



**DPAA Family/VSO Quarterly Call and Update Notes**  
**Thursday May 12, 2022, 2:30-3:30 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:**

- American Legion: Ms. Tyra Nelson
- Coalition of Families: Ms. Donna Knox
- Disabled American Veterans: Mr. Vince Darcangelo
- Special Operations Assn/Special Forces Assn: Mr. Wade Ishimoto
- Vietnam Veterans of America: Mr. Grant Coates

**Department of Defense (DoD) Participants:**

- Director’s Update (Mr. Kelly McKeague)
- Deputy Director for Operations Update (RDML Darius Banaji)
- Operational Update (Indo-Pac, Col Matt Brannen/Euro-Med, COL Jon Lust)
- Partnerships and Innovations Update (Mr. Rocky Gillette)
- Scientific Analysis Update (Dr. Debbi Zinni)
- Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES) Update (Dr. Tim McMahon)
- Outreach and Communications Update (Mr. Mark Abueg)
- Question & Answer

**Director’s Update**

**Fiscal Matters.** Last month, Congress passed, and the President signed, the Consolidated Appropriations Act which provided DPAA with \$130.7 million (M) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. However, the bill did not include the \$25M program increase that was included in the Defense Authorization Bill. As such, this smaller appropriation is significantly degrading our field activities and other operations. Within the DoD FY 2023 Budget Request which was submitted to Congress at the end of March, our budget included a \$15M increase, which will remain in place four years thereafter. This resulted from our 6-month effort to justify and advocate increased operational requirements to the DoD Comptroller.

**COVID-19 Update.** Internally, this month, we are increasing our in-office presence due to changing DoD force health protection guidance, while still allowing our personnel the flexibilities of telework arrangements. At the same time, we are closely monitoring an increasing number of our team testing positive for COVID, but fortunately, having mild to no symptoms.

**Tunisia Agreement.** After over three years of negotiations and back-and-forth editing, the Tunisian Ministry of Foreign Affairs signaled they are ready to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with us, which would allow access for our activities (which will be limited to disinterments at first) and repatriation of American remains. The U.S. Chargé d'affaires will sign the document after the Memorial Day ceremony at the Tunis American Cemetery on May 28.

**High-Level Support for India.** Over the last few years, we have had challenges advancing our mission in India due to changes in government staffs and procedures. Last month, at the U.S.-India 2+2 Dialogue in DC, the U.S. Secretary of Defense and Secretary of State, and their Indian counterparts met to review/resolve various strategic issues. Their Joint Statement at the conclusion of the talks included cooperation on the POW/MIA mission. RDML Banaji will travel to India this summer for senior leader engagements to solidify our access.

**Southeast Asia Trip.** As currently being planned, I will travel to Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos next month, my first time back to the region in almost three years. I will meet with senior officials from the respective host nations (HN) and U.S. Embassies.

**Commemoration.** On April 7, at our memorial in Hawaii, we commemorated the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Mi-17 helicopter crash in Vietnam that took the lives of 7 U.S. Servicemen and 9 Vietnamese government officials and crewmembers. Their legacy is manifested by the strength of both today's POW/MIA mission and the comprehensive U.S.-Vietnam partnership.

**New OC Director.** Our new Outreach and Communications Director, Mark Abueg, is on board. He came to us from the Department of Education where he served as their Director of Strategic Communications. Mark is a 4-year Army Veteran and has been a Federal civilian since 2009, serving in Public Affairs for the Army, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Justice.

**Family Member Update Reduction.** Prior to the onset of the pandemic, DoD hosted seven FMUs in addition to the two Annual Government Briefings for Vietnam War and Korea/Cold War families. An important component to these meetings is individual Case Summary Reviews, the preparation and execution of which involve our historians, analysts, and researchers. With a major focus in FY 2023/2024 being boosting case progression, which is worked by these same individuals, we are having to scale back to four FMUs. This decision was not made lightly and is necessary to best balance the competing requirements, which strain our resources. We will publish the FY2023 schedule soon.

## **Deputy Director for Operations (DDO) Update**

**Operations Outlook.** As COVID-19 conditions have improved in countries of interest, we continue to execute missions with reduced HN mitigation restrictions. However, many Pacific Island nations remain closed due to COVID and their health care capacity challenges. In the past 3 months, we deployed 20 organic and private partner field missions in 16 countries that included disinterment missions in Hawaii, Italy, and the Philippines. This success was a result of extensive coordination and collaboration with our U.S. Embassy and HN counterparts. DPAA remains vigilant in applying our force health protection measures - before, during, and after missions - to

ensure the safety of our teams, partners, and HN personnel. We are optimistic for our summer planned field missions.

