



DPAA Families/VSO Quarterly Call and Update Notes
Thursday July 23, 2020, 1:00 PM
‘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:

- American Legion
- Coalition of Families
- Disabled American Veterans
- Honor Release Return, Inc.
- Korea-Cold War Families of the Missing
- Korean War POW/MIA Network
- National League of POW/MIA Families
- Special Operations Association
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- Veterans of Foreign Wars

The agenda includes:

- Director Update (Mr. Kelly McKeague)
- Deputy Director of Operations Update (RDML Darius Banaji)
- Operational Update (Euro-Med, COL Jon Lust/Indo-Pac, Mr. Stewart Holbrook)
- Partnerships and Innovations Update (Dr. Tom Holland)
- 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

In addition to those listed above, Principal Deputy Director, Mrs. Fern Sumpter Winbush, Mr. Brian Pearl and Mrs. Jennifer Nasarenko from Policy & Plans also participated in the call.

Director’s Update

Senior Enlisted Leader (SEL)

We were privileged to have U.S. Army Sergeant Major (SGM) Kerrick Loyd assigned as our Senior Enlisted Leader. Hailing from Louisiana, he is a career Petroleum Supply Specialist, has five Afghanistan deployments, and is a seasoned SGM. As the Agency’s SEL, SGM Loyd is a key leader for our team and is already making an impact.

COVID-19 Posture

After 106 days in maximum telework, we began the first phase under our Return to Work Plan. Except for the cancellation of our field operations and family member meetings, we have been able to continue our important work and stay safe. During Phase 1, the number of staff returning to work spaces increased (9% DC, 12% HI, and 32% NE). We have taken extensive health and safety measures, so as to strike a balance between ensuring personnel safety and conducting priority functions that cannot be performed optimally, or at all, via telework. It is most reassuring that no DPAA military or civilian has been stricken by COVID-19. We were just notified one of our contractor workers tested positive for COVID-19. He has been teleworking since April; has not been in DPAA workspaces and not been in contact with any DPAA workforce since April.

Budget Matters

Having not been able to conduct field activities or disinterments since late March, obligating our apportioned Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 budget has been challenging. But we have been able to execute previously unfunded key requirements, such as our Case Management System, private partner project demonstrations, and digitization of historical records. Our FY 2021 budget submission is with Congress, and we are encouraged by the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee including two program increases, totaling \$30 million (M), for DPAA in its bill.

Misidentification Follow-up

In regard to the 2019 misidentification of the remains of a Korean War Unknown disinterred in 2018, since our last call, the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) has commenced an independent assessment utilizing a team of outside scientific experts. We look forward to CNA's feedback later this year which will complement the initiatives we have already implemented from our corrective action report.

New Policy and Plans Director

Two weeks ago, we welcomed back our former Europe-Mediterranean Region Director and retired U.S. Army Colonel, Brian Pearl, who was selected as the Policy and Plans Director. We are thankful for Jennifer Nasarenko expertly serving as the Acting Director since John Hamilton's January 31 retirement.

Key Anniversaries

June 25 was the 70th Anniversary of the start of the Korean War. Along with the Korean War Veterans Association, DPAA was privileged to participate in the Embassy of the Republic of Korea's wreath-laying ceremony at the Korean War Veterans Memorial.

Also, July 11 was the 25th anniversary of U.S.-Vietnam diplomatic relations. The extraordinary transformation of the bilateral relationship between two former enemies would not have been possible without the foundation of Vietnam's commitment to assist the United States in accounting for Americans lost during the Vietnam War. Our joint humanitarian efforts began in earnest seven years before the 1995 normalization, just as our Detachment had a presence in Hanoi years before the U.S. Embassy.

Deputy Director for Operations

Contingency Operations Planning

As you may recall, due to COVID-19, we ceased missions and brought the last deployed team home on March 21. We continue deliberate planning in support of resuming organic and partner field operations. We assess U.S. and world-wide conditions and a list of factors monthly; and once these conditions/factors improve, we will resume organic and partner missions.

