themselves for their home country," said Keun-Won Lee, MAKRI Director. "We have a lot of expertise in the field of forensic identification here, and I believe that the gathering of this expertise can bring fruitful results for all of us."

By creating a space to share knowledge and discuss realistic areas for improvement, DPAA and MAKRI enabled various experts to provide information on some of the scientific community's most important topics. This included the integration of DNA analysis in the identification process and its integral use in making challenging identifications.

"Primarily, our work revolves around DNA cases where direct reference samples are not often available," said Dr. Suni Edson, Armed Forces Medical Examiner System's-Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory Past Accounting section assistant technical leader. "Remains are often fragmented or commingled, so your sampling of the remains depends on the age of the remains, their condition, what specific remains are available, and several other factors. The other things that need consideration are what DNA technology you are using and what DNA extraction methods you have validated. What we've learned from years of being able to process samples is that you can't ever have just one method."







Another hot topic was the incorporation of isotope testing in identification processes, which uses bone collagen to determine the diets of deceased individuals. This, in turn, can help forensic scientists build a biological profile before DNA testing even begins.

'There are three major goals that DPAA targets with isotope testing," said Dr. Gregory Berg, DPAA Case Coordination DNA laboratory manager. "We try to determine if remains are from a United States individual or from someone else, we see if we can separate commingled remains, and then within the United States, we want to try and determine what someone's home of origin could be. When we have little or no background information on a set of remains, doing DNA analysis can be time-consuming and costly. We can use isotope testing to get a better idea of what needs to be sent for DNA testing. We can get values very quickly and classify them before pursuing further follow-on testing."

Dr. Denise To, DPAA scientific recovery expert and archaeological field sciences laboratory manager, reviews forensic scientists' field recovery operation packages at the end of missions. She, along with other presenters, concluded the event with briefings on field recovery operations, and the importance of their success to positive identifications.

"We may all be in different countries, but we all do very similar work," said To. "The processes and problems that we face as forensic scientists are generally the same. We've spent the last few days talking about laboratory analysis, but that's not where the science begins. Under even the most extreme field conditions, our DPAA scientists are expected to uphold the highest levels of scientific integrity. We're expecting the scientists to follow set procedures for collecting data and processing evidence. We excavate sites the same way we would a modern-day forensic crime scene. By using these practices, our archaeology can stand up in a court of law, and we can use it as a line of evidence to make an identification."

It's through collaborative efforts like these that DPAA fosters strong and productive partnerships. These collaborations are vital to pursuing joint field activities and successfully recovering and identifying possible POW/MIAs.

"What we're doing with these missing persons missions is a humanitarian effort," said Byrd. "It's done for purely humanitarian reasons. In order to solve all these cases, we all have to work together and cooperate with one another. We call many of these countries host nations, where they allow us to come into their country and look for our missing people. We are eternally grateful to them. If we can all learn from each other, we'll all be better equipped to pursue these cases."

This summit is one of many events DPAA hosts to foster innovation and collaboration between forensic scientists and partner nations. The moral imperative to provide the fullest possible accounting of our missing personnel to their families and the nation encourages DPAA to apply new and improved forensic methods while continually fostering a spirit of innovation throughout the organization.









The DPAA and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam have forged a strong collaborative relationship over the decades to account for personnel missing from the Vietnam War. Since 1973, their joint efforts have led to the identification and dignified burial of thousands of personnel. Each year, multiple investigations are conducted in Vietnam to collect evidence, investigate leads, and conduct excavations. The excavations are usually conducted by recovery teams (RTs), which are led by a U.S. military senior noncommissioned officer or a commissioned officer. However, in some instances, the RTs are led by Vietnamese officials, which are called Vietnamese recovery teams or VRTs.

Socialist Republic of Vietnam Col. Huy D. Nguyen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, was appointed by the Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP) board of directors to be the VRT's team leader for a recovery mission ranging from July to September 2024. As team leader, it was his responsibility to coordinate with local authorities and set up the infrastructure at the recovery site, including site clearance, worker preparation, and lodging for team members. Nguyen's goal was to keep team members on both sides in good spirits and promote a sense of rapport. "Two teams as one," he said, was his mantra for the mission. Nguyen had been part of 10 missions with DPAA, but this was his first time as a team leader. However, to Nguyen, every mission, just like his current one, presents its own obstacles to overcome.

"The main challenge has to be the sheer amount of prep work that had to be done for the two sites in one single mission, as well as other logistical issues and moving parts during the beginning of the mission" he said. "But it is with incredible efforts, resilience, and cooperation on both sides the teams were able to eventually settle down, get things in order and achieve meaningful on field results."