**Operations Symposium.** In late April, we held our annual Operations Symposium mostly virtually. Discussions moved our FY 2023/2024 Operations Plan for continued development and addressed site prioritization, organic/partner case selection, site closure processes, and optimizing the effectiveness and efficiency of our operational efforts.

**Outreach and Recruiting:** We had booths at the Organization of American Historians Conference on American History, the Society for American Archaeologists Conference, and the Society of Military History Annual Conference. We are able to expand awareness of the mission and to promote employment, volunteering, and partnering opportunities to historians and scientists.

**Key Leader Engagements.** We have seen an increase in visits to DPAA facilities in Hawaii and Nebraska over the last three months. In addition to a number of Congressional Member and Staff Delegations, we were privileged to host the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the VFW; the Republic of Korea (ROK) Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Commander, U.S. Forces Korea; the National Commander of American Veterans; Pacific Air Forces Commander; Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Foreign Defense Attaches; and the President of Palau, who had also dived with DPAA's partner on an underwater investigation there. These visits enable us to expose our mission to them and seek their support on challenges we are experiencing.

**PNG Operations Summit.** This week (9-13 May), we are hosting a Papua New Guinea (PNG) delegation in Hawaii to facilitate future terrestrial, underwater, and partner missions there. We have made good progress on the review of an updated MOU with the PNG National Museum and Art Gallery (NMAG), our sponsor for missions in PNG. We are also discussing planned and future partner and organic missions and ways to further collaborate with NMAG and our Australian counterparts in their Army and Air Force Unrecovered War Casualties Offices.

## **Regional Teams Overview**

### **Indo-Pacific (IP) Region**

**Research and Analysis.** While the National Archives remain partially closed due to COVID mitigation policies, IP researchers and historians have been regularly accessing the small number of areas which are open for research. Additionally, IP historians also recently began conducting archival research at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers historical office in Alexandria, VA, focused on World War II (WWII) and Korean War historical research. Our Korean War analysts conducted their semi-annual Case Coordination Conference in April, during which cases and research priorities were reviewed, and priority archival research and analytical tasks were assigned.

The Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Section organized 96 wartime imagery collections and the images are being geo-referenced and analyzed in sequence with the case workflows. Other wartime imagery resources have been identified and are being worked into GIS workflows for use in case studies. These and current imagery collected from various authoritative sources are used to provide operational planners the intelligence needed to detect encroachment around identified sites.

**Field Operations.** Over the last quarter, IP conducted operations in Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, and India. The Joint Field Activity (JFA) in Laos consisted of four Recovery Teams (RTs). Due to COVID concerns in some of the provinces, we postponed the Investigation Team (IT) mission until April – May and, instead, added the fourth recovery team. The RTs focused on four incidents in southern Laos where the teams recovered possible osseous material at one crash site and material evidence from all four incidents. An IT worked 3 incidents and 2 uncorrelated crash sites geographically dispersed from northeastern Cambodia down to the southern coast. The team successfully conducted three archeological surveys and five witness interviews during this time. The JFA in Vietnam consisted of 3 HN RTs focused on two sites in northern and one in central Vietnam. The teams ended operations on April 22 and recovered possible osseous remains and possible life support material at two of the three sites. A WWII mission in northern Thailand, the first conducted in more than a decade, consisted of one RT which recovered possible human remains and life support equipment.

**Disinterment Operations.** This last quarter, we disinterred 103 Unknowns - 71 from Manila American Cemetery and Memorial (MACM); including 39 associated with the Tokyo Prison Fire incident, as well 32 Unknowns from the National Military Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl), which are associated with Phase 4 of the Korean War Identification Project, which we commenced on April 11 and will continue through the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of FY 2023.

**Planned Field Operations.** In mid-April, one IT deployed to Laos, the first in 2-1/2 years, to investigate 14 sites in central and southern Laos. One IT arrived in Korea on April 30 to investigate 3 cases; they will also meet with the Ministry of National Defense Agency for Killed in Action Recovery and Identification (MAKRI) to discuss future planned operations and visit ongoing MAKRI operations at White Horse Hill in the Demilitarized Zone. In mid-May, one IT and one partner Underwater IT, which includes 2 organic personnel, will deploy to Vietnam. The IT will focus on 14 sites in the Central Highlands of Vietnam while the UIT will focus on 4 sites located off the southern coast of Vung Tau. Planning for 4<sup>th</sup> quarter JFAs in both Vietnam and Laos continues, should additional funding come available. An IT to Malaysia is being planned to synchronize with the signing of an MOU. Following the PNG Operations Summit, an advanced team will work with local officials to set conditions and continue planning for a 4<sup>th</sup> quarter IT and an underwater RT in East Sepik Province. Lastly, we are positioned to support reopening operations in the Solomon Islands should COVID restrictions be lessened.

