
10th
DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY
Anniversary
Edition
2025 Year In Review



A DECADE OF RESOLVE

In addition to capturing the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's (DPAA) worldwide mission over Fiscal Year 2025, this 10th Anniversary Edition of DPAA's Year in Review chronicles a decade of compassion, integrity, teamwork, respect, and innovation that have been applied to this sacred mission. These values have driven the fullest possible accounting of Americans missing from the nation's past conflicts.

The compilation of images, stories, and information over the past ten years captures the professionalism, perseverance, and passion of DPAA's military and civilian personnel, past and present, who have worked tirelessly to bring long-sought answers to families of the missing. Just as importantly, this 2025 Year in Review serves as a tribute to the **1,799 Americans** who have been accounted for since the Agency's establishment as well as the resolute commitment to search for, recover, identify, and repatriate those who made the supreme sacrifice in World War II through Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and have not returned home.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3–12 **Across the Decade**

DPAA Leaders; today's military and civilian faces; posters; and other notables.

13–19 **Agency Overview**

An overview of days of recognition and agency highlights.

20–54 **Fiscal Year 2025**

Highlighted by the milestone achievement of the Agency accounting for 231 Americans, DPAA personnel continued to perform its sacred mission with distinction over the past year across the globe.

55–83 **THEN: Events to Remember**

Review the notable events and activities over the last decade that shaped the Agency to what it is today.

Bringing the Mission to Life: Watch, Learn, and Engage

Step into the world of the DPAA and experience the agency's sacred mission up close and in action. Scan the QR codes throughout this Year in Review to access exclusive video footage and stories from key events, field missions, projects, and more.

- See the science behind identifications
- Follow recovery teams across the globe
- Watch ceremonies honoring the fallen
- Read about missing Americans coming home



DPAA Mission Overview
This video explains the agency's mission to achieve the fullest possible accounting for missing personnel, honoring their service and providing answers to their families and the nation.

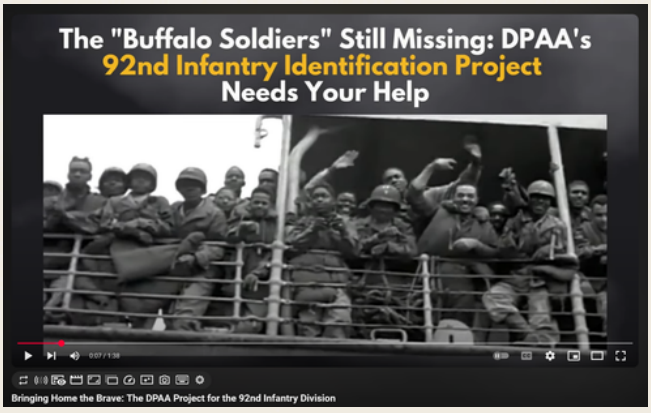
How it works:

Scan the QR codes
Watch and explore DPAA's mission in motion
Every video and vignette tells a story

01 West Loch Project

This video highlights the ongoing effort to identify service members lost in the 1944 West Loch Disaster, one of the worst non-combat tragedies in U.S. military history. Watch as the process of disinterment and identification continues for those buried as unknowns at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu.



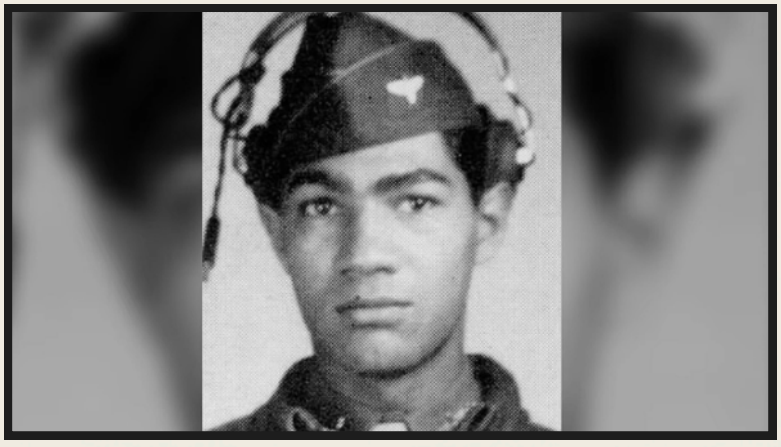


02 Bringing Home the Brave: The 92nd Infantry Division Project

This video highlights DPAA's ongoing efforts to recover and identify the fallen soldiers of the 92nd Infantry Division, one of two African American divisions in the U.S. Army during WWII. Follow the journey of these Buffalo Soldiers, from their assembly at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, to their battles on the Gothic Line in Italy, and learn how DPAA is working to bring them home.

03 Lost Tuskegee Airman Found After 75 Years

Watch the story of U.S. Army Air Forces Capt. Lawrence E. Dickson, a Tuskegee Airman missing since WWII, and how he was identified and recovered through a collaborative effort to honor his legacy.



DIRECTORS



KELLY **MCKEAGUE**
2017 - PRESENT



MICHAEL **LINNINGTON**
2015 - 2016



VICE ADM. MICHAEL **FRANKEN**
2015 - 2015

PRINCIPAL DEPUTY DIRECTOR



FERN **SUMPTER WINBUSH**
2015 - PRESENT

Senior Leaders Through TIME

DEPUTY DIRECTORS OF OPERATIONS



CAPT. MEGAN **BODNAR**
2025 - PRESENT



JOHN **FIGUERRES**
2024 - 2025



COL. MATTHEW **BRANNEN**
2022 - 2024



REAR ADM. DARIUS **BANAJI**
2019 - 2022

DEPUTY DIRECTORS OF OPERATIONS



REAR ADM. JON **KREITZ**
2017 - 2019



BRIG. GEN. MARK **SPINDLER**
2015 - 2017



MAJ. GEN. KELLY **MCKEAGUE**
2015 - 2015

SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISORS



SGT. MAJ. LAUREN **FLORES**
2025 - PRESENT



SGT. MAJ. ANTHONY **WORSLEY**
2022 - 2025



SGT. MAJ. RONALD **GARDNER**
2021 - 2022



SGT. MAJ. KERRICK **LOYD**
2020 - 2021



SGT. MAJ. JOAQUIN **ANDUJAR**
2019 - 2020



SGT. MAJ. MICHAEL **SWAM**
2015 - 2019

Today's DPAA Professionals

Behind every mission is a team of military and civilian professionals from diverse skill sets — each bringing expertise, dedication, and compassion to their critical roles of accounting for the missing. From across the globe, these are just some of the many faces working to bring answers to families and to fulfill the nation's promise.



KIM ANH
DETACHMENT TWO
FINANCIAL ASSISTANT



ANDY STETSON
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
OFFUTT SITE MANAGER



KELLY NGUYEN
ACQUISITION
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT



SFC MATTHEW MOANA
EXPEDITIONARY SUPPORT
TEAM LEADER/TEAM SGT



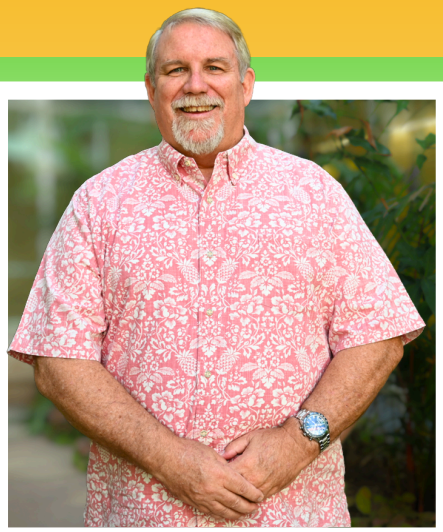
CLAIRE BARNEWOLT
INDO-PACIFIC
HISTORIAN



KENNETH BOOK
PARTNERSHIP & INNOVATIONS
OPERATIONS PROGRAM MANAGER



MASTER SGT LAURA GRAINGER
EUROPEAN-MEDITERRANIAN
MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM



JOHN MCMILLAN
SECURITY
OPSEC PROGRAM MANAGER



CAPT CAROLINE KERN
LOGISTICS
AIRFIELD OPS & PLANS BRANCH CHIEF



TECH SGT MICHAEL CASTRO
GENERAL COUNSEL
OPERATIONS LAW NCOIC



MAJ ADAM EDGERTON
FRONT OFFICE
DEPUTY CHIEF, CURRENT OPS & PLANS



YASMINE MUHAMMAD
OUTREACH & COMMUNICATIONS
COMMUNITY RELATIONS SPECIALIST



MASTER SGT CHRISTIAN ORTIZ MORALES
EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN DETACHMENT
SUPERINTENDENT



LT TOM HETZEL
POLICY & PLANS
POLICY ANALYST



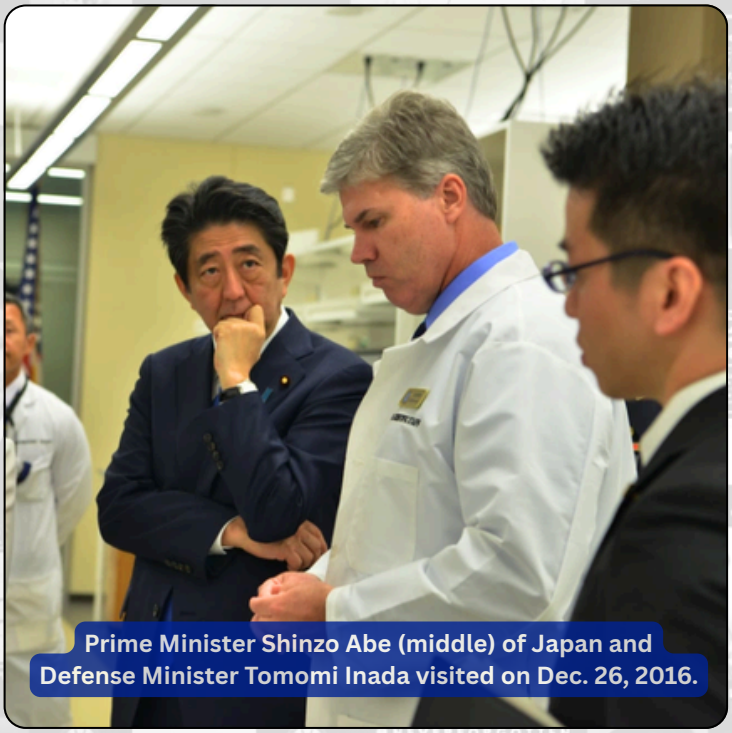
KELLY RAWLS
COMPTROLLER
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ANALYST



PS 1 ALEJANDRA GONZALEZ BERIO
HUMAN CAPITAL
LEADING PETTY OFFICER

DISTINGUISHED *Visitors*

Over the past decade, DPAA has been privileged to host distinguished civic and military leaders to include three foreign Heads of State. These visits reinforce DPAA being a tool of engagement for the U.S. Government to advance alliances and partnerships, and promote American interests and values in the 54 countries DPAA works in.



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (middle) of Japan and Defense Minister Tomomi Inada visited on Dec. 26, 2016.



Taro Kono (middle), Foreign Minister of Japan, visited on Aug. 22, 2018.



Republic of Korea Vice Minister of National Defense Choo Suk Suh visited on Sept. 26, 2018.



Vice President of the United States Mike Pence hosted the repatriation ceremony of remains on Aug. 1, 2018, at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam, Hawaii. North Korea had turned over the remains from the Korean War.



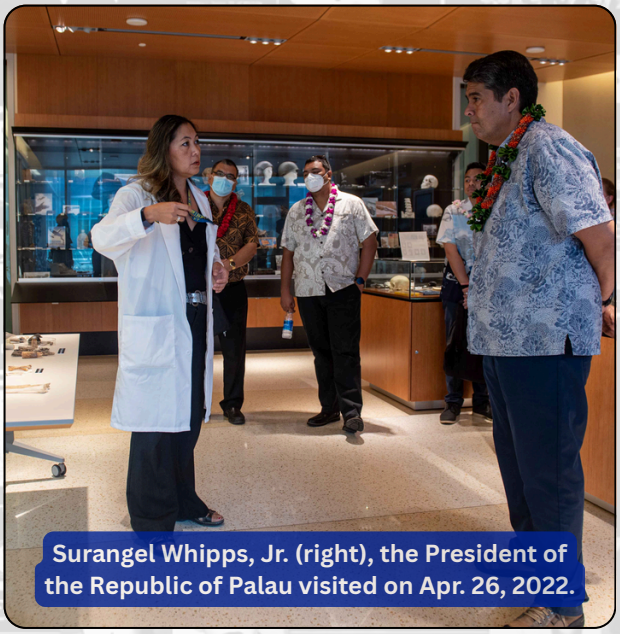
Prabowo Subianto, the Republic of Indonesia Minister of Defense visits the POW/MIA Corridor at the Pentagon on Oct. 23, 2020.