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Nicole McMinamin, the U.S. team leader for this VRT, served as an intermediary between the U.S. team members and the Vietnamese. Of the 15 missions she has been on, this was her first VRT. She noticed significant differences between a VRT and a regular RT.

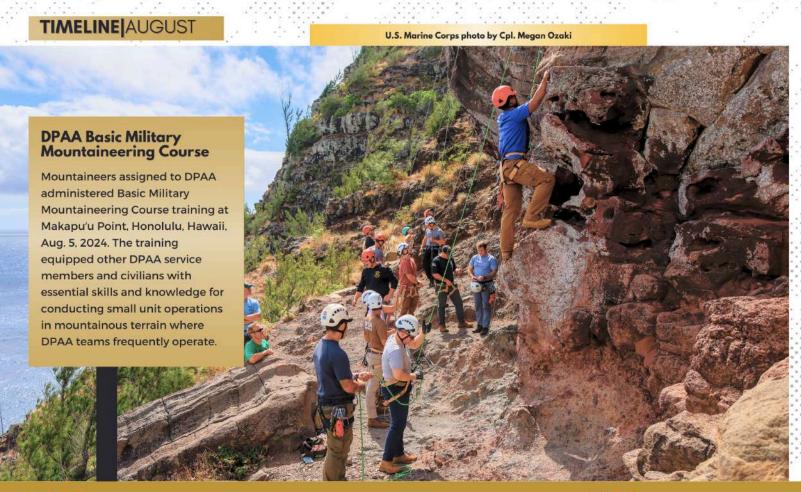
"I have found that the VNOSMP are force multipliers in terms of preparing the area for site operations, advising the team on local food and cultural customs, and coordinating efforts to help with the assistance and management of the local workforce," McMinamin said. "They have really taken care of the team, from providing meals and coordinating hotel stays. The procurement of the local workforce is a huge part of what the VNOSMP bring to the table, the extra manning is what makes these recovery missions possible in the limited time we have."

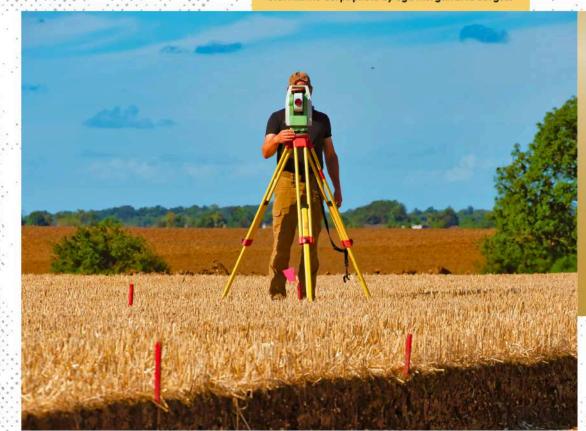
VRTs are special as they allow host nations to ease recovery teams into favorable positions for efficient and expedient mission operations, since half the battle is knowing the landscape and the local force. They also foster camaraderie between the two nations, who feel it is an honor to be a part of such a solemn mission, as Nguyen does.

"To me personally, being able to take part in these humanitarian missions has always been an honor and privilege," Nguyen said. "It is my hope that positive results will come with all the hard work from everyone involved. In my capacity as team leader, I will contribute to the best of my abilities towards this goal."

Cooperation between nations is what makes these recovery missions possible. McMinamin shared this sentiment alongside her deep appreciation for the VNOSMP and Col. Nguyen's contributions to the agency's mission. "I think the relationship between the U.S. and Vietnamese is so important because without their help and assistance of individuals like Col. Nguyen, our mission would not continue in Vietnam and a lot of families would not get the closure by having their loved ones returned to them," McMinamin said.

In the end, the success of these recovery missions hinges on the unwavering cooperation between nations and the dedication of individuals like Nguyen and McMinamin. Their collective efforts not only bring closure to families but also underscore the profound impact of international collaboration in addressing humanitarian needs. As the teams continue their work, the spirit of unity and mutual respect remains a testament to their shared commitment to honoring and recovering the memories of those who served. The legacy of their mission is a powerful reminder of the enduring bond between the U.S. and Vietnam, and the commitment to never forget those who made the ultimate sacrifice.





#### **DPAA, U.S. Military Partner** in 60-Day Recovery Mission

Hugh Tuller, a DPAA scientific recovery expert, uses a total station to measure distances at the excavation site during recovery operations in England, Aug. 29. 2024. Team members cycled through tasks including wet screening to collect potential osseous material and life support equipment. DPAA members along with augmentees from Europebased U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force units worked together to advance the mission during the 60-day recovery.