**Planned Disinterments.** We are complete with disinterment operations in MACM for the remainder of FY 2023. During this quarter, we will disinter 32 Korean War Unknowns from Punchbowl.

**DET Engagements.** In March, our Detachment (DET) in Thailand coordinated the visit of U.S. Chargé d'affaires and 74 U.S. and Thai officials to the WWII recovery site. The recovery generated much interest from the Thai Government and media including a Thai PBS documentary; a repatriation ceremony will take place on May 18. Depending on the Joint Forensic Review, our DET in Vietnam will plan a repatriation for the recently completed HN recoveries. Our DET in Laos hosted the U.S. Ambassador, Lao Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and General Officers from the Ministry of National Defense to a recovery site in March. The visit highlighted the long-standing bilateral cooperation between the U.S. and Laos, along with us safely execute our mission in the COVID environment.

## **Europe-Mediterranean (EM) Region**

**Field Operations.** Since the last update, we began a field recovery in Great Britain, completed investigation or research missions in Italy, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Czechia, and began investigation missions in Denmark and Germany.

**Planned Field Operations.** Conditions for entry in our region remain favorable despite the general COVID situation worldwide. We remain on course to execute investigation or research missions in within the Netherlands, France, and Austria during June; in Italy, Germany, and France during August; and in Kuwait during September.

**Disinterment Operations.** We completed 6 disinterments at the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery in March and remain on track to complete an additional 44 disinterments at American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) cemeteries in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands from June through August.

**Research Activities.** There has been no significant change to research activities at the National Archives Facility in College Park, Maryland. We still have access to the records stored on-site and imagery records stored off-site in Kansas through their appointment system, but access has not been restored to pre-March 2020 levels.

**U.S.–Russia Joint Commission.** Despite the exceedingly difficult bilateral relationship between the two countries right now, we continue the commission’s humanitarian work. The U.S. Government continues to support discussions between the two chairmen of commission, research activities in Russian archives, and coordinating the execution of field activities with the possibility of progressing cases.

## **Partnerships and Innovations (PI) Update**

Despite continuing COVID-related travel restrictions and challenges, PI oversaw 8 field missions and worked on 58 separate research projects during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter. These included: terrestrial RTs in PNG, Italy, Cambodia, and the Philippines and an underwater RT in Saipan (possible human remains and other forms of evidentiary material were found at several of these); and terrestrial ITs in the Philippines. The University of Illinois-Chicago are conducting the field activities in the Philippines under a unique, multi-year pilot program.

During this same period, we also executed 12 MOUs to either initiate a new partner or renew an existing partner. We have established a healthy “bench” of partners to draw from as we continue to identify more partnering options for the future. We currently have 108 existing or developing partnerships and an additional 93 potential partners that we are actively evaluating. Some of the notable new partners are Portland State University; the Air/Sea Heritage Foundation in Boise, Idaho; and James Cook University in Queensland, Australia.

We have 7 partner teams in the field right now, with 39 more preparing to launch over the remaining months of this FY. COVID could still be a limiting factor regarding these efforts. The Lao government is still going through the approval process to allow a Partner IT to bring in

their aerial drone for a site survey next Fall.

Some field missions being executed have a number of pilot efforts that also allow DPAA partners to use various techniques, tools, and available new technology, such as deep-water robotics, machine learning, and environmental-DNA (eDNA) analysis to locate sites of interest to advance the specific missions. The last one, eDNA, is aimed at seeing if we can find DNA traces in underwater crash sites where it could be challenging to have a diver enter an aircraft fuselage.

We initiated, or continued working, more than 55 research projects with our research partners. Since the start of the new quarter, we have initiated 2 more research projects and are reviewing or developing 32 additional ones. Our research partners supporting this effort include The Ohio State University, the University of Wisconsin, Texas Tech University, and the National WWII Museum.