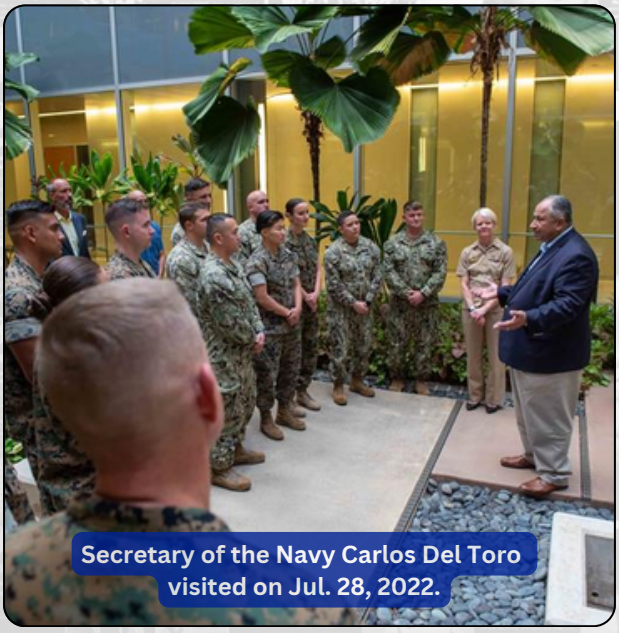
Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III visited on Apr. 30, 2021.



Suh Wook (second from right), Minister of National Defense, Republic of Korea visited on Sep. 21, 2021.



Surangel Whipps, Jr. (right), the President of the Republic of Palau visited on Apr. 26, 2022.



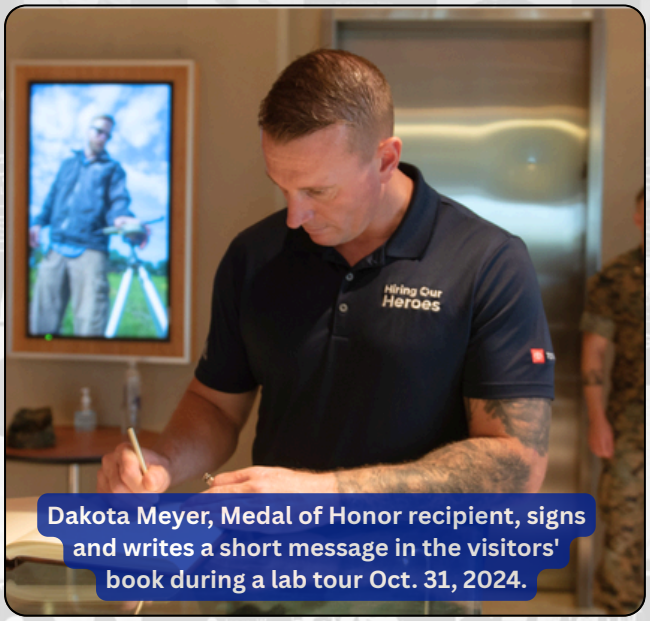
Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro visited on Jul. 28, 2022.



U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea Philip Goldberg visited on Jan. 19, 2023.



Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, and First Lady Kim Jung-sook visited on Sept. 22, 2021, where they officiated a major repatriation ceremony at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam, Hawaii.



Dakota Meyer, Medal of Honor recipient, signs and writes a short message in the visitors' book during a lab tour Oct. 31, 2024.



Senior Lt. Gen. Vo Minh Luong, Deputy Minister of National Defense, Socialist Republic of Vietnam visited on Aug. 6, 2024.



German Federal Minister of Defence Boris Pistorius visted on Jul. 30, 2024

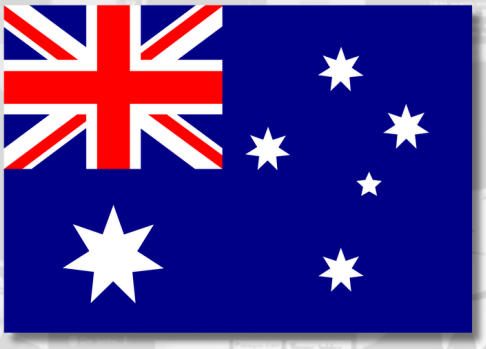


Mr. Kim Min Jae, Deputy Minister of Interior and Safety, for the Republic of Korea visited on Aug. 7, 2024.



The U.S. Ambassador to China, David Purdue, visited on Jul. 7, 2025.

This is a special thank you to the many guests and distinguished visitors that have met with us to continue our mission and help reinforce our ongoing recovery efforts.



Australia



Cambodia



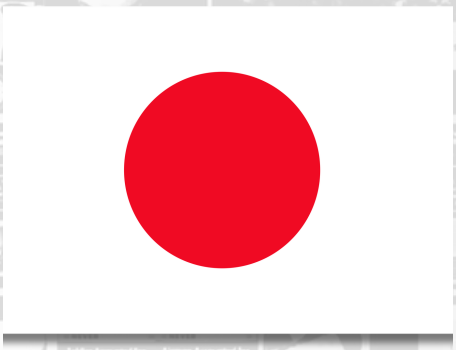
China



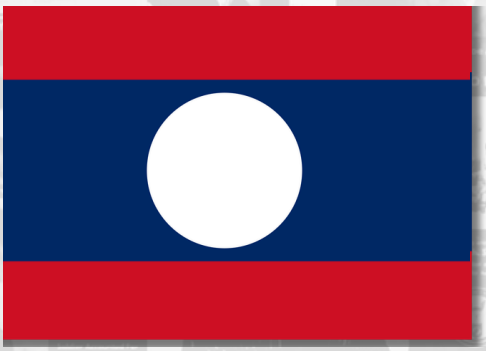
Germany



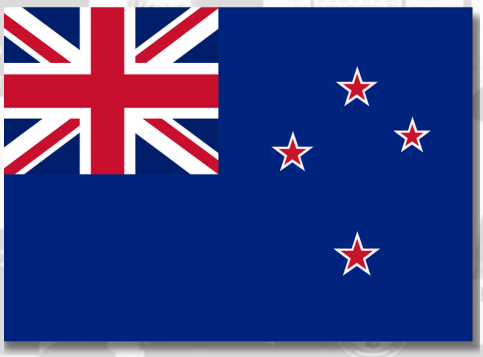
Indonesia



Japan



Laos



New Zealand



Palau



Phillipines



South Korea



Vietnam

RETURNED HOME

ACCOUNTED FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025

*In accounting for these **231** U.S. Service Members in FY2025, DPAA achieved an unprecedented milestone in its 10-year history. This accomplishment is reflective of years of painstaking historical research, field work, and scientific analyses by the Agency, the Department of War and private partners.*

WORLD WAR II

Army

1Lt Robert Aikman
2Lt Charles Arnao
2Lt Charles Atteberry
Pfc Lawrence Beard
CWO Charles Benthien
Pvt Lawrence Beyer
Cpt Willibald Bianchi
1Lt Ralph Blythe
Pvt Henry Bordner
Pfc Joseph Borsysiewicz
2Lt William Bucey
Pvt Roman Cherubini
1Sgt Hiram Collins
1Sgt David Crouse
Pvt Jasper Davis
Pfc Claude Dewberry
Cpl Williiam Diekmann
Pvt Otis Dill
Cpl Floyd Dunning
Pvt Joseph Gala
Pfc Marlin Gallaway
Sgt Simon Garelick
Pvt Philip Geary
Sgt Theordore Gerth
Pfc St. Clair Gibson
Sgt Robert Goldsworthy
Pvt Rex Gore
Pvt Jack Green
S/Sgt Paul Gregg
Pfc Sylvester Haggins
Pfc Nicholas Hartman
Pfc James Heigh
Cpl Peter Helisek
Pvt Mack Homer
S/Sgt Paul Huzarewicz
Pvt Leonard Jackson
Sgt Melvin Jones
Pvt Mack Kidd
S/Sgt Charles Knecht
Pfc Edward Kramer
Pfc William Kutnock
Pvt Alfred Langevin
Pvt Ben Leslie
Pvt Donald Lichty
Pfc Wilbert Linsenbardt
Pvt Condia Lynch
Pvt Kenneth Matson
Pfc Charles Milam
T/Sgt Joseph Moore
Sgt Jay Moreland
S/Sgt William Moreland
Maj James Odonovan
Pfc Manuel Pacheco
Cpt Paul Pearson
Cpl Bruce Penny
Pfc Robert Pitts
Pvt Blanchard Pruitt
Pvt Alex Raines
Pvt Leo Rakoff
LtC Louis Roemer
Capt Ralph Rowland
1Lt Wilburn Saunders
Pvt Erwin Schopp
Pvt Euguene Seger
Cpl George Sepsey
S/Sgt Junior Shelton
Pfc Robert Shotton
T5 Ell Simantz
Pvt Charles Smalley
T4 Reuben Smiddy
Pvt Henry Smith
Pfc Richard Summers
Pvt. Warner Sutherland
Sgt Ivor Thornton
Pvt Harold Tullis
Cpl Ernest Ulrich
Cpl Richard Veal
Pvt Carl Vines
Pvt Richard Waite
Cpl James Walker
Pfc John Walko
Pvt Ira Warren
Pfc Milo Whipple
Pfc Charles Winters
T5 Daniel Wyatt

Army Air Forces

Pvt Lowell Akers
Pvt Donald Bays
Cpl William Berrier
Pvt Lewis Bolton
1Lt George Bradbury
2Lt Joseph Burke
Sgt Sidney Burke
2Lt Justice Buttala
1Lt Henry Carlin
T/Sgt Truman Causey
T/Sgt Russel Chitwood
Pfc Lee Clendenning
S/Sgt John Danneker
Sgt Thomas Deitman
T/Sgt Donald Dorman
2Lt Donald Durand
S/Sgt Irvin Ellingson
S/Sgt Stephen Fatur
T/Sgt Clarence Gibbs
Cpl John Ginzl
2Lt Jason Goldwater
S/Sgt Nicholas Governale
Pfc Reuben Habecker
S/Sgt Paul Heggemeier
2Lt Nathaniel Hightower
2Lt Dwight Holmes
2Lt Milton Hymes
S/Sgt Chester Johnson
Cpl Delmont Johnston
2Lt Frank Johnstone
S/Sgt Clifford Keeney
S/Sgt Robert Keuchel
S/Sgt Kenneth Kramer
T/Sgt John Larkins
Cpl Lester Libolt
Cpt Arthur Lingo
S/Sgt John Mann
2Lt Robert McCollum
1Lt Charles McCook
Pvt Herbert McLaughlin
WOJG William McMichael
1Lt Gerald Melofchik
2Lt Byron Michener
1Lt Woody Owen
S/Sgt John Pagliuso
S/Sgt James Pirtle
T5 Gurnie Richard
T5 Edwin Ross
S/Sgt Gustave Secunda
1Lt Morton Sher
Pfc Bernard Sweet
Pfc Norman Towner
Pvt Bennett Waters
1Lt George Wilson
Sgt Henry Younge

RETURNED HOME

231

ACCOUNTED FOR

WORLD WAR II (CONT.)