**AUGUST 6** 



AUGUST 23





#### **Vietnam Deputy Minister** of National Defense Visit

DPAA civilian and military members host a visit by Senior Lt. Gen. Vo Minh Luong, Deputy Minister of National Defense Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and his delegation, at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, Aug. 6, 2024. Following stops at the Pentagon and Harvard University, the Deputy Minister's visit to DPAA's Laboratory was intended to learn about DPAA best practices and the progress of the 39 years of joint field activities in Vietnam.

#### Recovery mission in Papua New Guinea

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Kevin Christensen, DPAA life support investigator (LSI), brushes soil off a piece of aircraft wreckage recovered from a World Wa II crash site in Papua New Guinea, Aug. 23, 2024. LSIs are responsible for assessing and identifying any life support equipment found, which in turn, helps the scientific recovery expert correlate the loss and guide the excavation strategy.









#### MISSING SERVICE MEMBERS' FAMILIES FIND CLARITY AT ANNUAL BRIEFINGS

By Todd Lopez, DoD News

More than 400 family members of individuals who served in the Korean War or the Cold War and never returned are attending briefings in Arlington, Virginia. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency organizes these meetings to provide updates on the progress of their cases.

Kelly McKeague, DPAA Director, highlighted the significance of these briefings, stating, "This is part of DPAA's mission to connect with and update families of the missing, especially those from the Korean War and the Cold War."

DPAA is joined by representatives from South Korea's Ministry of National Defense Agency for Killed in Action Recovery, and Identification, which assists in the recovery of American remains. Keun-Won Lee, the agency's Director, noted, "It is my honor to update families on our efforts to locate, recover, and identify U.S. servicemen lost during the Korean War."

Currently, about 126 U.S. service members are unaccounted for from the Cold War, and more than 7,400 from the Korean War. Of these, approximately 5,300 are believed to be lost in North Korea. In 2018, 55 boxes of remains, known as "K55," were repatriated from North Korea, representing approximately 250 individuals. Kristen Grow, the DPAA Korean War Identification Project Lead, reported that 93 U.S. service members have been identified from these remains. Additionally, 88 South Korean soldiers have been repatriated to South Korea. About 69 individuals from the K55 remains are still being analyzed.

McKeague also mentioned that diplomatic efforts with North Korea regarding the repatriation of remains has stalled since 2019. "There has been no response from North Korea despite numerous outreach attempts," he said. The U.S. remains ready to resume efforts if North Korea is willing to cooperate.



### A FLOWER TO REMEMBER

"The more I bring these to people, it allows them to know that there's a lady down in Texas that's praying for them and believing in what they're doing,"

says Patricia K. McMahan, who attends DPAA's Korea/Cold War Annual Government Briefings each year to honor her brother, U.S. Army Cpl. Orville Spicer, who was last seen Nov. 25, 1950, after staying behind to cover his unit's retreat. Each year, McMahan brings handmade gifts, like quilted coasters, to express her gratitude to DPAA staff for their efforts in recovering missing personnel. "It's a little token of appreciation for the hard work we put in trying to get answers for them and all the other families of the missing," says Mike Fowler, DPAA acting director of outreach and communications. McMahan's dedication reminds us of the personal stories behind every case and the compassion that fuels our mission.

In fiscal year 2023, DPAA successfully accounted for the remains of nearly 40 American service members from the Korean War and continues its efforts in South Korea. Among the over 400 families attending, more than 95% are Korean War families, with 172 attending for the first time. Each family receives an individual case update from DPAA analysts.

McKeague reaffirmed DPAA's dual mission: to account for missing service members and keep families informed. "This is a national commitment, shared by both the U.S. and South Korea, to provide answers to families whose loved ones made the supreme sacrifice," he said.









H

2

02

K R

N

COLD

WAR

ANNUAL

GOV

RNME

Z

BRIE

FING





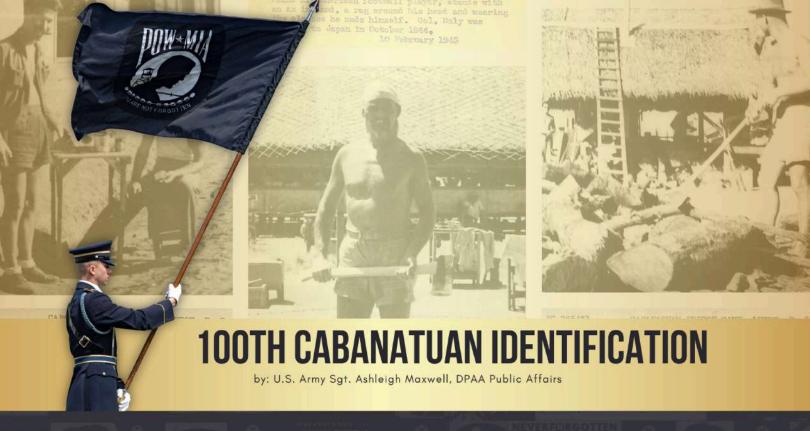














DPAA marked a significant milestone with the 100th identification from the World War II Cabanatuan prison camp in the Philippines.

