



DPAA Family/VSO Quarterly Call and Update
January 28, 2026, 2:00-3:00 PM EST
Fulfilling Our Nation's Promise



Summary: Keeping the families of our missing personnel and veterans informed is a key component of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's (DPAA) mission. This update summarizes our efforts from the last six months to account for our missing personnel.

Family Group/Veterans Service Organizations RSVPs:

- Coalition of Families of Korea/Cold War POW/MIAs: Donna Knox
- Mission: POW-MIA: Dave Huffman
- National League of POW/MIA Families: Aaron Ahlstrom
- Sons and Daughters in Touch: Colleen Shine
- American Legion: Hanna Begun
- Disabled American Veterans: Justin Hart
- Jewish War Veterans: Ken Greenberg
- Korean War Veterans Association: Rocky Harder
- National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum: Pam Cain
- Vietnam Veterans of America: Grant Coates
- Special Operations Association/Special Forces Association: David Gordon

Director's Update (Mr. Kelly McKeague)

Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Budget. The new FY began with a 43-day lapse of appropriation/government shutdown that significantly impacted the Agency. Although a continuing resolution was enacted through January 30th and the House of Representatives passed their Defense Appropriations Bill, Senate passage could get delayed because the Homeland Security Bill is included in the package, which could then trigger another shutdown. For FY2026, you will recall that DPAA's appropriation will be \$171.3M which is an 11% reduction as a result of Department-wide budget adjustments.

Realignment. DPAA is among 28 Defense Agencies/Defense Activities (DAFAs). Formally, all of them report directly to the Secretary of War, but administratively, each is assigned to a Principal Staff Assistant (PSA). As it has been since our establishment in 2015, our PSA is the Under Secretary of War (USW) for Policy. Among a few DAFA realignments, consideration is being given for DPAA to move to the USW for Personnel and Readiness. While a final decision has not been made, should realignment occur, we do not anticipate any impacts to the Agency or mission.

Vietnam Engagements. During his November stop in Vietnam, the Secretary of War visited our Detachment where our DET Commander was able to provide him a short mission overview and render honors at the DET's Mi-17 Memorial. Vietnam War personnel accounting remains a cornerstone of the US-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership as reinforced during my 3 engagements. In September, along with Mission: POW-MIA leaders, I participated in events in

New York City, the capstone of which was an artifacts turnover officiated by Vietnam's President. Last month, I attended the 171st Repatriation Ceremony of remains that had been recovered by one of the 2 Vietnamese RTs that were able to operate during the shutdown. Attended by 3 Vietnamese Deputy Ministers, it was conducted at a hangar located at the Hanoi airfield from which the first POWs departed Vietnam during Operation HOMECOMING in 1973. Lastly, the POW/MIA mission was a key element at last month's US-Vietnam Political, Security, and Defense Dialogue at the State Department where the Vietnamese Vice Foreign Minister was their senior representative.

China Engagement. Last month, the POW/MIA mission was included in the annual US-China Defense Policy Coordination Talks at the Pentagon. Among the topics raised was their cooperation that led to the successful recovery and identification of a World War II Airman and his burial which was a few days prior to the talks; productive joint surveys of 3 Korean War crash sites in Liaoning Province (which borders North Korea); and several joint activities being planned this year.

Regional Conference. Hosted by the US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) Commander, the Regional Ambassadors Conference presented an opportunity to connect with Chiefs of Mission where DPAA presence and activities are prominent. Everyone I spoke with appreciates the value of our mission and it being a tool of diplomacy and engagement for them.

VSO Visits. In December, we were privileged to host the visits to the Hawaii Laboratory of the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, and Military Order of the Purple Heart National Commanders and their respective delegations.

Deputy Director for Operations Update (Captain Meghan Bodnar, USN)

FY2026 Ops Outlook. We entered FY 2026 with the intent to field 66 field missions (versus the 105 deployed in FY2025) due to the reduced budget, but the shutdown forced cancellation of the Vietnam (2 RTs, 1 Investigation Team (IT)) and Laos (3 RTs, 1 IT) Joint Field Activities (JFAs). Some of the IT work can be accomplished within the current JFA in Laos, but the RTs, due to geography and weather windows, must be deferred to next FY.