Marine Corps

Pvt Raymond Hesslink
Cpl Stephen Mayer
Pfc Edgar Norcross
Pfc Norton Retzsch
Pfc Luther Rhodes
Cpl John Ruark
Sgt Fram Schmaltz
Pfc John Newstrom

Navy

F1C Edward Bowden
CM2C William Burns
LTJG Ralph Dupont
SK3 Robert Garcia
ENS George Gilbert
ENS Howard Holding
SEA2 Harlan Johnson
ENS Eugene Mandeberg
ENS Delbert Martin
S2C Jerome Mullaney
SEA1 Wayne Newton
ACMM John Reimer
ENS Joseph Richey
LTJG Thomas Ruth
CWT William Snow

KOREAN WAR

Air Force

1st Lt. Howard Odell

Army

Pfc Shirley Andrews
Sgt Jack Baker
Cpl George Barbiere
Pvt Lester Bauer
Pvt Roland Bowser
Pfc Robert Brewster
Cpl James Brock
Pfc Donald Burmingham
Pvt Arthur Carlsen
Pfc Frederick Carrino
Pfc Charles Carroll
Cpl Celestino Chavez
Cpl Joshua Carruth
Pvt George Curley
Cpl Deloren Dage
Pfc Thomas Daniels
Pfc Nicholas Dellolio
Pvt Harold Dulyea
Cpl Roger Duquesne
Pfc Albert Estrada
Pfc William Farrell
Pvt Albert Faust
Pfc Lonnie Fields
Pfc Rodger Fields
Cpt Charles Gibson
MSg Luther Grace
Sgt Rosslyn Gresens
Cpl Delmer Grissom
Cpl George Hagie
Cpl William Harper
Pfc Andrew Hathaway
Pfc Vester Hicks
Cpl George Hill
Pfc Paul Hoots
1LT William Hott
Cpl Ray Johnson
Pfc Earl Kibbey
Pfc Anthony Konze
Pvt Richard Lennox
Pfc Norman Levesque
Sfc George Manring
Pfc Edwin Martin
Cpl Orace Mestas
Pfc John Moore
Pfc Thomas Neiswinger
Pfc Donald Nickel
Cpl Elwyn Nordyke
Pfc Marvin Patton
Pvt Walter Pytak
Pfc Vernon Rhine
Sfc Leslie Solomon
Pfc Oscar Sprague
Pvt John Stovall
Pfc Elijah Trannon
Pfc Howard Troup
Pvt Vincent Vega

Marine Corps

Capt. Franklyn Stratton

VIETNAM WAR

Air Force

MSgt. James Calfee
Capt. Donald Downing
SSgt. Henry Gish
TSgt. Willis Hall
Lt. Col. Walter Renelt
TSgt. Donald Springsteadah

Army

SP5 Donald Gervais

Navy

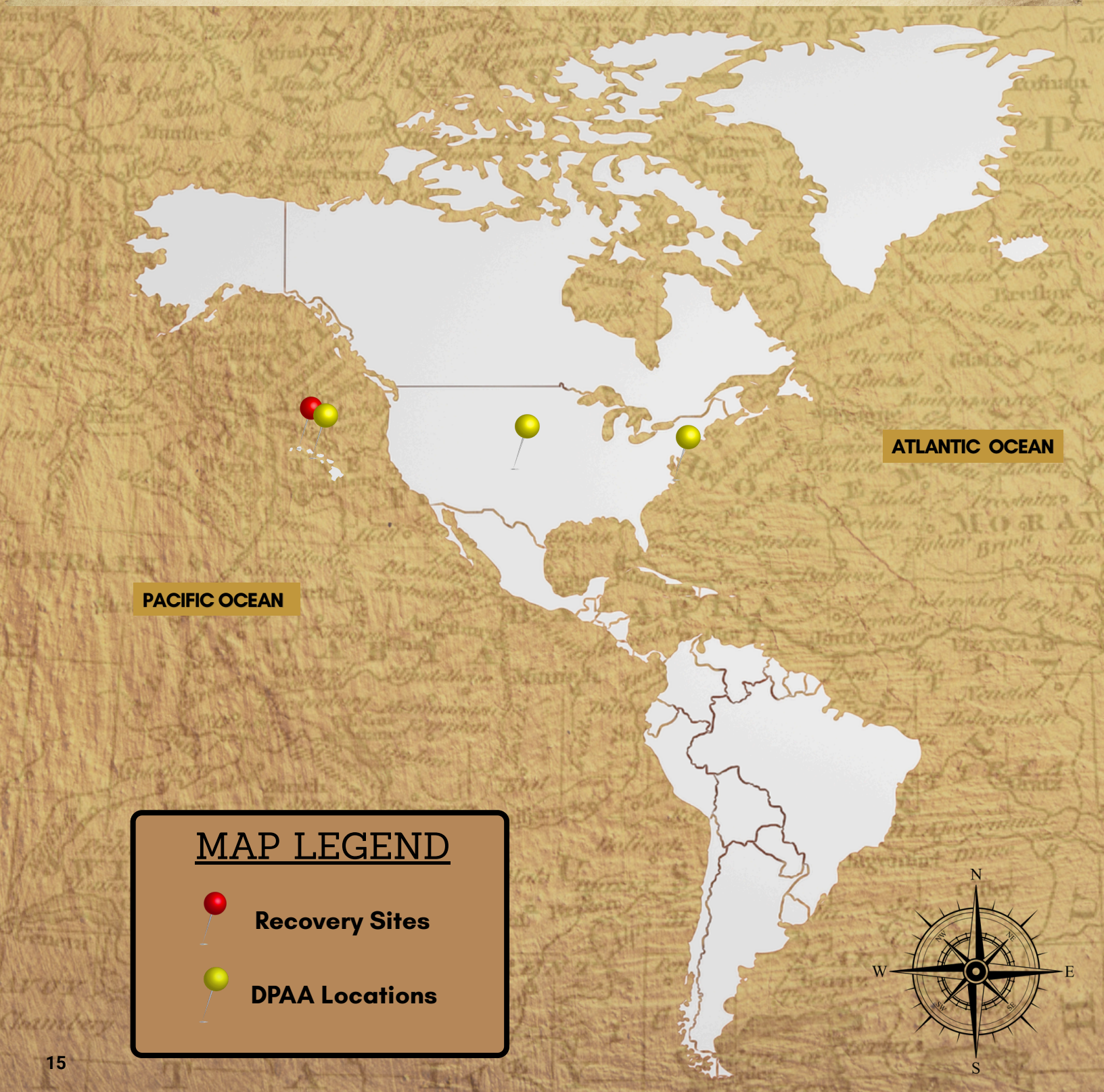
LCDR Thomas Scheurich

FULFILLING OUR NATION'S PROMISE

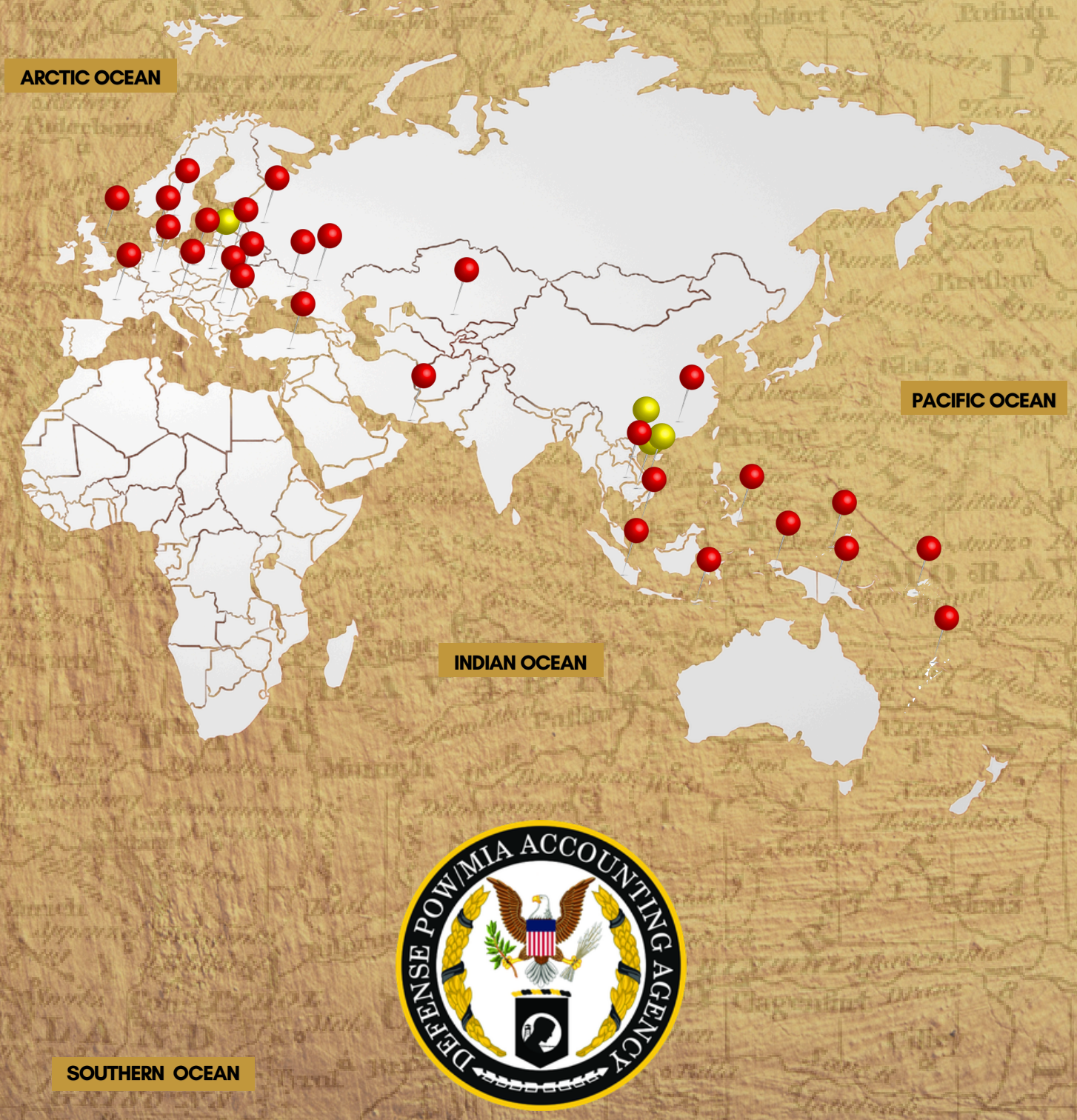
DPAA

DPAA AROUND THE WORLD

In FY2025, DPAA and its partners conducted a total of **188 field activities** across the globe to investigate, recover, and repatriate the remains of Americans missing from past conflicts. The maps below highlight DPAA's worldwide locations and the countries where these 54 investigations, 63 recoveries, and 71 disinterments took place.



- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Cambodia
- China
- Croatia
- Denmark
- Fiji
- France
- Germany
- Guam
- Indonesia
- Italy
- Kuwait
- Laos
- Luxembourg
- Netherlands
- Palau
- Papua New Guinea
- Philippines
- Poland
- Slovenia
- Soloman Islands
- South Korea
- Thailand
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Vanuatu
- Vietnam



MEMORIAL DAY

HONORING ALL WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

2025



Europe-Mediterranean Operations Support Division Deputy Chief, **Air Force Maj. Carlos Wilkinson**, speaks at the Police Memorial Park, Las Vegas, Nevada.



Forensic Anthropologist, **Mr. Hugh Tuller**, speaks at Fort Bayard National Cemetery, New Mexico.



Mission Planner, **Army Staff Sgt. Sarah Lindsey**, speaks at at the Bath National Cemetery, New York.



Development and Integration Officer, **Mr. Justin Budd**, speaks at the Riverview Memorial Gardens, Worland, Wyoming.



Joint Military Manpower and Personnel Actions, **Air Force Tech. Sgt. Victoria Artibee**, speaks at the Barrancas National Cemetery, Pensacola, Florida.



Lead Defense Travel Administrator, **Mr. Nicholas Deweever**, speaks at Woodlawn National Cemetery, Elmira, New York.



DPAA Director Kelly McKeague delivers remarks at Ardennes American Cemetery, Neupré, Belgium. The cemetery is administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission, a key DPAA partner.



Partnerships and Innovation Deputy Director, **Dr. Jesse Stephen**, speaks at Bakersfield National Cemetery, California.



Europe-Mediterranean directorate Senior Enlisted Leader, **Army Master Sgt. John Meholick**, speaks at the Golden Gate National Cemetery, California.



Acting Records Manager, **Air Force Capt. Jennifer Vella**, speaks at the Calverton National Cemetery, New York.