Not long after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, the enemy began attacks against U.S. forces in the Philippines. For more than three months, Filipino and U.S. forces engaged in defensive operations. Ultimately, the Bataan Peninsula was surrendered, Corregidor Island fell and forces in the Southern Philippines surrendered.

In April 1942, after the surrender of Bataan, thousands of Filipino and U.S. troops were forced to march over 60 miles in route to Camp O'Donnell, Tarlac Province. The soldiers, already weakened from starvation, illness and fatigue. faced unimaginable abuse. Many were subjected to beatings and gunfire or abandoned and left to die along the way. Throughout the march, the prisoners of war suffered extreme heat and were often denied opportunities to rest, resulting in numerous deaths. Those who survived the march were confined to prison camps, forced to live in inhumane conditions.

The primary detention center for American POWs was Camp Cabanatuan, located in Nueva Ecija Province, which originally consisted of three separate prison camps. The number of POWs at Cabanatuan reached approximately 10,000. When the camp was liberated on Jan. 30, 1942, more than 2,700 POWs had already been buried in the Camp #1 cemetery. Following a postwar identification attempt, over one-third of these servicemembers remained

"As a historian working on this project, I have a few different tasks," said Dr. Aelwen Weatherby, DPAA historian. "One of those is to research the unknowns and figure out how they need to be grouped to be proposed for disinterment. Then I start writing the memos, which are essentially making the case to the approval authority for why we should disinter the unknowns and who they could be associated with. That gets the ball rolling on each unknown."

In August 2014, ten unknowns linked to a common grave in Cabanatuan were disinterred for forensic examination, initiating DPAA's Cabanatuan Identification Project.

"There had been a lot of family pressure at the time to disinter unknowns associated with Cabanatuan," said Weatherby. "That, I think, was the actual driving force behind getting the disinterments going."

Scientists collected DNA samples from multiple skeletal elements for analysis by the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory. Anthropological evaluation and DNA testing revealed that the unknowns were significantly commingled, making the identification process more difficult and time

"This is a really challenging project for a lot of reasons," said Dr. Mary Megyesi, DPAA forensic anthropologist and project lead. "But now that we've made all this progress to get to 100, it's really, really amazing. I'm really grateful that I've been part of this project this entire time and to watch it grow and to take this big puzzle and figure it out to make all these identifications."

In addition to the commingling, the degradation of the unknown remains along with the lack of DNA Family Reference Samples made the identifications all the more challenging.

"It's really difficult to make an ID if we don't have that family reference sample and because the bones are so degraded, effort to get DNA takes longer," said Dr. Megyesi. "We are always making efforts on what else we can do. We couldn't do this without the effort of an entire lab and an entire team."

DPAA continues working to recover and identify the more than 900 remaining unknowns from Camp Cabanatuan, using advanced technology and historical research to ensure that those who gave their lives for their country are not

"I'm very honored to be a part of this," said Weatherby. "It's such a collaborative project. There are so many people who have contributed to it. These men went through so many difficulties, and I really hope that we are able to bring many of them home. There's so much that we still have to learn."

## UNACCOUNTED FOR: THE JOURNEY TO IDENTIFICATION RESEARCH RECOVER IDENTIFY









**Case Initiation** 

2 Case Review & Assessment ろ Mission Planning



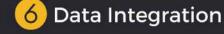






**Field Operations** 

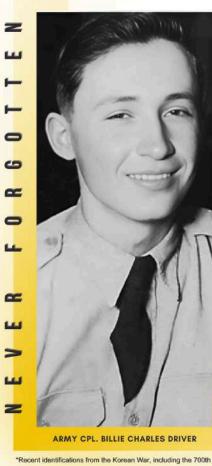
Evidence Analysis







- 1. Case Initiation: Case files compile military records, historical archives, and family information
- 2. Case Review and Assessment: Researchers evaluate records and eyewitness accounts to determine
- 3. Mission Planning: Teams develop investigative strategies, allocate resources, and coordinate logistics
- 4. Field Operations: Experts execute recovery and investigative efforts in the field
- 5. Evidence Analysis: Forensic labs confirm identification using anthropological, dental, and genetic
- 6. Data Integration: Systems integrate all data to support secure operations and precise analysis.