Many of the factors that would support resuming missions are in our favor. However, the largest single external factor to resume field missions is country access. Once this restriction improves, we will resume missions. If COVID-19 restrictions and access were lifted today, there are actually 19 possible missions that could take place during 4th quarter of FY20. Excluding disinterments, 15 out of the 19 missions are organic and the remaining four are with partners. The mission by conflict breakdown is 2 Vietnam War, 3 K/CW, and 14 WWII.

On a positive note, DPAA's doors remain open; our operations team which includes researchers, analysts, planners, and scientists continue to advance case progression and make identifications.

Republic of Korea (ROK) Update/ Repatriation Ceremony

This quarter, we held several teleconferences with our ROK counterpart, the Ministry of National Defense Agency for Killed in Action Recovery and Identification (MAKRI), including its Director, BG (Ret) Heo. We continue discussions and planning regarding future joint field activities (JFAs) along the ROK side of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) as soon as feasible.

On June 23, at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, we hosted a joint Repatriation Ceremony that was made possible by our Hawaii laboratory completing the Joint Forensic Review (JFR) with MAKRI that enabled 147 remains to be turned over to the ROK. To mitigate COVID-19 risks, attendance was limited and we used the Defense Media Activity to livestream the ceremony and archived the coverage at <https://www.dvidshub.net/webcast/24140>. The event reached 26,307 people, and 11,922 viewed it with 1,465 sharing and commenting, most of whom expressed appreciation for the U.S. efforts or asked about their missing loved one.

On June 25, the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War, the ROK held a Repatriation Ceremony where President Moon welcomed these remains home, along with prominently having seven families participate whose DNA match is among the 147 remains being repatriated. We just found out MARKI was able to identify an eighth DNA match and were able provide answers to one more family. During this Ceremony in Seoul, the ROK also turned over to the United Nations Command six U.S. remains which MAKRI recovered. These remains have been accessioned into our laboratory. The following link can be used to view this extremely fitting and impressive ceremony in Seoul: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bpAByzg9Hk&t=4198s>.

European Mediterranean (EM) Leadership Changes. Lastly, there is a significant change in key leaders within the EM Directorate. It is a pleasure to welcome back Ms. Heather Harris as the EM Deputy, after completing the prestigious Eisenhower School Program within the National Defense University. It is bittersweet, as we bid farewell to COL Frank Tank and his family as they transition from the U.S. Army after 34 years of active and reserve service and head to Colorado. DPAA benefitted from Frank's leadership and determined efforts in support of this noble mission. It is

also a pleasure to welcome aboard U.S. Army COL Jon Lust who is our new EM Director, and will be with us for three years. He brings a wealth of experience and is coming to us from the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, where he was the Chief of the Logistics Plans and Exercises Division.

Regional Teams Overview

EM Region

Operations. DPAA did not conduct any field operations in the EM Region from April through July, and had to postpone two recoveries in Belgium and Italy, and five investigations in Poland, France, Austria, Germany, and Italy.

Disinterment Operations. Disinterments scheduled in Europe for April-June were postponed. However, we successfully completed the disinterment of 16 Unknowns July 6-16 from the Ardennes American Cemetery in Belgium. We could not have done so without herculean efforts on the part of the U.S. Army Regional Mortuary Europe-Africa and the American Battle Monuments Commission. All 16 Unknowns are associated with Operation TIDAL WAVE, the August 1943 air raid against oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania. Due to significant limitations on cemetery operations during the pandemic, this represents the maximum DPAA could accomplish in Europe in July. Additionally, on July 21, we completed the Honorable Carry of 28 transfer cases to the Offutt Lab. This mission marked the first repatriation to the lab since COVID-19 began and repatriated the 16 Unknowns from Operation TIDAL WAVE, 2 from Rhone American Cemetery in France, 9 sets of remains from previous DPAA organic and partner recoveries, and 1 set of remains from a unilateral transfer from the Royal Netherlands Army Recovery and Identification Unit.