Country Desk Officer, **Dr. Stephen Johnson**, speaks at Pikes Peak National Cemetery, Colorado.



Country Desk Officer, **Mr. Poul Graverson**, speaks at Northwoods National Cemetery, Wisconsin.



Forensic Anthropologist, **Dr. Alec Christensen**, speaks at the Indiantown Gap National Cemetery, Pennsylvania.

DISTINGUISHED DIPLOMATES

ABFA
AMERICAN BOARD OF FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY

This year, DPAA is proud to recognize the five scientists who passed the demanding **American Board of Forensic Anthropology (ABFA)** examination and met rigorous competency standards, thereby becoming the latest AFBA **Diplomates** in the Agency.

This distinctive achievement is the highest professional credential in the field of forensic anthropology. Each Diplomate adheres to a strict code of ethics and pursues continued professional development to maintain their certification.

2025's Newest Diplomates



Dr. Rylan Hawke



Dr. Kaitlin East



Dr. Katie Whitmore



Dr. Amanda Friend



Dr. Valerie Sgheiza

Of the **130 active AFBA Diplomates worldwide, 24 of them (18%)** contribute their talents and expertise to the sacred DPAA mission. These are the other DPAA forensic anthropologists who achieved Diplomate certification in prior years.

- Dr. Greg Berg
- Dr. Carrie Brown
- Dr. John Byrd
- Dr. Franklin Damann
- Dr. Janet Finlayson
- Dr. Laurel Freas
- Dr. Matthew Go
- Dr. Megan Ingvoldstad
- Dr. Larkin Kennedy
- Dr. Sarah Kindschuh
- Dr. Kyle McCormick
- Dr. Mary Megyesi
- Dr. Nicolette Parr
- Dr. Katie Rubin
- Dr. Katherine Skorpinski
- Dr. Rebecca Taylor
- Dr. Denise To
- Dr. Traci Van Deest
- Dr. Debra Zinni



OCTOBER

RISING ABOVE THE FLOOD

Courtesy photo by U.S. Army Col. Scott Grogan

DPAA 25-1LA recovery team members carry their 72-hour backpacks overhead as they cross along a flooding area during their mission in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Oct. 27, 2024. DPAA recovery teams visit remote and hard-to-access areas in hopes of recovering an American lost during the Vietnam War.





ARMY NATIONAL GUARD PFC. HARRY JERELE



OCTOBER

ARMY GUARDSMAN RETURNS HOME

Photo by Barbara Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers honor the homecoming of their comrade-in-arms, Pfc. Harry Jerele, at Chicago O'Hare International Airport on Oct. 1, 2024. A member of the 192nd Tank Battalion, Jerele was activated for federal service, arriving in the Philippines shortly before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He was captured in the fall of Corregidor in April 1942, survived the Bataan Death March, died in the Cabanatuan POW Camp, and was buried as an Unknown in the Manila American Cemetery.

His 89-year-old niece, Rosemarie Dillon, who was 5 when her uncle went missing, receives the U.S. Flag from Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard, during the full military honors burial at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, Illinois, Oct. 4, 2024.



NOVEMBER

WEST LOCH ANSWERS 80 YEARS LATER

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Ariel Owings

A DPAA team conducts a disinterment ceremony at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Nov. 4, 2024, for eight Unknowns who were lost in the May 1944 West Loch disaster at the Pearl Harbor Naval Base. In total, 49 Unknowns were disinterred as part of the West Loch Project, which commenced 80 years after the explosions that claimed the lives of 132 personnel during munitions loading operations. DPAA forensic anthropologist, Dr. Janet Finlayson, is the project lead and is featured in the video link.

View the West Loch Project video by using this QR code.

*MANY WOMEN PAID THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE DURING THE WAR, AND **88 FEMALE SERVICE MEMBERS** WERE TAKEN AS PRISONERS OF WAR.*

WE CAN STILL DO IT!





Scan the QR code to learn more about the "Rosies" journey and their visit to DPAA.

DECEMBER

REUNITING WITH HISTORY

ROSIE THE RIVETERS VISIT DPAA HAWAII LABORATORY

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Morgan Burgess

Jeanne Gibson and Delphine Klayput (left), both referred to as "Rosies," received a tour of the laboratory and had the opportunity to examine a B-24 metal plate which a DPAA team recovered from a Papua New Guinea crash site. Inscribed on the historical artifact were the names of six Rosie the Riveters who had built the bomber.

The Rosie nickname originally comes from a Redd Evans and John Loeb song, "Rosie the Riveter," and became synonymous with the women who worked in the previously male-dominated industrial fields. The image of a strong, working woman, inspired women to enlist and serve.

Delphine worked as a certified clerk in Baltimore, and Jeanne served as a shipyard welder in Seattle and Anchorage in support of the U.S. during World War II from 1941 to 1944. The agency welcomed them just two days after the 83rd anniversary of the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor.

Approximately 10 million men were inducted into the military by the end of the war in 1945, and although women were not required to do so, more than 350,000 enlisted in the service as new opportunities opened in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Army Air Corps, and Coast Guard. Combat roles were off limits to women, but they still played an influential part in supporting the war effort. Many women paid the ultimate sacrifice during the war, and 88 female Service members were taken as prisoners of war.

"My mother asked me; 'would you be willing to quit school and go work in Baltimore for the war effort?' And I said, when do I leave?," said Delphine, who put her high school education on hold to travel to work in Maryland after receiving an invitation from her uncle. She added, "I would have rather been in school, but everybody else was joining to serve and doing their part, so I felt I had to do my part."





JANUARY

RECOVERY SITE PREPARATIONS

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

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Madison Cook (left), a DPAA recovery NCO, assembles water piping for a wet screening station at an excavation site in Laos, Jan. 17, 2025. The above photo captures a wider view of the DPAA recovery team setting up the station which is essential for separating potential osseous material, aircraft wreckage, or life support equipment from hundreds of cubic meters of soil that are excavated during the 45-day mission.

Scan the QR code to view more images from this recovery mission.







FEBRUARY

HIGH GROUND

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

A DPAA recovery team operated on one of the most complex and challenging missions in Laos, Feb. 14, 2025. Operating on Phou Pha Thi, a 5,600 ft mountain in Houaphan Province, the team was searching for the remains of Service members lost in the March 1968 North Vietnamese commando attack of Lima Site 85, a clandestine facility that provided tactical air navigation assistance to U.S. aircrews. There are 7 Airmen unaccounted for from the site, and overall, more than 280 personnel are missing in Laos from the Vietnam War.

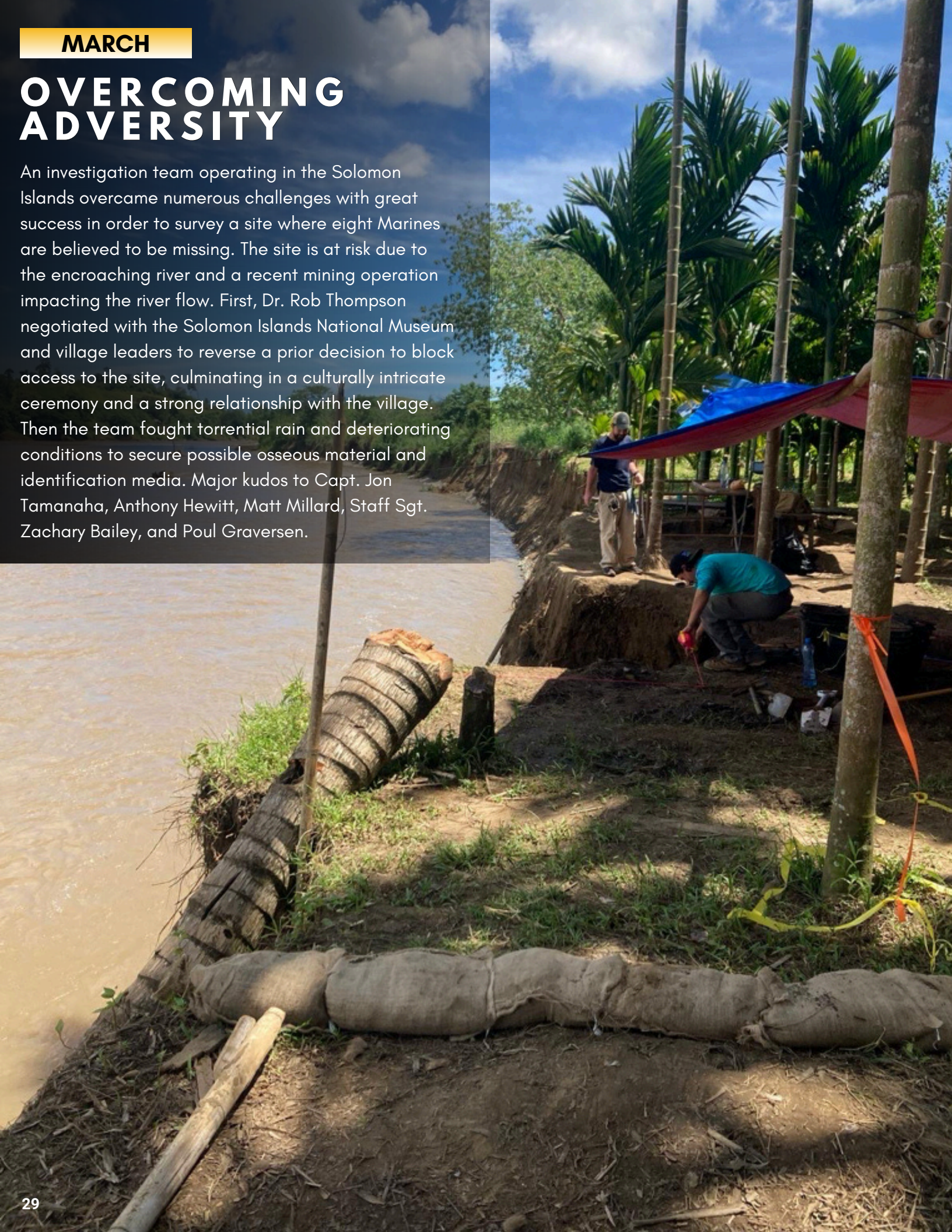
View the Laos recovery video by using this QR code.



MARCH

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

An investigation team operating in the Solomon Islands overcame numerous challenges with great success in order to survey a site where eight Marines are believed to be missing. The site is at risk due to the encroaching river and a recent mining operation impacting the river flow. First, Dr. Rob Thompson negotiated with the Solomon Islands National Museum and village leaders to reverse a prior decision to block access to the site, culminating in a culturally intricate ceremony and a strong relationship with the village. Then the team fought torrential rain and deteriorating conditions to secure possible osseous material and identification media. Major kudos to Capt. Jon Tamanaha, Anthony Hewitt, Matt Millard, Staff Sgt. Zachary Bailey, and Poul Graversen.





APRIL

WINTER CHALLENGES

An investigation team comprised of Dr. Mick Polczynski, Dr. Nicole Eilers, and Katie Stollenwerk from our European Mediterranean Directorate with Master Sgt. Jeff Tremel from the Surgeon General Directorate and Blake Ayala from Scientific Analysis made their way through an unexpected snowstorm that brought more than 12 inches of snow in order to search for the isolated grave of a B-24 pilot who did not survive a bailout over Poland in December 1944.

APRIL

A FAMILY REUNITED

Deptartment of War photo by Ashley Wright

Heather Harris, European Mediterranean Directorate Director, speaks with the family of U.S. Army Air Forces Sgt. Edward S. Kovaleski, 25, of Southbridge, Massachusetts, during his funeral at Arlington National Cemetery April 9, 2025. Kovaleski was a B-24 crewman who went missing when his plane went down in Austria during World War II and was recovered by DPAA partner Geoscope Services, Ltd. in 2024. Kovaleski's second cousin said the family had drifted apart until a genealogist reached out to ask for his DNA. He said DPAA's work brought them back together.





MAY

ACADEMY ASSIST

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Keion Jackson

Midshipman 2nd Class Jordan Trantham, a student at the U.S. Naval Academy, uses a pin pointer to search for a metal hit that could be potential material evidence of unaccounted-for U.S. personnel in South Korea, May 28, 2025. As part of their summer training, two Midshipmen from the Naval Academy assisted on a Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency mission. The experience offers a unique opportunity for future Navy officers to gain hands-on insight into joint-service operations, and the vital role DPAA plays in accounting for personnel from previous conflicts.