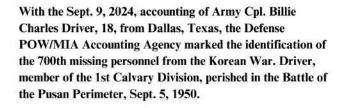




\*Recent identifications from the Korean War, including the 700th accounted-for personnel.

## **AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR 700TH MISSING KOREAN WAR HERO**

BY ASHLEY M. WRIGHT, DPAA PUBLIC AFFAIRS



"This is an incredible milestone," said Kelly McKeague, DPAA Director, "It is reflective of the talent and dedication of the Department of Defense personnel who dutifully serve this sacred mission."

Since 1982, forensic scientists have painstakingly and skillfully analyzed recovered remains to reach this accounting milestone and return fallen Korean War personnel back to their families for proper burial honors. This number is in addition to the roughly 2,000 Americans whose remains were identified in the years immediately following the end of hostilities, when the North Korean government returned more than 3,000 sets of remains to U.S. custody.

"The Korean War Identification Project was established to oversee the identification process for all Korean War laboratory cases," said Kristen Grow, project lead. "Our dedicated team represents the largest project in the DPAA Laboratory and involves remains from varied sources, including unilateral turnovers, field recoveries, cemetery disinterments and cases turned over to us by our esteemed

partner organization in South Korea. Cases from Korea represent highly commingled human remains involving thousands of missing persons from varied proveniences."

During the more than three-year-long conflict, the United States suffered approximately 36,500 casualties. There are still more than 7,400 missing from the Korean War. Of these, the agency's researchers believe that about 5,300 are located in North Korea.

"The Korean War Identification Project highlights the challenges and successes encountered through a multidisciplinary approach, involving the expertise of historians, anthropologists, odontologists, and DNA and isotope specialists, who collaborate closely with family members in the pursuit of identification and resolution," Grow said. "Our devoted team considers it a privilege to contribute to this poignant mission every day, where we have the chance to facilitate the reunion of missing service members with their families and loved ones."

It was not until 1990 when the North Korean government resumed unilateral turnovers of missing U.S. service members through the United Nations Command to the United States. From 1990 to 1994, North Korea repatriated 208 boxes of human remains, which came to be known as the K208. While the North Korean government stated that each box represented the remains of a single service member, forensic analyses determined over 700 to be represented. To

date, 155 individuals have been accounted for from this turnover.

From 1996 to 2005, DPAA's predecessor organizations conducted 37 Joint Recovery Operations in North Korea, alongside officials of the Korean People's Army. Anthropological and odontological analysis performed by DPAA, and DNA analyses performed by the Armed Forces Medical Examiner system revealed a high degree of commingling and a crossover of skeletal elements belonging to the same individuals between the K208 and recovery operations.

"Our Korean War Program has faced tremendous challenges over the years, to include gaining the cooperation of the Korean People's Army in North Korea in past years. For much of the past three decades, we made little progress identifying the remains we recovered in North Korea, but in the past ten years, we turned the corner and began seeing huge success in identifying remains of our Korean War missing from a variety of sources. There have been innovations both in technology and in processes," said John Byrd, DPAA laboratory director.

In total, 153 identifications have been made from the ten years the U.S. teams were allowed to operate in North Korea.

"Most of the remains we recovered in North Korea have now been identified and we are always hopeful that relations will reach a point again that we can receive more remains and resume work in North Korea," Byrd added. "We will remain diligent in resolving as many of these Korean War cases as possible."

In July 2018, DPAA proposed a plan to disinter 652 Korean War Unknowns from the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii. This effort became known as the Korean War Disinterment Project. The project consists of seven phases and DPAA is currently exhuming caskets in the fifth phase of the project. To date, 232 Americans have been identified through this disinterment project.

Since DNA testing began in 1992, there were two major issues affecting DNA analysis of Korean War samples. The first issue was having appropriate Family Reference Samples to compare to the unknown remains. By 2010, through the diligence of the Service Casualty Offices, the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System had received references for 92 percent of the original 8,100 missing service members.

The second issue that arose in the disinterment project is the ability to extract DNA from the remains in the caskets. In the 1950s, officials treated the unknown remains with chemical preservatives prior to burial, which severely degraded the available DNA. However, the cutting-edge DNA scientists, preeminent in the world, at the AFMES have determinedly resolved this challenge.