Key Leader Engagements. To continue to educate and build on our external support, we have hosted numerous senior officials to our Hawaii Laboratory. Among them have been War Department and State Department leaders (the latter included US Chiefs of Mission to Laos, Solomon Islands, and Burma); the USO President; and international leaders from India, Brunei, Japan, Vietnam, and China (the latter was a delegation who were in Hawaii at a Pacific Fleet Dialogue). Among the benefits of these visits is to facilitate access and operations across the globe.

Aligning Efforts. To continue strengthening our ties with USINDOPACOM planners and operators, DPAA staff participated in their Capability Exercise Planning Conference last month and will continue to work with the command to highlight DPAA activities in their region. We are also working with our medical counterparts in various Hawaii commands to improve our medical outreach with local communities when on mission.

Regional Teams Overview:

Europe-Mediterranean (EM) Region (Ms. Heather Harris)

Field Operations. As we wrapped up our FY2025 field operations, 2 RTs completed work in Germany at a B-17 and P-47 crash sites. DPAA teams also conducted investigations of a total of 14 incidents in France, Germany, and Italy. We had an IT to Hungary postponed by the shutdown, but fortunately, the landowner was willing to work with us on new dates that would not disrupt his agricultural crops; we will now conduct this investigation this March.

Disinterment Operations. We concluded last FY's disinterment operations with 13 disinterments of Unknowns from American Cemeteries in Belgium and France. For the year, DPAA and American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) personnel disinterred a total of 51 Unknowns from 10 ABMC cemeteries located in Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Throughout all of these, 6 Airmen from 4 air bases in Europe assisted the effort as augmentees.

Research and Analysis. EM researchers also supported future investigations through the creation of Investigation Proposals and participated in our planning process for upcoming investigations; prepared Historical Reports for recently announced or upcoming identifications; and conducted routine archival research and analysis in support of case progression.

Planned Operations. The first two quarters of the FY typically have little operational missions in the EM AOR due to the winter weather. In March-August, we plan to conduct 10 investigations, 3 recoveries, and disinterments of 51 Unknowns.

Some USRJC Progress. The U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, to which DPAA provides direct support, continues, wherever possible, to increase cooperative efforts with the Russian Side of the Commission. A DPAA-funded contractor resumed in-person research within the Russian Ministry of Defense's Central Archives for the first time since December 2023 (she had been limited to conducting research on previously gathered materials). Concurrently, an archivist representing the Russian Side arrived at the Russian Embassy in Washington and regularly communicates with us. Also, resuming a tradition that last took place in 2020, the US Side Chairman and 2 DPAA staff attended a wreath-laying ceremony in Elizabeth City, NC, this month, honoring 4 Soviet aviators who perished in a 1945 training exercise with the US Coast Guard. The Deputy Chief of Mission of the Russian Embassy was their senior official. We are cautiously optimistic that these activities signal increased cooperation in the near future.

Indo-Pacific (IP) Region (Mr. Chris Phelps)

Field Operations. In the last quarter of FY2025, Vietnam War JFAs included one RT, one IT and one Host Nation IT in Vietnam. For WWII, we conducted one underwater investigation off the coast of Oahu; 2 recoveries and one investigation in Papua New Guinea (PNG); one RT and one IT to the Solomon Islands; one investigation in Fiji; and one IT to China. As mentioned earlier, we cancelled the Vietnam and Laos JFAs in the first quarter of FY2026 because of the prolonged shutdown, except for the 2 Host Nation RTs in Vietnam, which were funded with prior year money.

Disinterment Operations. During last FY's fourth quarter, we conducted 6 disinterment missions (48 Unknowns) at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP), which totaled for the FY, 80 of 110 Unknowns from Phase 6 of the Korean War Disinterment Project. This past quarter, 3 NMCP disinterment missions were cancelled due to the shutdown. Since then, 2 disinterment missions at NMCP (15 Phase 6 Unknowns and one WWII Unknown), and one mission at Manila American Cemetery and Memorial (MACM) (34 WWII Unknowns) were completed.