Scan this QR code to read the full story:

MAY

MARINE'S VIETNAM MISSION REKINDLES FAMILY LEGACY

By Cpl. Megan Ozaki,
DPAA Public Affairs

For Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Kenneth FuQua, Short-term Individual Mobilization Augmentee, "No man left behind" isn't just a motto — it's family history. A third-generation Marine with deep ties to Vietnam through his grandfather and uncles, FuQua volunteered for a grueling mission with the DPAA to help bring America's missing home.

On May 30, 2025, he worked with quiet determination under the blistering sun and through unyielding clay — driven by promises kept, a revived passion for poetry, and the unshakable belief that every fallen warrior deserves to rest on home soil.

Scan the QR code to read his full story — and the poem he penned on the very ground his grandfather once fought.





MARINE CORPS GUNNERY SGT. KENNETH FUQUA'S GRANDMOTHER, RETIRED U.S. MARINE CORPS CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 WILMA STEVENSON

A LETTER, A LEGACY, AND THE SEARCH FOR PVT. DONALD RAYMOND VOGEL

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Shay Stuart

Jennifer McDaniel held history in her hands—the last letter sent by her great uncle, Donald Raymond Vogel, before he went missing in April 1943. At a Family Member Update (FMU) held in Bellevue, Washington - May 3, 2025, McDaniel joined hundreds of families tethered to names, memories, and hope.

Vogel, a U.S. Army Air Forces private in WWII, disappeared in the Indo-Pacific. More than 80 years later, his great niece sat with DPAA leaders, including Principal Deputy Director Fern Sumpter Winbush and Indo-Pacific research chief Dr. Kyle Bracken, to share his story and provide a DNA sample.





Learn more about Jennifer's FMU experience by scanning the QR code.



"My great uncle's story is one of many. But today, I feel like it's finally being heard."

– Jennifer McDaniel




2M
6
4
2
1M











JUNE

UP FROM THE DEPTHS

U.S. Air Force photos by Staff Sgt. Taylor Crul

An underwater recovery team, comprised of personnel from DPAA and U.S. Army and U.S. Coast Guard dive units, conducted a mission in Khanh Hoa Province, Vietnam, June 4-July 2, 2025. The team excavated the site of a U.S. Army CH-47 helicopter that crashed over water in October 1971.







VIETNAM WAR ANNUAL GOVERNMENT BRIEFINGS, JUNE 26-27

OMAHA, NE



From left, Ned Lundquist and Johnie Webb conduct a panel on a retrospective look at the recovery efforts over the last 40 years.



The Vietnam War AGB served as a platform for DPAA to communicate progress in recovery efforts and discuss ongoing missions to families of unaccounted-for service members and civilians from the Vietnam War. Families were informed about the status of their loved ones, reassuring them that the government is committed to bringing closure and accountability. Families also had the opportunity to engage with DPAA representatives, third-party researchers, and other family members in a conversation-based environment. A remembrance ceremony provided the opportunity to share personal stories and experiences related to their loved ones. 2025 marked several significant milestones, including the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, the 40th anniversary of sustained recovery efforts in Vietnam, and the 30th anniversary of normalized relations between the United States and Vietnam.



Dr. Katie Whitmore (right) leads a tour of DPAA's Offutt laboratory.



Ashley Conner, DPAA Outreach and Communications deputy director, talks with family members.



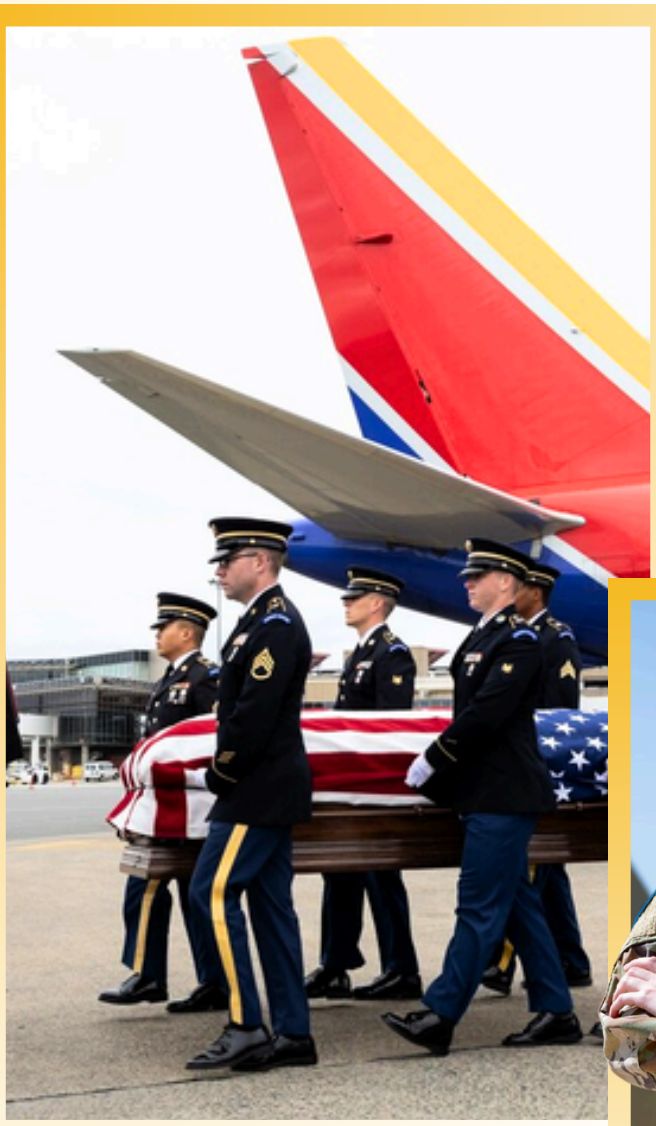


Families of unaccounted for Vietnam War American service members share stories about their missing loved ones during a remembrance ceremony.

GUARDIAN ESCORTS WWII AIRMAN HOME AFTER 80 YEARS

Just days after Memorial Day, as the nation honors those who gave their lives in service, 2nd Lt. Katherine Hendl carried out a deeply personal mission: escorting the remains of her great-great-uncle, Staff Sergeant Loring E. Lord, a U.S. Army Air Forces gunner killed in action during World War II, home to Massachusetts—nearly 80 years after he was declared missing in action.

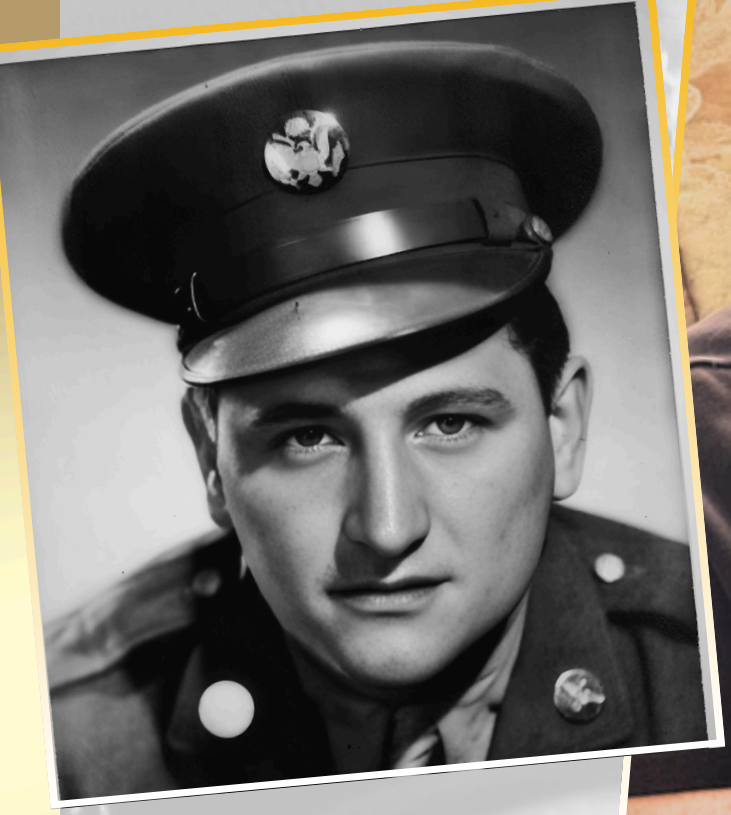
Hendl, a newly commissioned officer assigned to Space Training and Readiness Command, is currently attending Officer Training School through the 319th Combat Training Squadron at Peterson Space Force Base.







Learn more about 2nd Lt. Hendl's mission to return her Uncle home:





JULY

KEEPING THE FLAME OF HOPE BURNING; WWII LIGHTER REUNITED WITH MIA FAMILY

July 14, 2025

By Ashley M. Wright, DPAA Public Affairs

To some, it is an artifact from the greatest generation's darkest hour; to others, it is a two-ounce, two-inch piece of metal with a simple job, but to one family, it is the link to a hero who never came home.

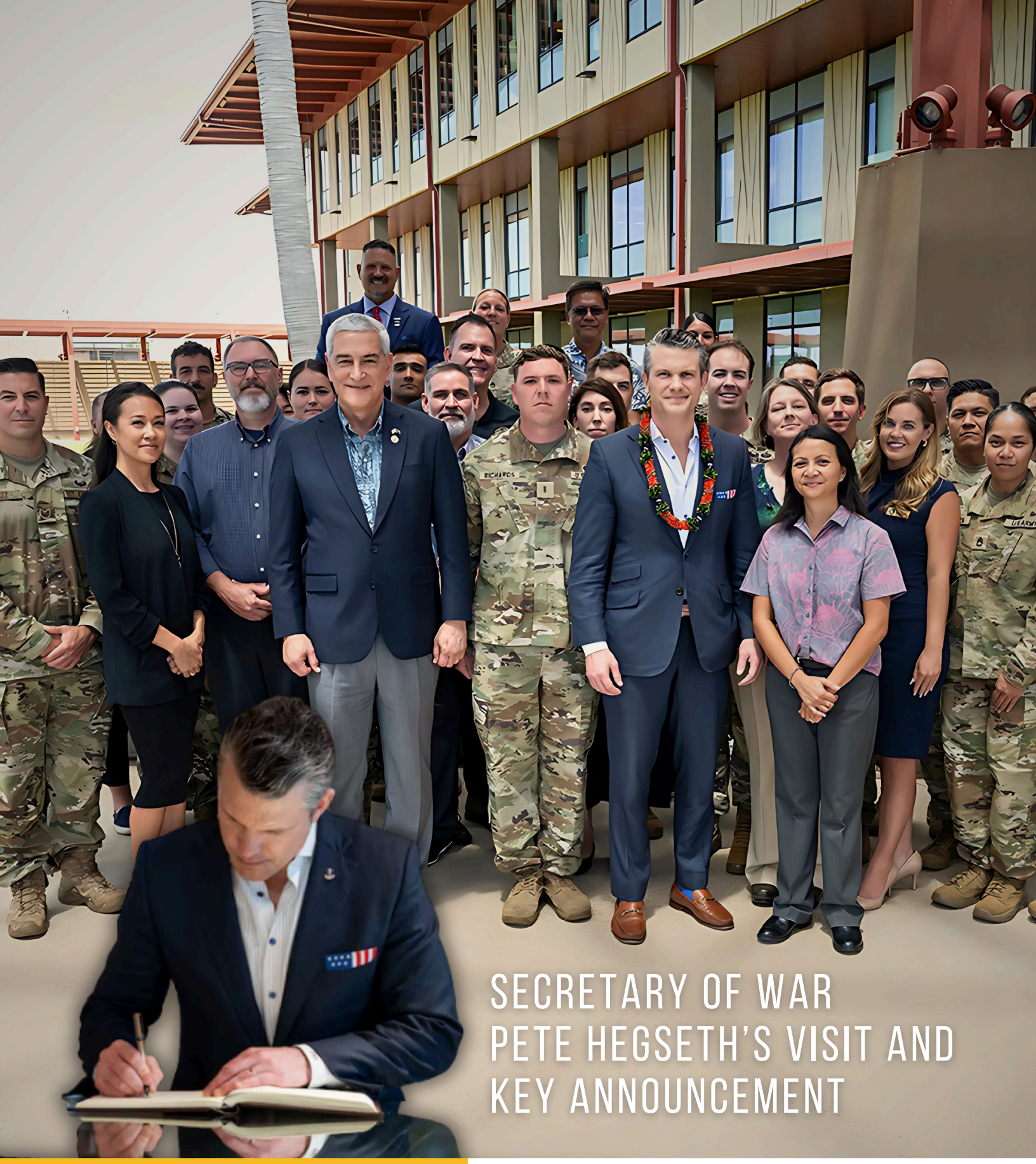
And thanks to the intervention of DPAA historians and the kindness of a stranger, turned friend, a Zippo lighter carried by missing Army Air Corps Staff Sgt. Michael Musashe is back with his family after 80 years.