"Starting in 2000, knowing that the Korean War samples had been treated with chemicals that degraded DNA, AFMES scientists started a research initiative that took 16 years, with several key advancements developed by AFMES and improved scientific instruments before fielding the first fully accredited DNA Next Generation Sequencing method that worked with highly degraded samples," said Tim McMahon, Director of the AFMES DNA Laboratory. "The easiest way to explain the method is that we developed a human mitochondrial DNA bait with a metal molecule on it that was specific for human DNA. The mtDNA bait binds to the human mtDNA, and we use a magnet to pull the human mtDNA out of the solution. AFMES is still the only forensic laboratory with this capability and since 2016 we have increased our success rate to over 65% and processing capabilities to 120 samples per month. This does not seem like much, but in 2016, capabilities were 5 samples per month and a 24% success rate. To date this method has produced results that have supported 165 Korean War identifications. That would not have occurred using traditional DNA testing."

Another step toward accounting for the Korean War missing occurred on July 27, 2018, with the historic summit between then-President Donald Trump and North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un after which North Korea turned over 55 boxes, referred to as K55, purported to contain the remains of American service members killed during the Korean War. After the remains were accessioned into the DPAA Laboratory, based on anthropological and DNA analyses, it was determined to be an estimated 250 individuals represented in the K55 boxes.

"Don't give up," said Sam Storms, son of Army Maj. Harvey Storms who died during the Korean War and was identified in 2019, when asked what advice he would give to families waiting on their loved one's return in a 2021 interview. "I never expected it [to] happen."

Storms was 34 years old when he left his pregnant wife and three sons to fight in the Korean War. He would perish on Dec. 2, 1950, when his unit was attacked and fought in hand-to-hand combat in freezing conditions in the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir. Storms is one of the 93 identified from the K55 boxes. He was buried in front of his four sons and fellow Korean War Veterans at Arlington National Cemetery in 2021.

Despite North Korea not engaging in repatriation and recovery discussions since the K55 turnover, the agency remains committed to providing the fullest possible accounting of Korean War personnel.

"Despite North Korea being the only country who does not cooperate on this humanitarian mission," McKeague said. "This 700th identification exemplifies the resolute determination of the United States to bring them home."

#### TIMELINE SEPTEMBER

U.S. Air Force photos by Senior Airman Kathy Duran



#### Sergeant Major or the Army Visits DPAA

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Weimer visits DPAA at Joint Base Pearl-Harbor Hickam, Hawaii, Sept. 4, 2024. In addition to receiving a strategic briefing from DPAA senior leaders and an in-depth tour of the forensic laboratory, he also met with Soldiers assigned to the agency and whose specialties are varied.

#### **DPAA Team Welcomed** with Traditional Dance in Papua New Guinea

Operating in remote areas of Papua New Guinea, a DPAA investigation team interviews witnesses and gathers information to advance a case. The team also benefits from the cooperation and warm hospitality of multiple villages. Here village elders and multi-generational villagers honored the team with a welcome ceremony that included a traditional dance, Sept. 17, 2024.



### SEPTEMBER 4



## SEPTEMBER 4





#### Mission in People's Republic of China

A DPAA recovery team excavates and moves soil to be screened while searching for the remains of a U.S. Army Air Forces pilot missing from a 1943 crash in Hunan Province, People's Republic of China (PRC), Sept. 9, 2024, DPAA's humanitarian efforts and cooperation from the PRC's People's Liberation Army and Ministry of Foreign Affairs strengthens the people-topeople ties between the two countries. The PRC is the only country DPAA works in with losses from World War II, the Korean War, Cold War, and the

Vletnam War.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Cole Yardley



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Eliza Capehart, DPAA Southeast Asia Mission Planner, transfers a pelican case containing possible osseous material during an Honorable Carry Ceremony at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. Hawaii, Sept. 24, 2024. The osseous material was recovered from a DPAA mission in Papua New Guinea and was accessioned into the DPAA Laboratory for scientific analysis and possible identification.





#### SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AUSTIN REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO POW/MIA RECOVERY

By David Vergun, DoD News



Locating and identifying the remains of service members killed in conflicts remains the Defense Department and the nation's "ironclad commitment," said Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III.

Austin spoke Sept. 20, 2024, at a National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony at the Pentagon.

During the secretary's 41 years of Army service, he said the soldier's creed has been to never leave a fallen comrade behind. "We lived that value, and we still do. We bring our troops home no matter what."

Over just the past year, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has identified the remains of 111 service members killed during World War II, 28 from the Korean War and four from the Vietnam War, he noted. "Now, that's quite a feat."

The agency works with diplomats and others from 46 nations to recover remains, relying on their cooperation and assistance, he added.