Planned August-September Operations. COVID-19 force health protection requirements and restrictions will prevent us from executing two recovery missions originally planned for August. One site is associated with the crash of a C-47 in Belgium with one service member still missing from that crew. The other site is associated with the crash of a B-26 in Great Britain from which one crew member is still unaccounted for. However, we continue to work on courses of action that will allow us to resume investigation and recovery missions to progress our cases and enable the fullest possible accounting of our missing.

August Disinterment Operations. Assuming no changes, an additional 16 disinterments of Ploesti Unknowns will be conducted at Ardennes American Cemetery August 17-27, and will conclude Europe disinterments for FY 2020, resulting in a total of 35 Unknowns disinterred.

U.S.–Russia Joint Commission (USRJC) Update: Due to the ongoing pandemic, the 23rd Plenum of the USRJC, originally scheduled May 7-8 in Moscow, was postponed until May 2021 by decision of the U.S. and Russian Co-chairmen. The two Sides remain committed to conduct the next round of Technical Talks November 17-18, 2020, in Moscow on the assumption that current travel restrictions will be lifted, permitting U.S. delegation travel. Also contingent upon the lifting of pandemic-related restrictions and development of force health protection plans, the USRJC and DPAA continue to plan and prepare to conduct a previously postponed recovery mission at a cemetery near Vladivostok, Russia, which may correlate to the loss of a U.S. Navy aircraft during a

1950 Cold War incident. Both Sides remain committed to executing these missions as soon as conditions related to COVID-19 improve sufficiently to allow their execution.

Indo-Pacific (IP) Region

Operations. An investigative mission scheduled for South Korea and a disinterment mission scheduled for Manila American Cemetery in April were postponed. Likewise, DPAA missions to Laos and Vietnam scheduled for early May were suspended until conditions warrant a resumption of field operations. Vietnam conducted a JFA May 5-June 23, which was comprised of three of their recovery teams (RTs). Despite the limitations on overseas access imposed by COVID-19, this quarter, IP made great progress planning for future missions and focusing on foundational case research.

Planned August/September Operations. Unilateral Vietnam operations will again take place July 21-September 5 utilizing Vietnamese RTs. Organic Laos operations will resume September 1 through October 15, but only if entry and health restrictions lift. In coordination with the Partnerships and Innovation Directorate, the University of Papua New Guinea (PNG) plans to conduct our first-ever partner nation unilateral RT in the Buna area (near the northern coast of PNG) during this period.

Research and Analysis. Researchers are using the current operational slowdown to conduct long-term research projects, review Unknown files, and propose cases for future field operations. Areas of focus include China-Burma-India Theater field investigations; ongoing cases in PNG and Solomon Islands; and a review of Unknowns in the Manila American Cemetery. South Korea and DMZ cases for potential future investigation were reviewed and verified during a June Case Coordination Teleconference. We recently shared a significant volume of Korean War U.S. loss data with MAKRI, which will allow them to pursue DPAA investigative and recovery work on our behalf. In addition to preparing for FY 2021 field work, our SE Asia analysts are busy preparing 46 Case Summary Reports requested by the Services for families who would have attended the U.S. Government Briefings that were cancelled when the National League of POW/MIA Families Annual Meeting was cancelled.

Disinterment Operations. While disinterments at the Manila American Cemetery are still on hold pending travel restrictions being lifted, disinterments from the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii are tentatively on schedule to resume in August when 12 will be conducted.

Partnerships & Innovations (PI) Update

DPAA partners have demonstrated maximum flexibility in the face of COVID-19 challenges. PI continuously worked with U.S. and foreign institutions to attempt to push partner teams to the field, when sensible, safe, and permitted to do so. Worth noting in this regard is the many organizations involved (DPAA, partners, host nation authorities, etc.) all remained steadfast in their dedication to try to field teams or, at the very least, to refrain from postponing missions until all avenues of possibility had been exhausted.

As a result of this mission-driven approach, PI is still working on four possible partner missions in fourth quarter; five other missions have been postponed at this time. Admittedly, some of these four are likely to be postponed because of travel restrictions. However, in certain instances, such as with PNG, we are working with local institutions that may have a higher likelihood of executing the mission activities than would a team coming from another country such as the U.S. This approach allows DPAA to draw on the best teams, but also shows our intent to mix the types of partners we work with so there truly is a broad spectrum capability to address the many challenges we face.

At this time, PI is deeply involved in planning and preparations for an ambitious program of activities in FY 2021. While much remains uncertain about travel and budgets, the partnership pool is robust, growing, and highly motivated to continue to build on past successes. The projections for next year include 50-60 planned partner field missions, which demand a significant amount of preparatory work we are actively conducting right now.

Research activities have certainly been impacted by the pandemic, as partners face travel restrictions, fiscal pressure brought by disruption of their baseline operations, and challenges with recruitment and hiring in this environment. All that said, the partnership research program has yielded significant results in the past quarter. For instance, the nine institutions involved in the current Hub & Spoke program have all advanced their efforts to finalize administrative structures for the overarching program. At the same time, three of the research fellows are in place and producing results, one fellow is soon-to-be on-boarded, and one other institution is now finishing its hiring process. The research results have provided baseline information and analytical products for DPAA staff to use in further progressing a wide variety of cases from World War II (WWII), the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. In addition to Hub & Spoke research, other partner institutions produced unilateral research and analytical products they have provided to the Agency. PI, working with the partners and with the other sections of DPAA, used this past quarter to establish firmly a comprehensive partnership research program to aid the mission.

Lastly, PI is happy to announce that we have signed a public-private partnership arrangement with Ancestry.com; final details are being worked out. Under this partnership, Ancestry will link their vast genealogical database to DPAA's list of the missing. This will alert family members doing their own genealogy when they have a relative that DPAA is actively attempting to locate, recover, and identify. The hope is that this will provide a vehicle for family members to submit useful historical information to our researchers, as well as alert possible DNA reference donors.

Scientific Analysis (SA) Update

The DPAA Laboratory System is balancing the maximized teleworking situation with limited access to the labs so as to maintain progress on identifications and other scientific work, while also mitigating any health risks. The scientific staff continue to work on other tasks that can be addressed in the current restricted environment. For example, our stable isotope analysis team continues to write the scientific papers necessary to introduce novel methods and to see them validated. Since we missed many scientific meetings due to cancellations, we are finding other

opportunities for professional development such as on-line courses.

Working closely with the AFMES-Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) team, there are a number of cases that are being developed for identification this month. Progress on the K-55, the 2018 unilateral turnover from North Korea, is 69 U.S. Soldiers accounted for, with more expected. Our counterpart lab at MAKRI in South Korea has identified now 8 soldiers from the recent turnover from DPAA, to make a total of 13 IDs from remains sent to them from DPAA.

The USS Oklahoma Project has made 255 IDs thus far with 25 more in final preparation. We will surge our efforts to complete the USS Oklahoma Project over the next several months. To assist U.S. Navy genealogical efforts to locate families to collect Family Reference Samples, which have contributed to several additional IDs.

Lastly, our Tarawa Project continues to be productive having now made 148 IDs with 8 more in final preparation. For remains from Tarawa, we have successfully implemented a 3-way JFR process with South Korea and Japan, which has established a set of remains in DPAA custody as a Korean National and one set as a Japanese National. Repatriations are on hold due to the pandemic.