Like so many mysteries in the digital age, it all started with a Facebook post. "It was purely by coincidence," said Vince Musashe, the sergeant's nephew, said. "It was my cousin's cousin that actually came across the Facebook post a year or so ago."

At a recent Family Member Update in New Orleans, Louisiana, members of the Musashe family sat down with Heather Harris, DPAA Europe-Mediterranean Directorate and Maj. Patrick Hannon, Army service casualty office, to discuss their missing loved one's cases.

Read the full account of how a lighter carried through WWII made its way home:

At the case summary review, Vince shared a screenshot of the "Great Lakes Lighter Club" Facebook page from 2019. The post was from a German-speaking citizen of Switzerland who collected lighters and showed a World War II era lighter inscribed "Musashe 1943" with parts of his service number visible and what appeared to be 27 hash marks on the lighter. Vince speculated that the 27 hash marks represented 27 missions, suggesting that the lighter had been removed from Musashe's body or from the aircraft wreckage.



SECRETARY OF WAR PETE HEGSETH'S VISIT AND KEY ANNOUNCEMENT

"FROM A BOX IN NORTH KOREA TO A NAME REMEMBERED."

DISCOVER THE JOURNEY BEHIND A HISTORIC MILESTONE IN DPAA'S MISSION.

U.S. ARMY 1ST LT. WILLIAM H. HOTT
32ND INFANTRY REGIMENT, 7TH INFANTRY DIVISION

KILLED IN ACTION DEC. 1, 1950
EAST JANGJIN (CHOSIN) RESERVOIR

100TH IDENTIFIED

FROM 55 BOXES TURNED OVER BY NORTH KOREA



"YOUR WORK MATTERS DEEPLY AND PROFOUNDLY. THANK YOU."

WATCH THE SECRETARY OF WAR'S ID ANNOUNCEMENT BY SCANNING THE QR CODE BELOW:



AVAR Partner RT



PNG National Museum and Art Gallery

united in

PURPOSE, COMMITTMENT, AND PASSION



DPAA-Malaysian Ministry of Defense 3rd Annual Joint Committee Meeting



Cotswold Archaeology



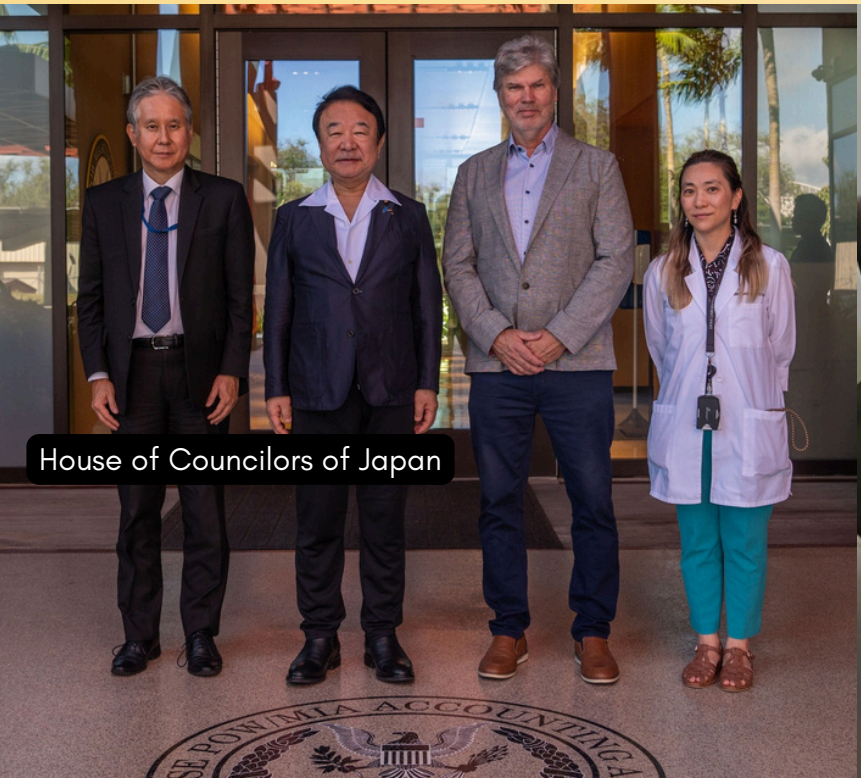
Ministry of National Defense Agency for KIA Recovery and Identification



Danish Royal Navy

Since its 2015 stand-up and having the authority with which to establish public-private partnerships, DPAA currently has 106 of them. In addition to the partnerships with U.S. and international universities and non-governmental organizations, DPAA has strong partnerships with foreign government entities.

Each partnership contributes critical capacity and capabilities to the mission of accounting for Americans missing from past conflicts. These collaborations expand DPAA's global reach from field investigations and recoveries to research and cutting-edge innovation initiatives that strengthen every stage of the accounting process.



House of Councilors of Japan



United Nations Command

JULY

GERMANY RECOVERY OF MISSING PILOT

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Ariel Owings

In July 2025, a DPAA recovery team operating in Germany searched for the remains of a U.S. Army Air Forces pilot missing from World War II. The team was augmented by U.S. Air Force Airmen from Ramstein Air Base, U.S. Army Soldiers from the 8th Engineer Support Battalion, a German private researcher, and student volunteers from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.



Mr. Hugh Tuller, scientific recovery expert with the DPAA, reviews excavation plans at the recovery site.



To the left: U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Jonathan Clark, a DPAA augmentee from Ramstein Air Base, dry-screens soil from a gridded unit, July 24, 2025.

To the right: Oliver Casadei, student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, screens soil during the recovery effort, July 4, 2025.



DPAA AND SOUTH KOREA'S MAKRI FORGE STRONGER PARTNERSHIP IN RECOVERING MISSING KOREAN WAR HEROES

By Sgt. Ashleigh Maxwell DPAA Public Affairs



DPAA and the Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense Agency for KIA Recovery and Identification, MAKRI, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Arlington, Virginia, Aug. 6, solidifying their commitment to recovering and identifying remains of service members missing from the Korean War. “We collectively have the best partnership that is beneficial to both our countries” said DPAA Director, Kelly McKeague.



“It’s emblematic of the values that we share as free, prosperous, stable democracies. It is foundational to the ironclad alliance we share, still to this day. It’s an honor for me to join Director Lee here.”

“Thank you for welcoming us,” said MAKRI Director, Keun-Won Lee, “We’re still trying to locate all the U.S. fallen heroes, and I promise that we will keep trying.”

The signing of this MOU underscores the enduring commitment of both the United States and South Korea to honoring the sacrifices of their service members and providing answers to their families. DPAA and MAKRI will continue to work tirelessly to fulfill their solemn promise to never forget those who served and bring them home with honor.

KOREAN/COLD WAR ANNUAL GOVERNMENT BRIEFINGS, AUGUST 7-8

ARLINGTON, VA

The Korean and Cold War AGB provides Gold Star families with the opportunity to meet with numerous civilian and military specialists of the government whose expertise includes foreign government negotiation, formulation of national policy, remains recovery and identification, DNA science, archival research, and intelligence analysis. This year featured panels from third-party researchers, DPAA alum, and family members in a conversational style setting.









Lt. Gen. Derek McCauley, United Nations Command Deputy Commander, addresses KCW attendees via Zoom from South Korea.



U.S. Army Sgt. Ashleigh Maxwell, left, interviews Rosanne Sallee, the 99-year-old widow of U.S. Marine Corps 1st Lt. Karle Seydel. Seydel was killed during the Korean War and remains unaccounted for.



Karen K. Payne shares memories of her uncle, U.S. Army Master Sgt. Hugh J. Drennen. Drennen, who joined the U.S. Army from North Carolina, served with the Headquarters, Headquarters and Service Company, 2nd Engineer Combat Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division. He was captured by enemy forces on November 30, 1950, as his unit withdrew from Kunu-ri to Sunchon. Drennen died of pneumonia while a prisoner of war in late January or early February, 1951. He remains unaccounted for.

SEPTEMBER

DPAA LABORATORIES RENEW ACCREDITATION

Scan the QR code to learn more about our accreditation process:

U.S. Navy photo by Seaman Lawrence Whaley III

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has successfully renewed its accreditation from the American National Standards Institute National Accreditation Board, reaffirming the agency's commitment to the highest standards of scientific excellence in its mission to account for America's missing personnel.

"We are accredited to what's called ISO/IEC 17025, which is the international gold standard for testing laboratories," explained Kristin Bukovec, a DPAA laboratory quality manager. "This ensures our work is conducted with rigor, reliability, and consistency every time."

Bukovec oversees DPAA's adherence to national standards of scientific practice and leads the accreditation process when ANAB teams conduct their assessments. The accreditation process, which takes place every four years with annual reviews, involves a team of four to eight expert assessors who evaluate more than 400 requirements. These include compliance with both ANAB standards and DPAA's own standard operating procedures. Assessors review everything from daily scientific activities to case files, reports, and laboratory records.



CHAIN OF CUSTODY IN HAWAII

On Sept. 18, 2025, U.S. Navy Lt. Allison Ledesma came to the Hawaii Lab to escort her great-granduncle, Storekeeper 3rd Class Robert Garcia, home. Identified April 14, SK3 Garcia served aboard *USS California*, and was killed during the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor. Dr. Laurel Freas, who heads the Pearl Harbor Project, along with Emily Eiseman and Abigail Kindler, also on the project team, provided Ledesma a briefing and lab tour, which culminated in the Family Viewing Room where she met her great-granduncle. The Hawaii Team then honored SK3 Garcia in a poignant Chain-of-Custody Ceremony.







National POW/MIA Recognition Day

Sept. 19, 2025



Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George, along with military and civilian senior leaders from the Department of War, pay tribute to POWs and MIAs during the ceremony at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C.



Hawaii Governor Josh Green provided the keynote address at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific ceremony, Honolulu, Hawaii.



The Honorable Marc E. Knapper, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, and the Defense Attache, U.S. Army Col. Richard Chen, laid a wreath at the U.S. Embassy Vietnam.



Logistics Plans Chief, Air Force Capt. Jacob Magana, rings the Spirit of Liberty Foundation's America's Freedom Bell at the Honolulu ceremony.



Joint Color Guard presents the colors at the Pentagon.

DoW photos by Petty Officer 2nd Class Aiko Bongolan

U.S. Embassy Vietnam photos by Thuy Nguyen

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

NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY *Posters* OVER TEN YEARS. . .



2015



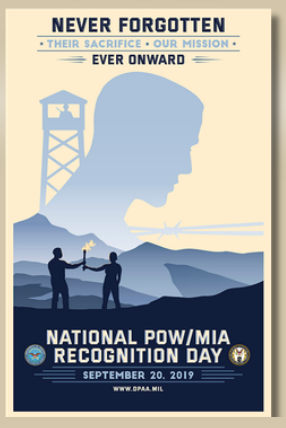
2016



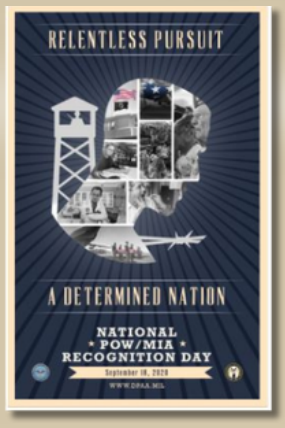
2017



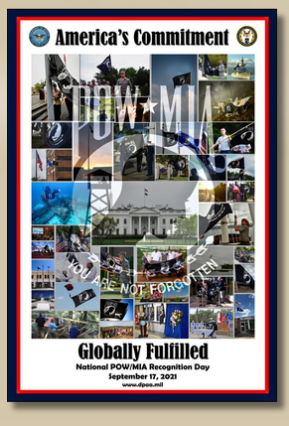
2018



2019



2020



2021



2022



2023



2024



The 2025 poster was designed by Jeanie Huffman, Gold Star Daughter of Navy Commander Edward Jacobs, Jr., an RA-3B Skywarrior pilot, who is unaccounted for from the Vietnam War. The poster features one active-duty Marine and four Army ROTC cadets from Old Dominion University, who are in period uniforms from the listed wars and various military branches, with each holding gear used for "going home."