During his first month as secretary, Austin visited the agency's laboratory in Hawaii, where anthropologists, archaeologists and other scientists identify the remains using the latest forensic techniques. "It's hard work both physically and emotionally, but ... it's a labor of love and it is a sacred calling," Austin said.

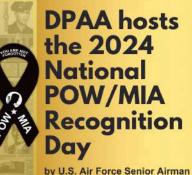
"From my office, I look out into this parade ground, and every day I see the American flag and the POW/MIA flag. And that flag's motto is a rallying cry, not only for everyone who works in the Pentagon, but also wherever it flies across the country, and it says, 'you were not forgotten,'" the secretary said.

The families of those still missing suffer and mourn and wait. "You have endured terrible uncertainty, lived with terrible absence and suffered terrible grief. We are humbled by your strength, and we're inspired by your resilience. We are proud to stand with you and we are proud to work with you. Because we will never give up. We will never lose hope, and we will always honor the sacrifice and service of your loved ones." he said.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. CQ Brown, Jr., thanked the POWs and families in attendance as well as families of those still missing, and the service organizations that support them.

"Throughout the history of our nation, service members have answered the call to defend liberty. ... These heroes have faced trials many of us can scarcely imagine. Some were captured by enemy forces and held in horrific conditions. Others never made it home. Their legacy lives on in the hearts of their families, their fellow service members and the very fabric of our nation," he said.





by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Kathy Duran, DPAA Public Affairs

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency hosted a National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii, on Sept. 20, 2024.

POW/MIA Recognition Day is observed on the third Friday of September throughout the U.S. and around the world. DPAA welcomed the public and service members to commemorate American service members who were prisoners of war and those still missing and unaccounted for.

Fern Sumpter Winbush, the DPAA Principal Deputy Director, spoke on the importance of DPAA's mission and commitment to the families of the unaccounted-for service members.

"We come together on this day annually to honor them, to remember them, give life to their stories and to renew our commitment to never stop searching," said Sumpter Winbush. "We will continue to honor the fallen, tell their stories and provide hope to the families who still wait."

The ceremony began with the playing of the U.S. National Anthem, the Hawaii state anthem, and the posting of the colors.

U.S. Army Capt. Ryan MacCormack, DPAA's Outreach and Communications public affairs director of operations and master of ceremonies, recited the State of Hawaii proclamation signed by Josh Green, Governor of Hawaii, honoring POW/MIA Recognition Day, which read in part, "... Service members who suffered in enemy captivity and those still missing from the nation's wars deserve our deepest respect for their honor, valor, and tested heroism."

DPAA personnel also read the names of 132 service members who have been recovered, identified, and returned to their loved ones since the last National POW/MIA Recognition Day.

The ceremony featured Retired U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. (Dr.) Sharon Bannister, keynote speaker and daughter of accounted-for U.S. Air Force Capt. Stephen Rusch.

During the Vietnam War, Rusch was the weapons system officer aboard a F-4E Phantom II on an armed reconnaissance mission over the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The Phantom crashed during the mission, killing Rusch. His remains could not be recovered at the time of his loss. In 2007, DPAA identified Rusch.

"No words can explain the years to follow because the uncertainty was always there," said Bannister, describing when she found out her father was declared Missing in Action. "Thirty-five years after the day that changed my life forever, I was able to get answers thanks to the dedicated professionals at DPAA."

The American Battle Monuments Commission also hosted a rosette ceremony for more than 940 U.S. service members who were declared missing during the Vietnam War and have since been recovered and accounted for.

Sharone Deane, daughter of Army Lt. Col. William L. Deane, places a rosette next to her father's name. U.S. Army photo by Tyrae Straw



Retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Sharon Bannister, daughter of accounted-for Capt. Stephen Rusch, shares a moment with DPAA Principal Deputy Director Fern Sumpter Winbush.

As part of the event at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Charles Djou, American Battle Monuments Commission secretary, called forward five Gold Star Families to place a bronze rosette next to their loved one's name as a symbol of their family member's recovery and identification.

"I am grateful to have participated in placing a rosette beside my dad's name during the ceremony to signify that he is no longer missing," said Bannister. "My words to each of you are to never give up hope. So much is said about our great nation who never gives up the mission of bringing our fallen home. Let them never be forgotten."





Colleen Ijuin, sister of U.S. Navy Lt. Ralph E. Foulks, places a rosette next to her brother's name. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sqt. Lesley Cisneros

Representatives from military organizations, veterans service organizations, and foreign consulates laid wreaths and rendered a salute to pay tribute to the sacrifices of the POW/MIA during the ceremony. The ceremony concluded with a 21-gun salute, the playing of taps, and the retiring of the colors.