Research and Analysis. Vietnam War: The research team has been focused on case research ahead of the Dover Family Member Update (FMU) and Case Coordination events. Researchers are also gearing up for upcoming ITs in Vietnam where they will deploy as field investigators. Analysts and historians are also conducting archival research at the National Archives in Maryland and the US Army War College in Pennsylvania. Korean/Cold War: Supporting the Annual Government Briefings (AGB), the team drafted 271 Case Summaries. In addition to preparing Case Summaries for the Dover FMU, they are conducting research coordination with our South Korean counterpart and preparing for the rescheduled Archival Exchange with the People's Liberation Army Archives (PLA-A). WWII: In September, the team held its annual coordination meeting with the Philippines. In addition to continuing foundational research projects throughout the Pacific, the team prepared 135 Case Summaries for the Dover FMU.

Planned Field Operations. This quarter, the JFA in Vietnam will be composed of 2 RTs, one IT, and one IT-Light; for the 2 JFAs in Laos (one of which is in-progress, there will be a total of 7 RTs and one IT-Light. Korean War-related operations will consist of one IT in South Korea. For WWII operations, there will be one RT in Thailand (in-progress), one IT in Japan, 1 RT in PNG, and one Underwater RT in the Philippines. The latter commences excavation of the sunken Japanese POW transport ship, *Ōryoku Maru*, which will be one of the most complex and difficult ever undertaken, with 286 Americans unaccounted for.

China Missions. A teleconference with the Chinese PLA-A occurred in December that was overall positive. The discussions secured their agreement to planning the Archival Exchange we will host this May in Hawaii as well as an IT and RT we will deploy this spring and summer, respectively.

Planned Disinterments. This quarter, we have 4 more disinterment missions planned at NMCP (32 Unknowns) and 2 disinterment missions at MACM (66 Unknowns). We are on track to complete the disinterment of the remainder of Phase 6 Unknowns next quarter. We expect to begin Phase 7 thereafter.

Partnerships and Innovation (Mr. Rocky Gillette)

Not Shut Down. Thanks to our very effective cooperative agreements which, among other things, allow us to conduct multi-year activities that cross FYs, we were able to continue all our scheduled partner field, research, and innovation activities despite the government shutdown,

Field Activities. Over the last 6 months, we successfully completed 19 partner field missions across 10 countries: Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Marshall Island, PNG, Poland, the U.K., and the U.S. (Hawaii). This period was marked by several significant highlights, including a poignant

mission in PNG where a team from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, working in the region where the state's 32nd Infantry Division fought during WWII, successfully began excavating a bomber lost in 1944. Also, after an intensive 91-day effort on an isolated Italian island, our partner, SEARCH, concluded one of our most complex missions ever, recovering substantial evidence that we hope will lead to multiple identifications.

This quarter, we anticipate sending 7 partner teams to 7 separate countries, mostly across the Indo-Pacific region and one UW investigation in Kuwait. This includes a partner RT in northern Cambodia that started on January 20 seeking an unaccounted for F-4 pilot as well as 2 partner ITs to nearby sites to survey targets of opportunity.

Also relating to Cambodia, we will have 2 Cambodian students visiting the Hawaii Laboratory this quarter as part of the Cambodian Completion Initiative. The program is providing Masters-level archeology training at the University of Hawaii and familiarization in DPAA field procedures so they can assist in future DPAA field activities in Cambodia and build Cambodian archaeological capacity.

Research. By the end of FY2025, we reached our goal of 100 partner research projects. The University of Missouri made significant progress reviewing records related to the 34th Infantry Division under a project aimed to refine data searchability for losses from that unit. Relatedly, collaboration with the University of Southern Mississippi included a review of data and archival sources associated with losses in Laos, focusing especially on flight plans and other resources DPAA does not have. Florida State University and University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill also continue to assist in efforts to better visualize recoveries and the flow of campaigns along the 38th Parallel. In December, DPAA hosted over 80 Agency and partner participants at a virtual event focused on challenges related to case research and community engagement. This quarter, Project Recover and Temple University started working on new projects related to WWII-Pacific Campaigns in Palau and the Solomon Islands.

Innovation. In the last quarter of FY2025, the Innovation Program achieved key milestone completions: the Opportunistic Innovation Project, Export and Analysis of Soil Samples from a WWII Plane Crash Site; a project-related dissertation defense for Re-Association of Submerged Remains Using Laser-Induced Breakdown Spectroscopy; field work completion for Digital Field Notebooks and Relational Databases for Field Archaeologists; and Phase II completion for Comparative Digital Archaeological Studies. Additionally, new, highly prioritized innovative project proposals have been proposed: Optimizing Search Outcomes for Downed Military Aircraft through Utilization of Multi-Sensor Geophysical Systems; Free Aerial LiDAR for Aviation Crash Site Prospection; and Developing GeoAI Tools for Integrating Historical Documentation with Remote Sensing Data, raising the Innovation portfolio to 16 multi-year projects. Concluding the annual "Think Ticket" proposal cycle, 70 innovative project proposals were submitted, a 119% year-over-year increase from last year.

New Arrangements. Since the last update, we established new partnerships through signed Memoranda of Understanding with Document Center-Cambodia; Purdue University; S4 Labs; Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Memorial; True North Archaeological Consultants; Northeast Archaeological Research, Inc.; University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign; Deep Research, Inc.; and University of Otago. Our total number of active partners is 125.

Scientific Analysis (SA) (Dr. John Byrd)

FY 2025 Identifications

Total = 231 newly-accounted-for, and 20 first-time DPAA IDs (23 additional portions of previous IDs)

WWII = 165 (newly accounted)

Korean War = 58 (newly accounted)

Vietnam War = 8 (newly accounted)

FY2026 Identifications as of January 6

Total = 54 newly-accounted-for; 3 additional portions from previous IDs

WWII = 45

Korean War = 9

Vietnam War = 0

Accessions. During FY2025, 407 batches of skeletal, dental, material, and/or life support evidence were accessioned into our laboratory system. They originated from disinterments (274), DPAA field activities (53), partner activities (25), and unilateral turnovers (55). The distribution of evidence received by conflict is WWII (65%), Korean War (22%), and Vietnam War (13%). During the last quarter, 68 batches of evidence were accessioned from disinterments (58), DPAA field activities (1), partner activities (3), and unilateral turnovers (6). The distribution by conflict is WWII (60%), Korean War (33%), and Vietnam War (7%).

Vietnam War Identification Project. New accessions consisted of 7 from Vietnam and 2 from Cambodia, 5 of which were unilateral turnovers. In addition to the 8 Vietnam War identifications last FY, 5 additional portion identifications were made. The team completed the quantitative portion of the taphonomy study which showed a clear decline in skeletal completeness from the late 1980s to the present time. They are continuing their data audit to validate records. A Joint Forensic Review was performed in Hanoi in December to review evidence recovered from the Host Nation RT. And last quarter, the laboratory received 5 new accessions from Vietnam, all unilateral turnovers, containing possible osseous and material evidence.

Korean War Identification Project. In the last two quarters of FY2025, 37 identifications, including the 750th newly accounted for, Army Cpl Donald Birmingham were made; 10 of these resulting from AFDIL's new SNPs technology. The team is currently conducting analysis of Phase 6 disinterments from the NMCP. Last quarter, 9 identifications were made, 2 using SNPs. To date, 773 unaccounted-for Service members have been identified from the project.

Cabanatuan Project. This month, the 150th Service member from the Cabanatuan Disinterment Project was accounted for. After surviving the Bataan Death March, they were imprisoned in the notorious POW Camp, and after dying from poor living conditions, were buried in common graves. After the war, 997 POWs were declared unidentifiable and interred at the MACM. The disinterment project began in 2014 and is complex because of extreme commingling.

USS *California*. Last month, one day after the 84th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Group Identification for USS *California* was made, resulting in the first-time identification of 7 previously unresolved Sailors from the ship and the completion of this project. DPAA made 13 individual identifications from USS *California* since the start of the project in 2018.

Scientific Summit. Co-hosted with the University of Milan (a DPAA Partner), our first Scientific Summit in Europe was a huge success. Along with personnel from across the Agency, participants from 16 countries engaged in over 30 scientific presentations, held round-table discussions, and relationships were initiated and strengthened from the Summit.

Second Agreement. In August, DPAA entered into an Education Partnership Agreement with the University of Hawaii System (our first was with the University of Nebraska System). While we have had individual private partner arrangements with two of their campuses, the EPA broadens and facilitates partnering opportunities with the whole system to include their School of Medicine. DPAA will benefit from UH research and innovation, and their faculty and students will have access to our scientists, lab, and equipment.

Professional Achievement. Dr. Rylan Hawke, Dr. Valerie Sgheiza, and Dr. Katie Whitmore passed the demanding American Board of Forensic Anthropology examination and earned distinguished Diplomate status, the highest professional credential in this field. There are now 26 DPAA Diplomates, which comprise an incredible 20% of active Diplomates in the world.