THEN

To commemorate DPAA's 10th Anniversary, we're featuring top stories from over the years that capture the breadth and depth of the mission, and the talent, passion, and dedication of our civilian and military professionals. Each page featuring a "THEN" label from above will signify a story previously published in other editions of our Year in Review publication.



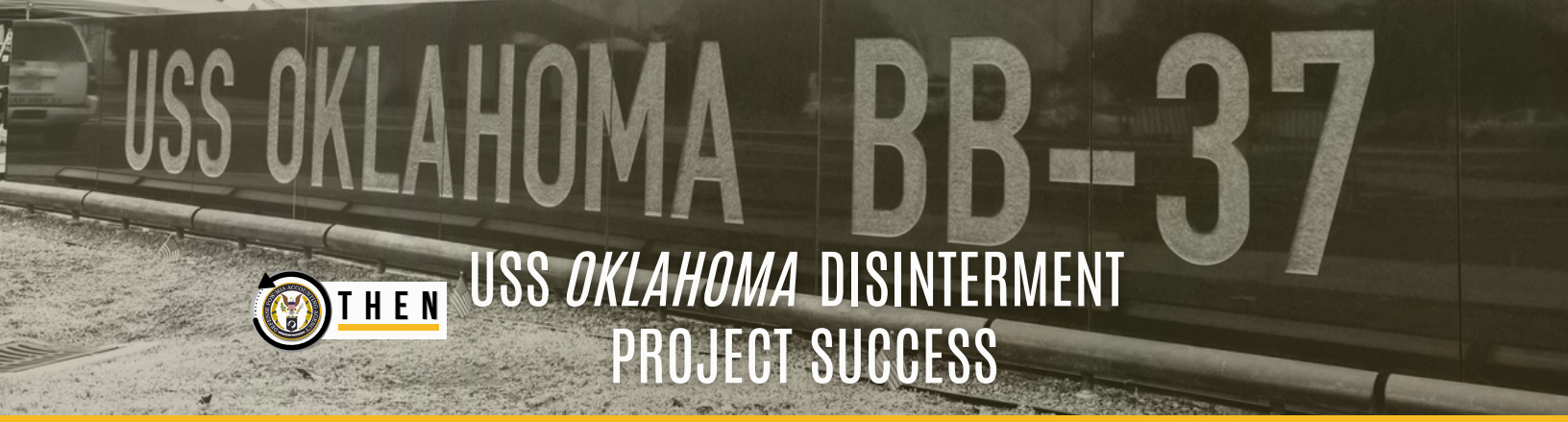
THEN

WWII CLUES IN ENGLISH SOIL

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Morgan L. R. Burgess

On Aug. 1, 2023, U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Matthew Sponagle, an explosive ordnance disposal technician with DPAA, staged material for wet screening during recovery efforts in the United Kingdom. The 60-day operation, supported by U.S. Army and Air Force augmentees, aims to locate and recover evidence linked to missing personnel from World War II.

Learn more about Sgt. Sponagle's recovery efforts by scanning this QR code.



THEN

USS *OKLAHOMA* DISINTERMENT PROJECT SUCCESS

On Dec. 7, 1941, the battleship, USS *Oklahoma*, was attacked by Japanese aircraft while moored in Pearl Harbor and capsized within 15 minutes, trapping and killing 429 Sailors and Marines. When the ship was righted and bodies recovered, only 35 were identified. The remainder were commingled and buried as Unknowns in 61 caskets plots at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

DPAA scientists developed a project to disinter all the USS *Oklahoma* Unknowns and commenced it in 2015. Over the course of six years, they, along with scientists from the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, used anthropological, dental, and DNA analyses to account for the missing service members.

MISSING FOR DECADES

394	362	32
Total Service Members Unaccounted For from the ship	*Service Members Individually Identified since 2003*	*Service Members Accounted for by Group Identification*



THEN

WINGS IN THE INDIAN MIST

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Erik Cardenas

Civilian and military mmbers of the DPAA conduct excavation operations in Arunachal Pradesh State, India, Oct. 10, 2015. The team searched for eight U.S. Army Air Forces personnel lost in a 1944 aircraft crash. Working at high altitude in remote terrain, the recovery team applied archaeological methods to locate potential osseous and material evidence that could be used to account for this missing aircrew.





Scan the QR code to see more images from this mission.






MERCURY


MCELYEA
U.S. NAVY



THEN

DIVING FOR HEAVEN

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Jack A. E. Rigsby

April 2023, DPAA and the Navy Experimental Dive Unit conducted underwater recovery operations in Hansa Bay, Papua New Guinea in an effort to find the crew of the B-24D Liberator bomber, Heaven Can Wait. The plane crashed in the bay on March 11, 1944, after being hit by anti-aircraft fire with 11 crewmen aboard. DPAA partner, Project Recover, located the wreckage in October 2017. Utilizing the Navy's dive bell, this mission was the deepest ever undertaken and was the most efficacious with Navy divers able to spend 22 and 35 consecutive days underwater.



THEN

SEARCHING THROUGH THE MUD

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Erik Cardenas

Members from DPAA remove mud from a pit during a recovery mission in Dien Bien, Vietnam, Nov. 18, 2016. They deployed to the area in hopes of recovering the remains of an F-4C aircraft pilot unaccounted for from the Vietnam Conflict.



View more photos from this mission using this QR code.



THEN

TARAWA MARINES RETURN HOME

Department of War photo by Bill Dasher

A repatriation ceremony is conducted in Kiribati July 25, 2017, for the recovered remains of Marines missing from the Battle of Tarawa. History Flight Inc., an agency partner, successfully excavated the remains of at least 17 Marines who were killed Nov. 20-23, 1943. The 76-hour conflict took place on Betio Island within the Tarawa Atoll in the Gilbert Islands, where U.S. Marines launched a major amphibious assault against entrenched Japanese forces.



Scan here to view more pictures from the Kiribati repatriation ceremony.







THEN

Searching For Closure

by Sean Kimmons/Army News Service

The day Army Sgt. 1st Class Tommy Murphy died is still engrained into his daughter's mind. It was April 7, 2001, and Tycoria Johnson was just 9 years old. On that Saturday, Murphy, along with six other American service members and nine Vietnamese counterparts, departed on an MI-17 helicopter to investigate a potential recovery site.

Johnson, now a Senior Airman based in Japan, recently volunteered for a joint mission with DPAA, where her father once worked as a mortuary affairs specialist. "He would talk about his missions a lot," she said, recalling the videos he would show her of people digging at excavation sites. "I knew that he enjoyed it and I think he would be surprised that I actually signed up to do it."

With her skills as a radio communications operator in the Air Force, Johnson was sent to Quang Ngai Province — not far from her father's crash site — to augment a recovery team.

Read the full story about Airman Johnson's quest in her father's memory here.



THEN

DPAA Remembers Fallen Comrades on 20th Anniversary of *MI-17 Helicopter Crash*

by Staff Sgt. Michael ONeal

A memorial service is held in commemoration of 16 U.S. and Vietnamese personnel tragically lost in an MI-17 crash on April 7, 2001. The ceremony was conducted at the memorial at the base of the mountain where the crash occurred in Quang Binh Province, Vietnam, April 7, 2021.

The Americans killed were: Army Lt. Col. Rennie M. Cory, Jr.; Army Lt. Col. George D. Martin III; Air Force Maj. Charles E. Lewis; Army Sgt. 1st Class Tommy J. Murphy; Air Force MSgt. Steven L. Moser; Air Force TSgt. Robert M. Flynn and Navy Chief Petty Officer Pedro J. Gonzalez.

The Vietnamese killed were: Mr. Nguyen Than Ha; Senior Col. Tran Van Bien; Lt. Col. Nguyen Van Ha; Lt. Col. Nguyen Thanh Son; Maj. Nguyen Huu Nham; Maj. Vu Pham the Kien; Lt. Giap Thanh Ngan; Lt. Pham Duy Dung and Lt. Dang Ngoc.

Photos top to bottom: In honor of the American and Vietnamese lives who were lost in the crash, DPAA and the Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons conducted commemoration ceremonies at the memorial near the crash site, and at the memorial stone outside the DPAA facility at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, on April 7, 2020.











Historic SINGAPORE SUMMIT

Following the summit between President Trump and Chairman Kim, North Korea turned over 55 boxes of remains of service members lost during the Korean War. Led by by U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Michael Minihan, the United Nations flag was placed over each box because they had fought for the U.N. during the war. On Aug. 1, 2018, Vice President Mike Pence, U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander Adm. Phil Davidson, Active Duty Service members, and Korean War Veterans rendered honors in a Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam hangar during the major repatriation ceremony. The remains were then transported to the DPAA forensic laboratory for analysis.



THEN











Photos taken by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class David Marshall, U.S. Navy Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Seth Coulter, U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Apryl Hall, and U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Mikaley Kline.







THEN

RECOVERY IN REKEN

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jamarius Fortson

Deployed DPAA military and civilian personnel excavate a bomber crash site in Reken, Germany, Aug. 16, 2018. They were searching for osseous and material evidence to help account for fallen U.S. Army Air Forces American who were lost during World War II.





THEN

REMNANTS OF THE PAST

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Bruch

The interior remnants of a U.S. Army Air Corps B-24 aircraft was the subject of a DPAA investigation mission in Papua New Guinea, Aug. 25, 2018.



Scan the QR code to see the more photos of the Army Air Corps B-24 aircraft.

THEN

COVID-19

MISSION UNINTERRUPTED:

HOW DPAA ENDURED THE PANDEMIC

When the pandemic halted international operations in early 2020, the DPAA faced an unprecedented challenge.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused recovery missions to suspend efforts. Personnel returned home under mandatory quarantine. Research locations across Europe, Southeast Asia and the Pacific were no longer accessible. Yet, despite these disruptions, DPAA never stopped working to fulfill its promise.

The agency adapted quickly using technology, shifting to a virtual collaboration environment with academic partners, scientific labs and foreign archives. Archival work continued remotely, including virtual engagements with the People's Liberation Army Archives in China. Field operations were suspended.

At the height of the pandemic, DPAA rapidly transitioned much of its workforce to telework, reducing exposure risks at its Washington, D.C., Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, and Offutt Air Force Base locations. By July 2020, the agency implemented a hybrid work structure that enabled uninterrupted case analysis and DNA processing.



DR. GREG KUPSKY, DPAA HISTORIAN



MR. DAN BAUGHMAN, DPAA INDO-PACIFIC CHIEF



MR. KELLY MCKEAGUE, DPAA DIRECTOR

In November 2020, DPAA held its first fully virtual Family Member Update (FMU), briefing more than 300 families while ensuring continued connection with those still waiting for answers. DPAA's adaptation to the virtual environment wasn't just a pivot it was proof that commitment to the mission transcends physical walls.

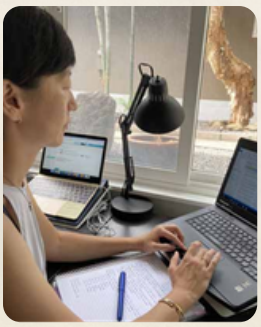
CONNECTED DESPITE COVID:

As the world halted at the precedence of the pandemic, DPAA staff members kept their commitment, adapting to the new virtual environment and staying mission focused.