FY 2020 Identifications

Total IDs = 94

WWII = 62 identifications / 59 newly-accounted-for

Korean War = 31

Vietnam War = 1

AFMES-AFDIL Update

The FY 2020 goal is 4,400 DNA analyses; as of June 30, AFMES reported 3,254 analyses to DPAA. This is an average of 366 analyses per month, which is what is needed to reach 4,400 analyses for the year. AFMES-AFDIL is working to maintain throughput, but will likely see a dip in the coming months due to COVID-19 challenges.

In March, AFMES adopted a dual-shift program running two shifts per day (AM and PM) with about 10 percent of employees per shift. Currently AFMES-AFDIL has entered Phase 1 of its Return to Work, which has allowed us to have 25% of our staff working in the building per each shift. Although not all scientists are in the building working, a large number of them are doing case review from home to keep casework moving forward.

Year to date, AFMES-AFDIL has written 849 Believe-to-Be Reports, the most it has ever written. This has led to 107 First-time Named Believe-to-Be Reports (first time a Family Reference is consistent with an unknown sample submitted by DPAA for DNA testing).

Most important is that AFMES-AFDIL, utilizing computer assets, is communicating and working daily with DPAA, while both laboratories adhere to on-site work restrictions.

Outreach and Communications (OC) Update

Cancellations

Due to COVID-19 limitations, we cancelled our Korean/Cold War Annual Government Briefings that were planned for July 30-31. We also had to cancel our Colorado Springs Family Member Update that was scheduled for September 12. The next FMU is scheduled for November in Little Rock, AK. The FY 2021 FMU schedule can be found at <https://dpaa.secure.force.com/dpaaFamWeb>.

National POW/MIA Recognition Day Poster and Ceremony

A ceremony to unveil this year's poster will take place this Friday, July 24, at the DPAA Headquarters, and the event will be archived on the DPAA website for viewing. Ordering the 2020 poster can be accomplished via the link at <https://www.dpaa.mil/Families/Posters.aspx>. Planning for the respective National POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony at the Pentagon and the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific continues.

Media Engagements of Note

Joint Statement in Commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the Outbreak of the Korean War by U.S. Secretary of Defense Esper and ROK Minister of Defense Jeong Kyeong-doo
<https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2231102/joint-statement-in-commemoration-of-the-70th-anniversary-of-the-outbreak-of-the/>

Children of Missing Korean War Airman Told US to Leave No Man Behind, Fox News
<https://www.foxnews.com/media/missing-korean-war-airman-fox-nation>
After 70 years, the children of one missing Korean War airman have not given up on America's promise to its Service Members and their father -- to leave no one behind. **Reach: 61M**

Pentagon to Return Largest Number of Allied Troops' Remains from Korean War, Politico
<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/06/22/pentagon-troops-korean-war-334350>
The U.S. on Tuesday will return the largest number of South Korean soldiers missing from the Korean War so far after years of forensic investigation of the unidentified remains that were handed over to the Pentagon by North Korea. **Reach: 31M**

Body of Korean War Soldier Finally Returning Home, The Washington Times
<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/jun/17/billie-joe-hash-korean-war-fatality-returned-home/>
An Army corporal is returning home to Kentucky almost 70 years after he was reported missing during fighting with the enemy. **Reach: 8M**

Question & Answers

American Legion: *No questions.*

National League of Families: *Of the 17 partnership operations upcoming; how many pertain to the Vietnam War?* **Answer:** If COVID-19 restrictions and access were lifted today, there are actually 19 possible missions that could take place during 4th quarter of FY20. Excluding disinterments, 15 out of the 19 missions are organic and the remaining four are with partners. The mission by conflict breakdown is 2 Vietnam War, 2 Korean War, 1 Cold War, and 14 WWII.

For the USRJC meeting dates on 17/18 November in Moscow —what working group would that pertain to? **Answer:** These Technical Talks would involve all four working groups. The talks are planned for November 17-18, pending the lifting of COVID-19 travel and entry restrictions.

When is the Plenum? **Answer:** Both Sides of the USRJC have committed to executing the 23rd Plenum during May 2021, but the specific dates during that month have not been finalized.

In FY21 you have 50 to 60 partner operations planned; how many are Vietnam War? **Answer:** Maybe half a dozen to include Scripps Oceanographic Institution and the University of Illinois at Chicago.

For the three unilateral missions this FY in Vietnam War, what were the results? **Answer:** Of the three Vietnamese Recovery Teams' efforts, osseous material was recovered at one site and turned to the detachment for transportation to the lab for analysis. Three more unilateral recoveries began this week, totaling six since the pandemic caused the cancellation of DPAA field missions.

Of the 94 IDs and only 1 from the Vietnam War, are any of the 60 in preliminary analysis from the Vietnam War? **Answer:** Currently, we have 64 cases pending identifications with one from the Vietnam War.

Disabled American Veterans: *No questions.*

Korea Cold War Families of the Missing: *The PBS documentary from Pennsylvania said the crash site was deemed non-recoverable and that the site could not be found. When you cannot recover how much research and analysis continues? How do you stay in touch with the changing landscape? Understand there is a higher priority for Vietnam so how do you not lose the information? Kudos to Tom Holland and History Flight for their work on that case and best wishes to Frank Tank.* **Answer:** We keep an eye on urban development where we have cases. For instance, in Southeast Asia, we have accomplished a number of high priority cases due to dams being built and other development. We review and adjust priorities when we become aware of these things. The hard part comes when you don't know the location of the missing persons. The Regional Directorates have their case development process during which they research the historical information and gain witness information including from people like the German gentleman you saw in the documentary.

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

Coalition of Families: *It's mystifying why DPAA does not have a partnership with John Zimmerlee.* **Answer:** I thought negotiations were productive; we have several courses of action we are going to socialize with the stakeholders to bring John in as a partner and utilize his work. There are several options available, and we are trying to determine which is best.

What is the status on postponed ROK missions? Answer: The IP Directorate intended to conduct an IT mission to an area west of Busan (Pusan) which is associated with 25th and 2nd Infantry Division losses as they fought to hold the Pusan Perimeter in August-September, 1950. Five investigative focal areas cover roughly a 65-kilometer section of this perimeter, and the specific cases address 46 missing individuals.

Is there a plan for Phase 3 disinterments to begin? Answer: Phase 3 of the Korean War Disinterment Project will begin when DPAA and AFDIL labs determine they have the capability and capacity to begin working the new phase. In addition, the National Cemetery Monument of the Pacific (Punchbowl) is currently working to accommodate current death interments which were delayed due to COVID restrictions, so their assessment is part of the move to Phase 3. We anticipate submitting the request toward the end of the summer to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness for approval; Phase 3 disinterments should begin shortly after approval is obtained.

For Arrow Head Ridge, any update on when that will resume, and if DPAA and DPRK will be involved. Answer: Limited ROK operations are ongoing. DPAA would like to add an organic team when we are able, but until COVID-19 travel and entry restrictions improve, we are not able to join MAKRI. DPRK has not participated in Arrowhead Ridge operations since the Fall of 2018, and have not shown up since MAKRI returned this past April.

Veterans of Foreign Wars: *No questions. Thanks for the fabulous work you do that needs more funding. BJ will be in contact to arrange an office call with our new National Commander.*

Korean War POW/MIA Network: *DPAA has been in contact with me three times, but there is no progress and no efforts made to get my research to the analysts. Seems all that effort and all those people could be put into the Punchbowl digging up those remains. I've heard there is a process and some paperwork that needs to be done, but from what I know that is not true. Answer:* The Punchbowl Cemetery has been a staunch partner, but it took much negotiating to get all parties, to include their bosses in Washington, to agree to the Korean War Disinterment Project. We have to be sensitive to the Punchbowl's capacity, capabilities, and requirements. We have worked closely with Punchbowl and will resume WWII disinterments in August, the first ones since March.

Vietnam Veterans of America: *No questions.*

Honor Release Return: *No questions.*