Armed Forces Medical Examiner System-Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory Update (Dr. Tim McMahon)

The AFMES-AFDIL has had a year of exceptional progress and innovation in our mission to assist with the identification of our nation's missing heroes. Recent advancements have not only assisted in accelerating the pace of identifications but have also positioned AFMES-AFDIL as a global leader in forensic science. Among the key accomplishments are:

Groundbreaking Identification Technology. Last January, AFMES-AFDIL became the first and only forensically-accredited laboratory to bring on a validated Next Generation Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (NGS-SNP) testing method that provides a scientific identification and not an investigative lead. The first year of NGS-SNP testing has been a resounding success, leading directly to the issuance of 102 First-time Named Believe-to-Be (BTB) Reports (supporting new identifications). This cutting-edge technology, with a 95% success rate on DPAA casework samples, is a game-changer for providing nuclear DNA testing capability for highly degraded samples where traditional Short Tandem Repeat (STR) or commercial SNP assays will not work.

Increased Operational Tempo. In FY2025, we increased overall testing and reporting by 23% over the previous year. This surge in efficiency and capability resulted in 241 First-time Named BTB Reports issued to the DPAA.

International Collaboration and Influence. AFMES-AFDIL hosted scientists from the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) for 2 weeks of intensive training on our NGS-SNP methods. The IDF is now looking to implement this technology to identify their own missing Service members, from the 1948 Arab-Israeli War to modern-day losses. This collaboration underscores AFMES-AFDIL's role as a world-class center of excellence in forensic science.

Future-Focused Research and Innovation. We are pioneering a new Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy (FIGG) method specifically designed for the highly damaged samples

associated with DPAA cases. Working with a commercial entity, we identified 1.2 million SNPs that could be used in our capture method and are currently testing them with commercial NGS whole genome sequencing kits and the NGS Kintelligence SNP kit. Regrettably, the results are showing that commercial kits either do not work or when they do, they provide false matches beyond 1st Cousin references, which a majority of family references are. However, the research is showing that AFMES-AFDIL's custom 1.2 million SNP capture method is working; we will continue to develop and optimize this method to provide potential new avenues for identification in the most difficult cases.

Streamlining for Greater Efficiency. AFMES-AFDIL is developing a single combined assay for Next Generation Mitochondrial (mt) DNA and SNP testing. This will streamline our workflow by replacing two separate tests with one, further increasing the speed and efficiency of our identification efforts.

FY2025 Year in Review.

Increased testing and reporting by 23% over FY2024 (numbers in parenthesis are of FY2024)

- a. Number of DNA tests reported 4,974 (4,020)
 - i. 1,123 (939) mtDNA sequencing reports
 - ii. 1,771 (1456) NGS mtDNA sequencing results
 - iii. 230 (0) NGS SNP samples results
 - iv. 1,123 (1010) Autosomal-STR results
 - v. 721 (612) Y-STR results
 - vi. 241 (159) First-time Named BTB Reports

Outreach and Communications (Mrs. Jennifer Nasarenko)

VSO Engagement. DPAA was privileged to support the American Legion National Convention and the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots' Association Reunion where staff explained and promoted our mission. Additionally, at the latter, DPAA analysts collected critical information and oral histories from firsthand witnesses for multiple active cases. We were also able to support the Special Operations Association's Annual Meeting in October, although only virtually, due to the shutdown.

Korean/Cold War AGB. Conducted in mid-August in Arlington, VA, the AGB was a true team effort among DPAA, Service Casualty Offices, and AFMES-AFDIL, it was attended by 346 Korean War and 17 Cold War family members, of whom were 121 first-time attendees (33%) to a DPAA family meeting. We announced to the families that next year's meeting will be in Omaha, 6-7 Aug. Providentially, during the meeting, an Army PFC, who died at North Korean POW Camp 5; was buried as an Unknown and a Phase 2 disinterment; and identified last March, was interred at Arlington National Cemetery where his 89-year-old brother and 77-year-old sister attended.

Family Member Updates. The shutdown forced us to move the first FY2026 FMU (Dover, DE), from November 15 to January 24. The weekend's major winter storm postponed it to a date later this year that is to be determined. A record 558 family members were registered to attend (the largest number in the 31 years of the program); they represented 306 cases and 415 of whom were first-time attendees. Registration is open for the Charleston, SC, FMU on February 21, to be followed by San Diego, Honolulu, and Detroit this spring.

Recognition Day Ceremonies. Pentagon: Secretary Hegseth hosted and was the keynote speaker. Prior to the ceremony, he met with 3 nieces and one nephew of CPT Bianchi; and Dave and Jeanie Huffman, who presented him her Dad's MIA bracelet. Attending the ceremony were 35 Gold Star Family Members, one former POW, VSO leaders, and a number of Ambassadors and Defense Attachés from countries we work in. Of the 9 members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 6 were in attendance. In his remarks, the Secretary announced the identification of Army CPT Willibald Bianchi, a Medal of Honor recipient, who was an Unknown (commingled among 3 NMCP graves) from the *Enoura Maru* Hellship incident. NMCP: Among the 250 guests were one Gold Star Family Member, one former POW, a Medal of Honor Recipient from the Vietnam War, VSO leaders, and Consuls General from 4 countries we work in. The keynote speakers were the Hawaii Governor (who also issued his Proclamation for POW/MIA Recognition Day) and Vietnam War Gold Star Daughter, Natalie Rauch. The 231 names of those DPAA accounted for this year were read as America's Freedom Bell, donated by the Spirit of Liberty Foundation, was rung. Ramstein AB: As part of POW/MIA Remembrance Week, DPAA's Detachment promoted the mission at a booth located at the Base Mall and participated in a 24-hour POW/MIA Run/Walk and Retreat Ceremony. SE Asia: Our 3 DETs commemorated the day by planning, organizing, and executing ceremonies at their respective Embassy where the US Ambassadors provided the keynote address. Each event was widely attended by Embassy staff, US Veterans, and Host Nation officials. Amazon: For the first time, they hosted a ceremony at their HQ2 in Arlington, drawing Amazon senior leaders and employees. The DPAA Chief of Staff was one of the keynote speakers; the POW/MIA Flag was raised in their square; and a robust DPAA display was placed prominently in their main lobby all week. Amazon intends to make this an annual event in partnership with us and will likely duplicate it at their HQ1 in Seattle. Multiple agency personnel spoke at 4 events in Nebraska; two in California; and one each in New Jersey, California, New York, Maine, and DC.

Recognition Day Poster. The unveiling of the 2026 National POW/MIA Recognition Day Poster was planned for the Dover FMU. Designed by one of our Army Sergeants (who was selected to become a Drill Instructor), it will now be unveiled at the Charleston FMU.

Public Affairs. FY2025 was record-breaking as DPAA continued to improve our amplification of the mission. We published 47 articles, more than double the prior year, with 18 articles since the last update. Also, since the last update, we published 628 photos and 15 videos; pushed 123 new releases announcing identifications; answered 26 media queries; and conducted 46 tours and 15 speaking engagements. Despite the prohibition on outreach during the shutdown, we were able to secure approval of 7 high-visibility DPAA engagements, meeting Agency strategic communication objectives.

Secretary's Video in Vietnam. This is the video link of Secretary Hegseth's visit to the DPAA DET. While he spoke to all the U.S. military personnel based in Vietnam, a majority of his remarks were about DPAA and our mission: <https://youtu.be/T4FqNVnjAWE?si=vKTfLgwcjT34ZtT6>.

Family/VSO Field Visits. DPAA always appreciates the visits from and advocacy of Family Organizations and VSOs. Upcoming ones being coordinated include the American Legion National Commander's visit to a recovery site in Europe in May/June; and the Mission: POW-MIA President and Executive Director visiting Vietnam in April and June, respectively (both trips will also include representatives from the Vietnam War Veterans).

Q&A Session

Coalition of Families of Korea/Cold War POW/MIAs: *We would like to request reinstatement of the Generic File Listing on the website and to provide more information on “foreign government sources”*

Answer: We took down the Generic File List from our website three years ago while we were trying to streamline the website. We are looking at reinstating it and if we can provide more details on why certain foreign government information is protected from release. However, we also balance the work required to do so against other requirements.

We also have heard that DPAA is being moved under USW(P&R) and we are concerned this will impact DPAA’s ability to conduct excavations of unknown.