"Through this ceremony, we honor their sacrifices and the families who were left behind," said Sumpter Winbush. "We must continue to remember that our mission is not only about recovery, but also about keeping a sacred promise. A promise that no matter how much time has passed, we will never forget."

## **DPAA COMPLETES FIRST RECOVERY MISSION IN 13** YEARS IN

By Bill Dasher, DPAA Public Affairs

DPAA completed an excavation of a suspected P-40 Warhawk aircraft crash site form World War II, found in the Hunan province

From early August to mid-September, 12 military and specialized Department of Defense civilians formed a recovery team tasked with searching for and recovering the remains of a pilot lost 81 years ago.

There have been approximately 10 recovery missions, including the recent one in Hunan province, since both countries agreed to work

The mission was very complex, with logistical challenges, but the cooperation and assistance from the US Embassy and Chinese officials resulted in successful operations.

During the 30-day mission the DPAA team also received support from the People's Liberation Army Archives, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, locals, and government officials who worked tirelessly to complete the mission.

The team endured frequent rain and temperatures hovering around 100 degrees Fahrenheit daily. Great care was needed to shore up footing on slopes and protection from the sun to ensure the safety of

"Another challenge was mitigating environmental impact for both the land and a nearby stream," said Dr. Rene Zielinski, scientific recovery leader for the team. "Excavation planning involves applying preventative techniques to minimize detrimental impacts, which facilitate land restoration back to a functional state post-excavation whenever possible."

U.S. Ambassador to China, Nicholas Burns visited both the U.S. and Chinese team members on the final day of the mission. Burns was impressed with the cooperation between everyone to complete the mission. "I was incredibly impressed to visit the [DPAA] recovery site in China to learn about their painstaking work," said Burns in a post on the social media site X. "The commitment of this team, led by Capt. Cole Euverard, Master Sgt. Eric Lawson, and Dr. Rene Zielinski, to look for our MIA is simply awe-inspiring,"



"I was incredibly impressed to visit the [DPAA] recovery site in China to learn about their painstaking work."

U.S. Ambassador to China, Nicholas Burns



HONORING
SFC ZACHARY ANDREWS RECEIVES OSD SENIOR
ENLISTED MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Army Sergeant First Class Zachary Andrews, one of DPAA's medics, was selected as the Office of the Secretary of Defense Senior Enlisted Member of the Year. He competed against peers from OSD organizations as well as the Joint Staff. The Deputy Secretary of Defense, Kathleen Hicks presented Sergeant First Class Andrews with the award at a ceremony at

- the Pentagon Hall of Heroes (below) at which his mother and Fern Sumpter Winbush, DPAA Principal Deputy Director, were able to attend.
- After the ceremony, Deputy Secretary of Defense, Kathleen Hicks tweeted "Our enlisted service members are the technical experts and hands-on professionals who are charged with the hard work of executing our National Defense Strategy. Their knowledge, leadership skills and dedication to mission is unmatched anywhere in the world, and essential to making our military the greatest fighting force on earth."



#### **KUDOS AND CONGRATULATIONS TO SFC ANDREWS FOR THIS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD**



## STAY IN THE KNOW

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA























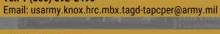
#### SERVICE CASUALTY OFFICES INFORMATION



U.S. Air Force HQ AFPC/DPFCM Tel: 1 (800) 531-5501 Email: AFPC.DPFC.POW.MIA@us.af.mil



U.S. Army
Department of the Army
Tel: 1 (800) 892-2490





U.S. Marine Corps Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps Tel: 1 (866) 210-3421, Option 1

Email: repatriation@usmc.mil



U.S. Navy

Navy Personnel Command Casualty Assistance Division

Tel: 1 (800) 443-9298 Email: NavyPow-Mia.fct@navy.mil













#### UPCOMING FAMILY EVENTS

#### Family Meetings | November 2024 - August 2025

Family Member Updates provide an opportunity for families of missing personnel to receive case-specific updates and speak directly with agency representatives. Dates and locations are subject to change.

#### Schedule

- November 2, 2024 Portland, ME
- February 22, 2025 Sacramento, CA
- March 22, 2025 New Orleans, LA
- May 3, 2025 Bellevue, WA
- June 26-27, 2025 Omaha, NE (Vietnam War Annual Government Briefings)
- August 7-8, 2025 Arlington, VA (Korean and Cold War Annual Government Briefings)

#### Important Notes

Family Member Updates are tentative and subject to change.

For the latest information, scan the QR code below to visit DPAA's FamWeb:





