



DPAA Family/VSO Quarterly Call and Update Notes
Thursday Feb 10, 2022, 2:00 PM EST
'Fulfilling Our Nation's Promise'



Summary: Keeping the families of our missing as well as veterans informed is a primary objective of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's (DPAA) mission. This update is intended to provide an overview of efforts during the previous quarter to account for our missing.

Family Group/Veterans Service Organization Participants:

- Coalition of Families: Mr. Rick Downes
- Disabled American Veterans: Mr. Vince Darcangelo
- Korea-Cold War Families of the Missing: Ms. Sherra Basham
- Korean War Veterans Association: Mr. Rocky Harder
- Korean War POW/MIA Network: Mr. John Zimmerlee
- National League of POW/MIA Families: Mrs. Ann Mills Griffiths
- Special Operations Assn/Special Forces Association: Mr. Mike Taylor
- Veterans of Foreign Wars: Mr. Bob Wallace
- Vietnam Veterans of America: Mr. Grant Coates

The agenda included:

- Director's Update (Mr. Kelly McKeague)
- Deputy Director for Operations Update (RDML Darius Banaji)
- Operational Update (Indo-Pacific, Col Matt Brannen/Europe-Mediterranean, COL Jon Lust)
- Partnerships and Innovations Update (Mr. Rocky Gillette)
- Scientific Analysis Update (Dr. John Byrd)
- Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES) Update (Dr. Tim McMahon)
- Outreach and Communications Update (Mr. Johnie Webb)
- Question & Answer

Director's Update

Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Bills. In December, the President signed the FY22 Defense Authorization Bill which fortunately includes the authorization (no funding) of a \$25 million increase to DPAA's budget request. However, there is no estimated date for the FY22 Appropriations Bill and all Federal funding is being provided under the second Continuing Resolution (CR). Expiring at midnight, February 18th, but there is talk of a 3-week extension. Anything beyond March would start to strain our planned spring and summer field missions because the smaller allocation of our \$130.7 million (M) budget request limits our ability to execute them.

COVID-19 Effects. Like it has with everyone else, the pandemic is still affecting us as we continue to respond and adapt to changing conditions. We execute planned DPAA and partner missions whenever host nations allow and must meet all their health and safety requirements. The Omicron Variant hit us hard with more than 55 positive cases since mid-December, but fortunately, all have either recovered or had moderate to no symptoms. To minimize the spread within DPAA, we pulled back on our in-office presence through January and increased it in February in accord with the base guidance, with continued use of teleworking and virtual meetings.

Congressional Briefings. As directed in language, we briefed staff from the Senate and House Armed Services Committees last month. The requirement was to: outline plans on how we account for remains in the field, address the extent to which we collaborate with external partners, outline innovative means to identify remains, and assess the feasibility of the use of DNA samples for comparison to samples in DNA databases. The latter was expertly handled by Dr. Tim McMahon. The staffers were pleased and appreciative of the information provided and pledged the continued support of their Members.

Strategic On-Site. In early December, the entire Agency leadership team (including all Staff Directors/Deputies and Key Staff Supervisors) had a successful and productive week-long On-site at one of our Hawaii facilities. The first two days were on professional and organizational development and the last three included a number of strategic discussions on Agency strategy and priorities, and the draft Manpower Study that an Army agency completed. Actioning and implementing these discussions are forthcoming.

Key MOUs. We have been working two memorandums of understanding (MOU) to provide us host nation access and enable the start of operations. We learned last month that the Government of Malaysia approved the latest draft which will be formally signed by their Secretary General and the U.S. Ambassador later this month. The MOU with Indonesia has been elusive for a few years, but it was included in senior leader discussions during the November U.S.-Indonesia Defense Dialogue, with commitments from Indonesian military officials to complete it this spring.

Deputy Director for Operations (DDO) Update

Operations Outlook. As FY22 began, we continued deploying our men and women despite the onset of the Omicron variant throughout the country and the globe. In the past three months, we deployed 15 organic and private partner field missions in 12 countries. This tremendous success was a result of extensive coordination and collaboration with our U.S. Embassies and host nation counterparts. We remain vigilant in applying our force health protection measures - before, during, and after missions - to ensure the safety of our teams, partners, and host nation counterparts. We remain just as optimistic for field missions for the remainder of FY22.

USS *Oklahoma* Project Complete. At a December 7 ceremony at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP), the Navy interred the 33 unidentified remains from the USS *Oklahoma*, and the Secretary of the Navy presented the flag from one casket to 101-year-old ship's survivor, David Russell. The ceremony culminated DPAA's six-year project which identified 92% of the 394 Unknowns who were highly commingled in 61 caskets.

Korea War Disinterment Project. Leaders from DPAA and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) had an extremely productive meeting earlier this week with our points of contact at the Office of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to review our plan to commence Phase 4 disinterments. Applying lessons learned from the first three phases, acknowledging the complexity of the chemically treated remains, and assessing both DPAA and AFDIL capacity, our current proposal is to start half of Phase 4 this April and conclude the phase in FY23.

Key Leader Engagements. In the last three months, we hosted many senior leaders, including: Mr. David Cohen, Deputy Director of the CIA; Ms. Andrea Gleason, Australian Consul General; Lt Gen Hiroaki Uchikura, Commander, Japanese Air Defense Command; Ms. Isbella Silk, Marshall Islands Consul General; and a House Staff Delegation consisting of four HASC staff members. Similarly, in Nebraska, we hosted Senator Joni Ernst (NE-R) and retired Chief Gerald Murrery, the 14th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. These visits afford us the opportunity to highlight our personnel and mission, and visitors gain a richer understanding of our worldwide efforts.

Regional Teams Overview

Indo-Pacific (IP) Region

Republic of Korea (ROK). I traveled to the ROK with members of the IP Regional Directorate and Plans and Policy to meet with DPAA's host nation strategic partner, the Ministry of National Defense Agency for Killed in Action Recovery and Identification (MAKRI), as well as counterparts in ROK's Ministry of National Defense and United Nations (UN) Command Military Armistice Commission (UNCMAC). We strengthened these relationships and coordinated plans for our FY22 missions in the ROK and the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

Field Operations. Over the last quarter, the IP Directorate accomplished Joint Field Activities (JFAs) in Laos and Vietnam. The Laos JFA was comprised of three Recovery Teams (RTs) focused on three sites in northern Laos, where the team recovered possible osseous material, life support evidence, and material evidence. The Vietnam JFA commenced with two HN recovery teams (RT-Hs), two RTs, one Investigation Team (IT) that worked 16 cases, and one Investigation Team-Light (IT-L) that focused on five Last Known Alive (LKA) incidents. The teams returned possible osseous material and life support items from five incidents. Our detachment (DET) in Thailand conducted engagements with the Kingdom of Cambodia to facilitate execution of a partner recovery in Cambodia, which is currently underway. A JFA consisting of four RTs to Laos deployed in early January 2022 as they seek to advance four cases towards potential closure.

Planned Field Operations. We also have a recovery mission involving a World War II (WWII) case which launched yesterday to Thailand and is there through May. We have a JFA to Cambodia that was postponed to later in the 2nd quarter due to COVID. Two JFAs to Vietnam are planned with three RT-Hs scheduled to begin work later this month and the second JFA currently funded for one IT. We continue to look for opportunities to maximize effectiveness and efficiencies and are prepared to execute more if resources become available. We currently have an Agency-wide planning effort underway to host officials from Papua New Guinea this quarter (has shifted to May since the update) with a follow-on site survey and two underwater recoveries (RT-Us) are in

planning for execution later this year. Finally, we have plans to execute a research IT with the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Archives.

Disinterment Operations. FY23 began with a disinterment project of 46 WWII Unknowns associated with the Battle of Myitkyina, Burma from the NMCP in Honolulu. We completed disinterment of 46 of the 47 Myitkyina remains in January and cemetery officials and are exploring options to disinter the final set of remains which are directly beneath a large Banyan tree. One disinterment mission scheduled for November/December at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial (MACM) was cancelled due to complications associated with COVID-19, but we have one underway through next month with a primary focus on disinterring Unknowns associated with the Cabanatuan POW Camp and the Tokyo Prison Fire. We began disinterment operations of USS *Utah* Unknowns on February 7 and are scheduled to complete this project on February 28.

Planned Disinterment Operations. For the Korean War Identification Project (KWIP), we have proposed beginning Phase 4 in April. Our final planned FY22 mission at MACM is scheduled from March to April 2022 where we plan to disinter Unknowns associated with Cabanatuan, the remaining Tokyo Prison Fire Unknowns, and Individual Unknowns.

Research and Analysis. IP held its biannual WWII and Korean War Case Coordination Conferences in December, where the teams refined research priorities and recommended cases for FY23-24 missions. Additionally, the Southeast Asia (SEA) Case Coordination Conference scheduled for early January in Hawaii was postponed to later in 2nd quarter due to new Covid travel restrictions. Collectively, IP authored/updated a total of 123 Case Summaries, of which 97 were for the January virtual Miami Family Member Update (FMU). IP also conducted a total of 26 family Case Summary Review meetings during the event.

Recently, the Geographic Information System (GIS) Section organized the wartime imagery and tied it to a map as an overlay. GIS is also building footprints of the imager overlays to determine if their coverage will help other SEA incidents. In support of the Miami FMU, GIS completed their first mapping out of an off-the-scope incident's Flight Plans and Debriefs to try locating the aircraft. Lastly, the GIS Section now has better 3D capabilities with ArcGIS Pro, a tool that will help with incident visualization and decision making when planning a mission.

IP also received promising new investigative leads from MACV-SOG veterans during the recent Special Operations Association Annual Reunion in Las Vegas. IP intends to incorporate this information into ongoing analysis of SOG cases from the Vietnam War. IP is exploring partner or contractor options to assist with FMUs and Case Summaries to facilitate increased time for analysts and researchers to advance cases. Finally, we continue to work with Defense Intelligence Agency Stony Beach to improve communication, coordination, cooperation, and increased access to files.

DET Recognition. In November, our DET in Hanoi coordinated Vice Foreign Minister Dung's site visit, providing him a deeper understanding of joint operations; his next post is as Vietnam's Ambassador to the U.S. Additionally, DET2 coordinated the 156th Remains Turnover Ceremony, ensuring proper transfer of custody of 4 sets of remains and 2 cases of material evidence. Vietnamese forensic experts also conducted the 6th unilateral forensic review resulting in the repatriation of 2 sets of remains to the DPAA Laboratory. Lastly, DPAA and U.S. Army aviation experts assessed HN helicopter assets in Vietnam validating their safety for operational use.

Europe-Mediterranean (EM) Region

Field Operations. Despite the general cessation of operations in the European region from October until early Spring, we gained permission from a landowner, after several years of work, to access the site of a B-25 crash in Sicily. We were able to execute a recovery mission from October until just before Christmas with tremendous support from the Italian Government for short notice permits and several units in the United States and Europe for manpower augmentation. Additionally, the team investigating the crash site of a Navy A-6 lost during a training mission in 1985, completed their work and redeployed in mid-December; the Secretary of the Navy requested DPAA assistance, which the Navy is reimbursing. Finally, we completed a field investigation in Poland last month.

Planned Field Operations. As we begin the New Year, conditions for entry in our region remain favorable despite the general COVID situation. We remain on course to execute a field recovery in Great Britain (April start); and investigation or research missions in Italy, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Czechia (all in February); and Austria and Denmark (both in April).

Disinterment Operations. We have coordinated our initial FY22 disinterment plan with ABMC and project resuming these critical activities in March at the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery and moving to cemeteries in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands later in the year as weather improves. Finally, we continue to work with the Department of State, to finish the multi-year effort to finalize an agreement with the Government of Tunisia to conduct disinterments at the North Africa American Cemetery.

General research activities. DPAA's coordination with NARA over the last several months has restored access to imagery records stored offsite in Kansas and are vital to investigating loss locations. Although the NARA II facility in College Park remains at a limited capacity due to COVID-19, our historians and analysts have access to these critical records and research continues.

U.S.–Russia Joint Commission (USRJC). We continue to work at all levels with the Russian Side and within the U.S. Government to continue the commission's humanitarian work. Although delayed by several weeks, we recently received permission from the Ministry of Defense to resume research in the Moscow Archives. The U.S. Chairman has conducted several phone calls with his Russian counterpart and across the interagency since October to enable work on both sides to occur. He will continue close coordination within the interagency process in the weeks ahead to determine if a viable path remains, despite the exceedingly difficult bilateral relationship between the two countries right now.

Partnerships and Innovations (PI)

During the last quarter of FY21, PI oversaw 5 field missions and initiated or completed 50 separate research projects. Regarding the field missions:

- Partners completed terrestrial recoveries in Germany, France, and Papua New Guinea
- Partners also conducted underwater investigations in Australia and Hawaii.
- Potentially identifiable remains were found at several of these.

During that same period, we also executed 28 MOUs to either initiate a new partnership or renew an

existing one. We also negotiated and drafted 17 other MOUs, so we have a good number of additional partners in the pipeline. Currently, we have 113 existing or developing partnerships and an additional 75 that are being evaluated. Some of the notable new partners are the University of Georgia, Marine Imaging Technologies, and the Strategic Air Command Museum.

Since the start of New Year, we have completed a field activity in Papua New Guinea, with our partner the University of Papua New Guinea and they completed extensive excavation work at that site. In addition, two new partner field missions are currently underway. One is in Italy with Cranfield University (England) and the other is in Cambodia with Ohio Valley Archaeology Inc. We also are preparing six more partner missions to the Philippines and Saipan this year, with more planned. COVID, of course, could be a limiting factor regarding these efforts.

We have initiated, or are continuing, 50 historical research projects with our Hub and Spoke research partners, which include The Ohio State University, the University of Wisconsin, Temple University, and Texas A&M University. We are developing a handful of new research projects to launch this quarter.

On the Innovation side, we have a number of efforts ongoing with partners who offer the opportunity to evaluate and potentially utilize new technology, equipment, and procedures. We are also identifying options for the Agency to develop a strategic and collaboration innovation program to ensure we are utilizing the latest accounting concepts, training, education, exercises, and solutions to maximum effect.

For PI and the Agency, we were very sad with the departure of Dr. Tom Holland in December. As PI's Director, he had established a terrific foundation for the Agency to build on as we expand our partnering efforts and pursue innovation to increase DPAA's capacity and capabilities.

Scientific Analysis (SA) Update

Our Laboratory System continued its balanced lab work/telework plan to maintain progress on identifications while mitigating risks due to COVID-19. There have been 52 identifications leading to a newly accounted for Service members so far this FY; 92% of these originate from disinterments with the remainder coming from DPAA excavations and unilateral turnovers. Agency field missions, disinterments, and receipt of unilateral turnovers has resulted in 51 accessioning events of skeletal, dental, and/or material evidence at this point in the year.

In November, the DPAA Laboratory began the reaccreditation process to maintain ISO 17025:2017 accredited status. The ANSI (American National Standards Institute) National Accreditation Board (ANAB) evaluated scientific competence and conformance with all applicable accreditation requirements. ANAB assigned a team of external assessors and subject matter experts to perform in-person assessments at both the Hawaii and Nebraska labs. We successfully resolved six due-outs and received final reaccreditation notification from ANAB.

Since being established in July 2021, the Vietnam War Identification Project (VWIP) has made one new identification and four additional portion identifications. Thus far, in FY22, VWIP has made one additional portion identification with another potential identification currently in review. The

VWIP Project Lead is Dr. Nicolette Parr. As a result of FY22 missions thus far, seven new VWIP cases have been accessioned into the laboratory containing possible human remains and are currently undergoing analysis. Project cases are divided between Active Case Work, Additional Portions Cases, Material Evidence/Life Support-only cases, and Hold Cases, with most devoid of osseous material related to missing U.S. Service personnel.

Additional milestones reached during the first quarter included the completion of the USS *Oklahoma* Identification Project. SA has received exhumations on the Unknowns from the Battle of Myitkyina, Burma, representing the newest project for SA and is being worked by staff from the Hawaii and Nebraska Laboratories. The project will move to Nebraska later this FY. The first Unknowns associated with the USS *Utah* were recently accessioned and they were added into the larger Pearl Harbor Project that is being worked by Dr. Laurel Freas.

Three scientists - Drs. Carrie Brown, Matthew Go, and Kaitlyn Stiles - recently passed the demanding American Board of Forensic Anthropology examination and earning distinguished Diplomate status, the highest professional credential in this field. There are not many Diplomates in the world, but now 24 of them work in DPAA labs, far more than any other organization.

FY21 Identifications

Total IDs = 142 newly-accounted-for
WWII = 127 newly-accounted-for
Korean War = 14
Vietnam War= 1
(Additional Portion IDs) = 211

FY22 Identifications to date

Total IDs = 52 newly-accounted-for
WWII = 46 newly-accounted-for
Korean War = 6
Vietnam War= 0

AFMES-Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) Update

Although Dover AFB adopted Health Protection Condition Level Charlie and the wing commander wanted staffing not to exceed 25% in the buildings, AFMES was granted an exception based on mission requirements and robust COVID-19 mitigation protocols. All scientific staff are currently in the building daily.

AFMES-AFDIL has continued support from the Defense Health Agency, our parent organization with funding under the CR. AFMES has received full allotments to cover the reagents and contracts needed to meet DPAA testing needs.

The Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) instrument will be brought on-line later this month February with the first fully trained staff. This will increase NGS throughput four-fold and allow the growth to 100 NGS samples per month by December 2022.

There is a lot of information in the news with regards to Investigative Genetic Genealogy and how it is being used to support Criminal or Missing Person Cold Cases within the states. I supported Director McKeague in presenting to the Senate and House Armed Services Committees on the reporting requirement regarding private public databases (Ancestry.com, 23andME...). Key points were: Direct-to-Consumer genealogy kits are geared to family reference and modern casework samples and not to DPAA samples and are only approximately 50% successful with cold case samples and are time consuming; AFMES-AFDIL along with Parabon Nanotech developed a Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) testing kit and analysis software specific for DPAA samples; and we recently published a paper showing that DNA obtained from WWII and Korean War-era chemically treated and highly degraded samples are of worse quality than 30,000 to 45,000 year old Neanderthal DNA.

Outreach and Communications Update

Regional Family Member Updates (FMU). Current DoD health and travel restrictions limit our ability to conduct large gatherings, therefore we held the Miami FMU virtually on January 22. We had 134 family registrants with 343 logging in at some point during the 4-hour event; the archived video has also been accessed by 190 other viewers. To watch our past virtual FMUs or Government Briefings, our Livestream archive may be found at: <https://www.dpaa.mil/Livestreams/>. We have postponed our FMU which was scheduled for Dallas, TX on February 26, until FY23 due to the expected large attendance. And our next FMU, which is scheduled for Spokane, WA, on March 26, will be held virtually beginning at 9:00 a.m. PDT.

Year-in-Review. We have mailed each of your organizations copies of the recently received DPAA FY21 Year-in-Review. The electronic version can be viewed at <https://www.dpaa.mil/Portals/85/Documents/Newsletters/YiR%202021%20Web.pdf>.

VSO Visits. In early December, we hosted the national commanders from the VFW and the American Legion and their delegations at our Hawaii facility. VFW Commander Fritz Mihelcic, an Air Force DESERT STORM veteran, said that, as a naturalized citizen, how the visit filled him with pride as an American. American Legion Commander Paul Dillard's theme for his term is "No Veteran Left Behind", which we shared was appropriate as we are searching for Unreturned Veterans.

News Releases. Our Public Affairs team released 52 accounting releases, and more than 500 photos and videos. The videos included the compelling story of the Barber Brothers as we wrapped up the *USS Oklahoma* project. The total article count from worldwide media was 275, 000 articles mentioning DPAA. Finally, the Wichita Eagle debuted their documentary, *Finding Father Kapaun*, around Veteran's Day. It can be viewed at <https://www.kansas.com/news/special-reports/father-kapaun/article255618296.html>.

USS *Oklahoma* Media Interest. The success of the *USS Oklahoma* Project generated a great deal of interest. The two most significant ones were a documentary from Time Magazine (<https://time.com/6121892/pearl-harbor-anniversary-unknown-victims>) and a Southwest Airlines

video on repatriating a Sailor (<https://www.facebook.com/SouthwestAir/videos/332400948347021/>). Major outlets that covered the story included the New York Times, Washington Post, Politico, and Inside Edition, among others. The total potential audience reach was 1.2 billion. We livestreamed the December 7th ceremony in Honolulu on our website and Facebook page, which had more than 28,000 viewers, and held a virtual press conference prior to the ceremony.

Virtual Speakers Bureau. In conjunction with our outreach and media efforts, we stood up a Virtual Speakers Bureau, which allows our subject matter experts to discuss our mission. On Veterans Day, our Principal Deputy Director, Mrs. Fern Sumpter Winbush, spoke to more than 1,000 Verizon employees who were viewing it from across the country. Also, our historians and scientists spoke to more than a dozen libraries across the country about DPAA efforts to account for Veterans who had not returned home from past wars.

Speakers for Memorial Day. We are currently offering speakers from across the Agency to provide remarks for Memorial Day, either in-person or virtually. This year marks the 80th anniversary of the Bataan Death March. If your organization would like to request a speaker from DPAA for your own events or others that you know of for Memorial Day, please contact Ms. Ashley Wright at ashley.m.wright52.civ@mail.mil.

News Articles of Note

Family to receive remains of Gonzaga graduate, Navy pilot missing since 1967 | Gonzaga University
<https://www.gonzaga.edu/news-events/stories/2022/1/24/family-to-receive-missing-navy-pilot-remains>

How scientist/detectives work to identify missing service members | Nebraska Public Media
<https://nebraskapublicmedia.org/en/series-media/what-if-video/season-3-video-16501/offutt-lab-50016759/>

Q & A Session

Disabled American Veterans: Question: *Three investigation teams in Laos and other teams in Vietnam focused on Last Known Alive (LKA) cases; what were the results and what came out of that?*

Answer: The first quarter Vietnam IT-L investigated five LKA incidents. Of those five, the team gathered information that we believe will help further two of those cases, but the witnesses for the other cases provided information that was inconsistent with the circumstances of loss. There were no field investigations scheduled in Laos in either the first or second quarters.

How many LKA cases are still on the books?

Answer: We have 41 individuals associated with 31 LKA incidents; 6 in Cambodia, 16 in Laos, and 19 in Vietnam.

Korean War Veterans Assn: *Is there any indication there is any chance to resume JROs in DPRK?*

Answer: Unfortunately, none at this time. There have been zero communications with the North Korean Army since March 2019. Ambassador Sung Kim, who is the U.S. Special Representative for DPRK asked for an update from DPAA, which RDML Banaji will provide him on Monday as well as brief him on the historical repatriations and operations with the DPRK and our work with MAKRI.

We would be interested in anything coming out of that meeting --- anything positive about future operations.

Answer: We are coordinating with the Department of State on a summary of the meeting which we will share with you.

Special Operations Assn/Special Forces Assn: *No questions.*

Veterans of Foreign Wars: *You referred to a \$25M increase if appropriations go through; is that real money or is that just keeping you abreast of inflation?*

Answer: The \$25M is in the NDAA, but we do not yet know what the Appropriators will do. As with prior year Congressional adds, the increases predominantly go toward operations. A \$25M appropriation would bring us to the minimum level of funding we have identified to the DoD and Members of Congress whenever asked.

Vietnam Veterans of America: *No questions.*

Coalition of Families: *Congratulations on all you did for the Oklahoma Project and the work you are doing for the Korean War Unknowns. That is one of our positive lights. Would like you to expand on the status of Cabanatuan and Tokyo Prison Fire disinterments.*

Answer: The in-progress Cabanatuan disinterments will provide the lab remains that could be associated with others that are currently in the lab. We are finding the Cabanatuan remains are just as challenging to extract DNA from as the Korean War remains, so AFDIL must apply NGS to them. Of the 66 samples per month in the NGS queue, half are dedicated to each of these projects. The success rate was 28% when we started; now we have a 66% success rate. We are excited about a new method coming online in December.

Also, would like you to expand on the PLA Archives engagement and what that entails.

Answer: Our engagement with PLA Archives will be a virtual research exchange where the PLA archivists will provide updates on their research and investigation findings for World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, and Cold War losses, and continue a dialogue on the way ahead for investigation and recovery operations in China.

I don't recall hearing anything about a joint DMZ operations with MAKRI.

Answer: The ROK completed their operations on Arrowhead Ridge south of the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) in June 2021. MAKRI's planned unilateral DMZ recovery operations on White Horse Hill will progress as planned in April. Our planning efforts with UNCMAC and

MAKRI are currently focused on Hill 111 in the DMZ, and we hope COVID conditions will allow a recovery later this year.

Regarding contact with DPRK, what kind of interactions have been going on within our own government; has anyone spoken with DPRK and what efforts have been made?

Answer: Since the Biden Administration took over, there have been multiple overtures with DPRK through their Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UN Mission; every one of them has been met with no response. Instead, the DPRK has continued provocative actions, raising tensions on the peninsula and with Japan.

Coalition of Families: *Regarding the State Dept & UN Communications are any directly related to the POW/MIA Accounting Mission?*

Answer: We continue to share our talking points with our DoD and State Department colleagues to advocate this humanitarian efforts being a key component to possibly opening the door to dialogue of any sort with the DPRK.

Korean Cold War Families of the Missing: *No questions, but I'm amazed that despite all of the obstacles, you continue to make progress.*

National League of Families: *Can you provide a copy of the briefing provided to Congress? If not, just send your own views on the four requirements from the Committee.*

Answer: Although the briefing is not classified, we need to ask the committee staffs whether it can be released.

The Disinterment Program worldwide mostly relates to WWII and the Korean War; how many remains have been disinterred and how many identified? Why are you continuing to disinter when you already have so many on hand?

Answer: To date, DPAA (and its predecessors) have completed approximately 1,859 disinterments and identified 791 individuals. We constantly monitor the capacity of both DPAA labs and are modulating how and when we conduct future disinterments. We are also working closely with AFMES-AFDIL so our current and future collective efforts are synchronized to ensure the best use of scarce resources. For DPAA, modulation includes accessioning remains into the lab to begin the analytical process and cutting for DNA testing.

Of all the people I probably know more than anyone and what it's taken to get there --- but I still did not get an answer on the remains that have been turned in by SB; want to know what has been done on those.

Answer: We have been providing case scrubs to Stony Beach, with the recent one this past month. Col. Brannen took the initiative to arrange regular meetings with Brad Taylor, which includes Dr. Greg Berg. These discussions included achieving fullest possible accounting in Cambodia; lab updates on Stony Beach accessions; Master Investigation/Excavation Lists; and increased access to DPAA files (two additional laptops were provided to Stony Beach personnel). Thirty-five of the remains accessioned from Stony Beach are still in testing and all the rest have been closed out; Greg Berg has provided a status report to Brad Taylor with regular updates forthcoming.

You mentioned the Panama mission, was it successful?

Answer: Yes, it was a field investigation intended to finally map the accessible crash area on the mountain. The team was able to identify several areas to excavate for a potential recovery mission, and we now have work to do internally, with the U.S. Navy, and with the Government of Panama to determine the next steps for a recovery in very challenging terrain with limited access.

Korean War POW/MIA Network: *When and where will the next in-person DPAA meeting might be?*

Answer: We evaluate these each time one comes up and assess local health and policy conditions. The next FMU will be Minneapolis at the end of April and we hope we will be able to conduct it in person. We also have very strong planning ongoing for the K/CW Annual Government Briefings at the end of July. It is being scheduled in conjunction with the dedication of the Wall of Remembrance at the Korean War Memorial.

When do you expect NARA to be open to the public?

Answer: They have not announced it, but we do know they are still operating with limited in-office capabilities.