Answer: Realigning DPAA to the USW(P&R) is being discussed and among the conditions that has been proposed is to move disinterment approval from the Assistant Secretary of War for Manpower and Reserve Affairs to the DPAA Director because both would work for the same USW.

Mission: POW-MIA: *We do not have any question but would like to compliment DPAA on the support to the Veterans Day Parade that was held in Norfolk.*

Comment: Thank you to Mission: POW-MIA for the engagement opportunities that were provided with Gold Star families, Veterans, and civic leaders.

National League of POW/MIA Families: *We are curious if work is still being done in Laos on Lima Site 85 after all the recent IDs that were made.*

Answer: The four men accounted for from the site last year was significant. A recovery team has been operating there since mid-January and will continue through February 23. The government shutdown last fall forced cancellation of the JFA in Laos that included a recovery team at the Lima 85 site. Adding this mission to the FY 2027 operations plan will be dependent on the results of the current recovery mission.

Sons and Daughters in Touch: *We would like an updated list of the partners with whom you work.*

Answer: The updated list of our current partners is attached.

Does DPAA have enough dedicated imagery staff?

Answer: DPAA could always use additional resources across all aspects of the mission. CAPT Bodnar will be chairing a working group within the Agency focused on improvements to imagery analysis and exploitation, and specifically, how Healing Through History and its capabilities could augment DPAA efforts.

American Legion: *We appreciate all the advance work of DPAA in facilitating our National Commander’s upcoming visit to one of your sites in Europe.*

Comment: We appreciate the tremendous advocacy of the American Legion and hope the excavation sites we provided will facilitate a visit from the National Commander, which the DPAA teams always appreciate.

Disabled American Veterans: *We do not have any questions but echo the positive comments on DPAA's efforts.*

Comment: Thank you to the DAV for all your tremendous support that continues your offer to sponsor refreshments for the Gold Star Families attending the Charleston FMU.

Jewish War Veterans: *We would like to do a story on a Jewish Serviceman who has been recently identified by DPAA. Are there any that you could suggest? We are also interested in establishing a DPAA display at our museum.*

Answer: Our Outreach & Communications Director will provide some exemplars for your story and discuss with you the requirements on how we can work together on DPAA display for your museum.

Korean War Veterans Association: *We applaud the recent Korean War identifications and would like to know how most of the identifications are being made?*

Answer: Most of the identifications that we are making now are a result of the tremendous work of the Korean War Identification Project team and come from the disinterments of the Unknowns.

How many identifications have been made from the 55 boxes of remains that the North Koreans unilaterally turned over in 2018.

Answer: So far, 107 Americans were identified and 89 South Korean remains were repatriated to them.

Has there been any contact with the North Korean government?

Answer: There has been none. Both the current and previous Administrations have attempted to engage the North Korean government at all levels without any success. The South Koreans have returned to conduct remains recovery on their side of the DMZ and despite overtures to the North Koreans, there has been no response.

National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum: *What is the latest on the Detachment in Laos being moved?*

Answer: To clarify, the Detachment is not moving; only the US personnel assigned to the Detachment are relocating to Bangkok; the experienced local staff will remain in place. Some personnel have moved and return to Laos in temporary duty status as required; there has been no degradation to field operations or engagements with the Lao.

The DPAA room at the museum is open to the public

Comment: That is wonderful news and we will work with you should you desire additional content to display.

Vietnam Veterans of America: *We just want to compliment DPAA on all the recent successes.*

Comment: We truly appreciate VVA's continued strong support and advocacy.

Special Operations Association / Special Forces Association: *What will be the impact on the budget cuts on Vietnam War accounting?*

Answer: The Vietnam War continues to be our number one operational priority so the budget cuts that will be spread proportionally across all missions will reduce more Vietnam War field missions from being deployed.

Is there any new technology that can assist in identifying the remains that you have?

Answer: We and AFMES continue to innovate and introduce new scientific advances, the most recent being SNP which has allowed us to make identifications that were not possible two years ago.

Does DPAA assist the K teams?

Answer: DPAA is aware of the efforts of the Vietnamese K Teams which are focused on accounting for Vietnamese losses and working to establish a closer relationship with them. They fall under Vietnam's National Steering Committee 515, who we hosted in Hawaii last month. It is important for the 515, VNOSMP, and DPAA to closely coordinate and share information because their searches could assist us in locating our missing.