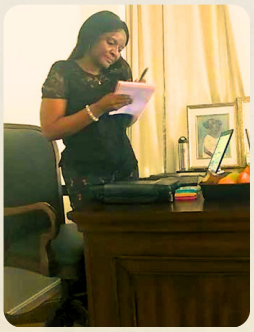
TELEWORK



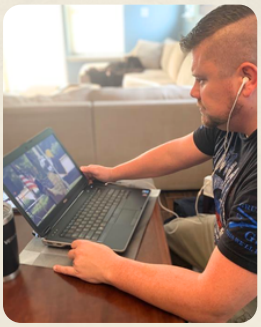
David Kalis, DPAA's comptroller, keeps the funding flowing from his home work station.



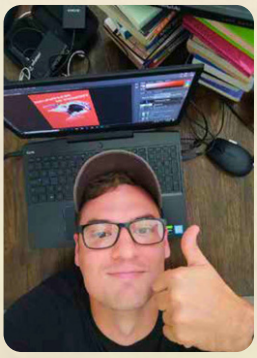
Dr. Jennie Jin an anthropologist and lab manager at DPAA's laboratory at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, works on reports to keep ID's moving.



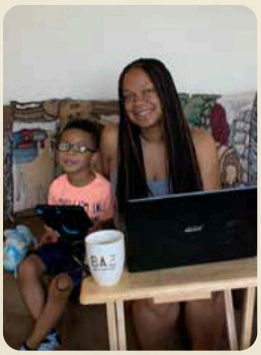
Lauretta Anastasia Edamivoh is DPAA's Front Office Executive Assistant, making sure everything is running smoothly for agency leadership in Washington, D.C.



Russell Meadows, an Information Security/Network Operations Engineer watches the Hawaii ceremony live from his home in Virginia.



U.S. Navy Mass Communications Specialist 1st Class **Tyler Thompson**, one of DPAA's photographers and graphic designers, working on a POW/MIA Recognition Day poster.



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. **Sharonda Jones**, part of the Joint Military Manpower/ Personnel Actions Section, ensures DPAA's human resources needs are met while her son, Kameron, works on his school tablet.



Gabe Zinni making sure both he and his son, Gabriel III, get their work done from their lanai at their Hawaii home.



Carrie LeGarde an anthropologist at DPAA's laboratory at Offutt AFB, Nebraska. Her helper, Scout, makes sure she stays on task.

PANDEMIC UPDATE

March 2020 – DPAA suspends all field missions due to global travel restrictions. Lab operations continue, processing over 200 cases remotely.

July 2020 – The Offutt Laboratory conducts its first dignified transfer of remains, receiving 28 transfer cases from Europe for forensic identification.

November 2020 – DPAA hosts its first virtual Family Member Update (FMU), engaging over 300 families in online briefings.

October 2020 – Despite restrictions, DPAA accounts for 142 missing service members, using lab analysis and historical research.

April 2021 – Field missions resume with teams following strict health protocols.

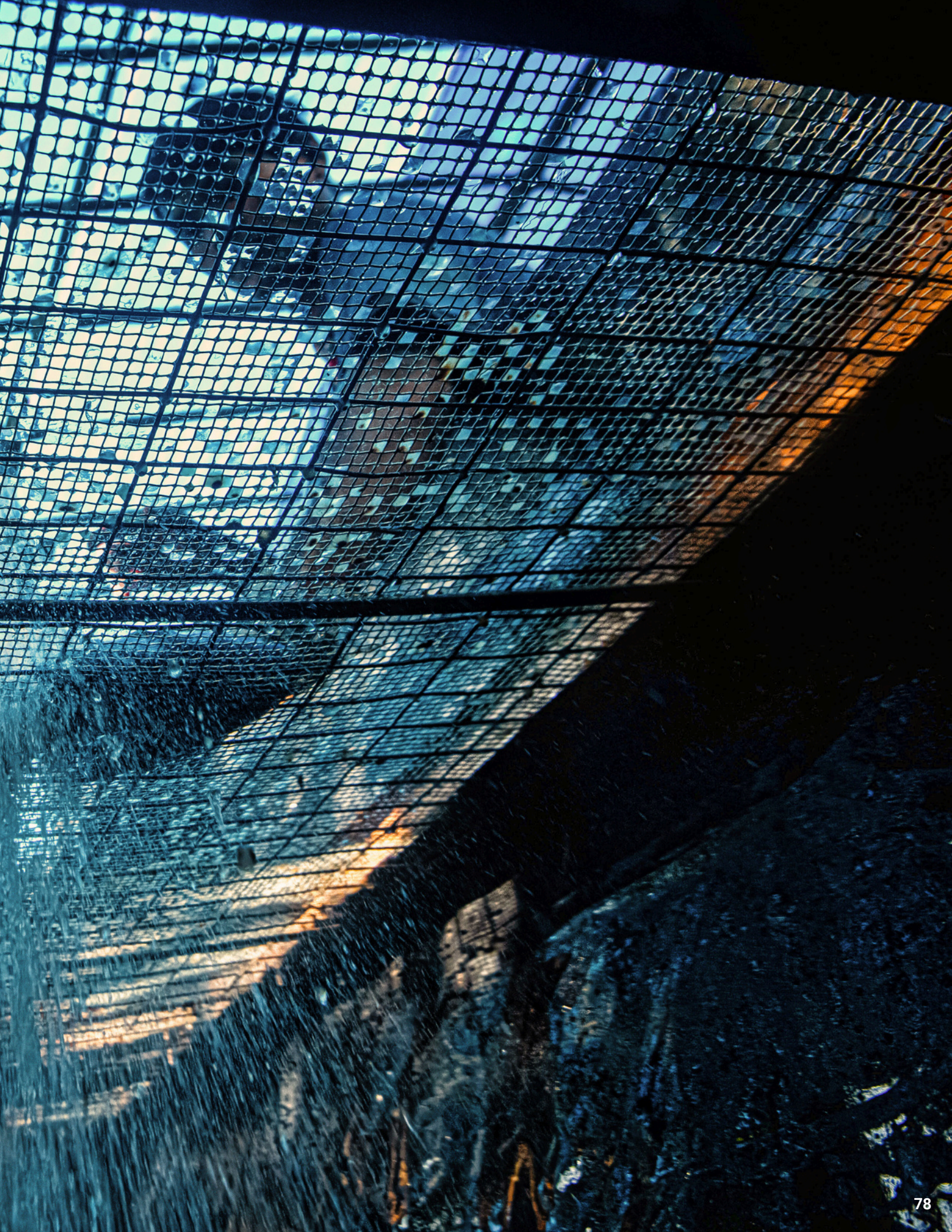


THEN

UNDER PRESSURE

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

U.S. Army Master Sgt. Eric Lawson, team leader with the DPAA, above, works alongside local personnel to screen soil during recovery operations in Laos Nov. 10, 2024. Viewed from beneath the mesh, the team uses high-pressure water to sift through excavated material, searching for aircraft wreckage, life support equipment, and potential osseous material. Laos remains a focus of the Vietnam War accounting effort.



THEN

ACCOUNTED FOR
MEDAL OF HONOR
Recipients
WITH HONOR



LT. COL. ADDISON E. BAKER — WORLD WAR II

From Chicago, Illinois, Lt. Col. Baker was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for extraordinary leadership and gallantry during Operation TIDAL WAVE on Aug. 1, 1943, a bombing mission targeting oil refineries in Ploesti, Romania. Despite his aircraft being damaged and on fire, he continued the mission, dropped his payload, and maintained formation until his aircraft crashed. Buried as an Unknown at Ardennes American Cemetery in Belgium, his remains were disinterred and identified on Apr. 8, 2022 through DNA and anthropological analysis.



CAPT. WILLIBALD C. BIANCHI — WORLD WAR II



Accounted for on Aug. 11, 2025, Capt. Bianchi was from New Ulm, Minnesota. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for clearing a series of Japanese machine gun nests in the Philippines despite being wounded. In April 1942, he was captured and imprisoned at the Japanese POW Camp at Cabanatuan. Bianchi then survived the mistaken U.S. bombing of the Japanese POW transport ship, *Oryoku Maru*, but was killed on the Japanese ship, *Enora Maru*, which was mistakenly bombed by U.S. aircraft near Formosa on Jan. 9, 1944. He was buried as an Unknown at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific until disinterred in 2023.





CHAPLAIN (CAPT.) EMIL J. KAPAUN — KOREAN WAR

Chaplain Kapaun, who died as a prisoner of war in 1951, was accounted for in March 2, 2021. His remains were recovered from the Punchbowl and identified using dental, anthropological, and mitochondrial DNA analysis. He received the Medal of Honor for actions on Nov. 1-2, 1950, when he repeatedly risked his life under enemy fire to aid wounded soldiers and intervened to prevent the execution of a fellow prisoner. In 1993, the Roman Catholic Church advanced Chaplain Kapaun to the second of four stages to be named a saint.



CPL. LUTHER H. STORY — KOREAN WAR



Cpl. Story was accounted for in April 6, 2023. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for actions on Sept. 1, 1950, during the Korean War, when he exposed himself to enemy fire to cover his unit's withdrawal. His remains, previously interred as an Unknown at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl), were disinterred in June 2021 and identified using advanced DNA analysis. Cpl. Story hailed from Plains, Georgia, and worked on President Jimmy Carter's family's farm.

UNCOMMON VALOR
EXTRAORDINARY GALLANTRY
SELFLESS SACRIFICE



US MARINE CORPS

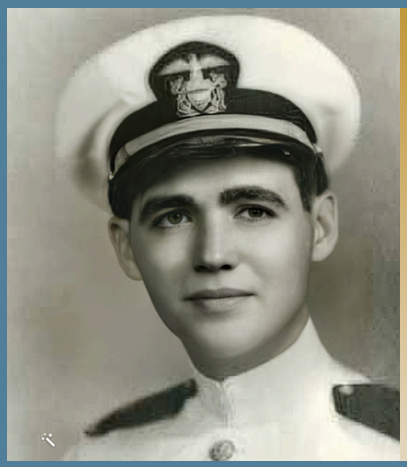


1ST LT. ALEXANDER BONNYMAN, JR. — WORLD WAR II

Raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, 1st Lt. Bonnyman, was identified on Sept. 22, 2015. He died during the Battle of Tarawa in November 1943. His remains, along with 34 other Marines, were recovered in 2015 from a trench burial site on Betio Island by DPAA partner History Flight, Inc. DPAA scientists were able to identify the remains through multiple forensic analyses. Bonnyman posthumously received the Medal of Honor in 1947 for leading assault teams under fire to demolish a huge bomb-proof bunker with 150 Japanese soldiers, and making a final stand atop a reinforced enemy position. The island was secured the same day of his death.

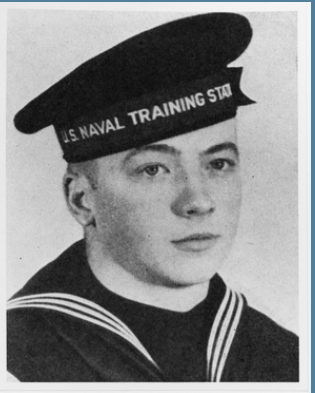
ENSIGN FRANCIS C. FLAHERTY — WORLD WAR II

Ens. Flaherty was accounted for on Sept. 30, 2019. Born in Charlotte, Michigan, he was assigned to the USS *Oklahoma* which was sunk during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. Flaherty remained in a turret, holding a flashlight so the remainder of his crewmates could see to escape, thereby sacrificing his own life. His identification was made through the milestone DPAA project to disinter the remains of 394 of the battleship's Sailors and Marines who were unidentifiable and buried as Unknowns.



US NAVY

US NAVY



SEAMAN 1ST CLASS JAMES R. WARD — WORLD WAR II

Seaman 1st Class Ward was from Springfield, Ohio, and was also lost aboard USS *Oklahoma* on Dec. 7, 1941. He remained in a turret holding a flashlight so the remainder of the turret crew could see to escape, thereby sacrificing himself. Along with 361 of his shipmates, Ward was accounted for (on August 19, 2021) from the disinterment project. The remains of 394 USS *Oklahoma* crewman had been highly commingled in 61 caskets and buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific as Unknowns.



In pursuit of our unwavering commitment: fulfilling our nation's promise for 10 years and beyond...



U.S. NAVY PHOTO BY PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS SETH COULTER