### **Scientific Analysis (SA) Update**

We continued our balanced lab work/telework plan to maintain progress on identifications while mitigating risks due to COVID-19. To date, there have been 72 identifications leading to 70 newly accounted for Service members: 60 are from WWII and 10 from the Korean War. Disinterments produced 61 of these identifications, followed by unilateral turnovers (5), DPAA excavations (3), and one identification where the source of evidence originated from both a disinterment and a unilateral turnover. There have been 190 accessioning events of skeletal, dental, and/or material evidence at this point in the year; a 272% increase since last quarter's reporting.

Among the 70 identified was U.S. Army Air Forces Lt Col Addison Baker, who was killed during WWII and buried as an Unknown in Ardennes American Cemetery. He was a B-24 pilot shot down during Operation TIDAL WAVE, the bombing mission against the oil infrastructure at Ploiesti, Romania and was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his gallantry.

Established in July 2021, the Vietnam War Identification Project (VWIP) has produced one more additional portion identification this quarter and thus far in FY 2022, put forward 3 new additional portion identifications, with 3 more potential additional portion identifications in various stages of development. To date, 19 new accessions have been added to VWIP this FY. Of these, 6 contain possible human remains, while the rest include material evidence and life support. Testing is underway on these cases.

We continue to work with the Defense Health Agency (DHA) to add an extension of the Medical Community of Interest Network into the DPAA Lab spaces in Hawaii and Nebraska. This extension effort will allow for more efficient file transfers and analyses with radiographic software in support of our chest x-ray comparison program. We plan to go live at both locations next quarter.

### **FY 2022 Accounted-for to date**

Total Identifications = 72 (Newly accounted for = 70 / Previously accounted for = 2)

    WWII = 60

    Korean War = 10

    Vietnam War = 0

Additional Portion IDs = 59

## **FY 2021 Accounted-for**

Total = 142 newly-accounted-for  
Additional Portion IDs = 211

## **AFMES-AFDIL Update**

Although the Federal budget passed, we are awaiting final validation of our FY 2023 budget from our parent organization, the DHA. We will adjust based on our allocated budget to prioritize funding to support reagents and consumables to meet mission obligations. DHA is committed to funding AFMES for this mission.

On March 10, the NextSeq instruments were fully integrated into the mtDNA Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) workflow with two out of the three NextSeq instruments being forensically validated. The third instrument will be validated shortly. The NextSeq instruments will increase the capabilities of sequencing chemically treated/highly degraded samples by 4-fold; allowing for 24 samples to be analyzed per run versus the ability to only analyze 6 samples per run on the previously validated MiSeq instrument. Our goal is to continue cross training additional scientists to use the NextSeq instruments over the coming months. This will allow us to grow from sequencing 50 NGS samples per month to 100 samples per month by December 2022.

AFMES-AFDIL along with Parbon Nanotech developed a Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) testing kit and analysis software specific for DPAA samples. We finished a set of optimization runs to solidify the scientific SNP testing method and have started the full validation of the solidified scientific SNP testing method and are dedicating a full team of 6 scientists to the validation.

AFMES-AFDIL and DPAA had a meeting with Orthram with regards to the feasibility of Investigative Genetic Genealogy. Orthram is assisting law enforcement with providing investigative leads to identifying perpetrators of a crime or an unknown human remain from cold cases. It was a fruitful meeting validating that they do not identify the individuals, but that they provide investigative leads to assist law enforcement. Law enforcement still has to obtain DNA reference samples from the suspect or family member of unknown human remain and then use a forensically validated DNA testing method (mtDNA or STR) for identification. AFMES-AFDIL's SNP method will be a forensically validated method as we are accredited under the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Quality Assurance Standards and the ANAB ISO-1705 forensic standards.

AFMES-AFDIL underwent its full re-accreditation to the ANSI National Accreditation Boards International Standards Organizations 17025 forensic standards and the FBI Quality Assurance Standards April 25-29. These are the same accreditation standards that State, Local and Federal DNA crime labs are accredited to; 10 forensic qualified auditors from multiple laboratories around the U.S. assessed our procedures and processes. They identified 2 findings that were corrected on site and accreditation has been reissued.

## **FY22 Statistics**

DNA Results Reported: 2,136 (on track to hit 3,700 analyses per year goal)  
NGS Tests Reported: 539 (monthly average 77 samples)

First-time Named Believed-to-Be Reports 61 (supporting new identifications)

## **Outreach and Communications**

**Regional FMUs.** On March 26, we conducted the Spokane, WA, FMU virtually due to COVID restrictions. We had 230 family registrants, 125 of whom were first-time participants. Our video post reached 2,900 accounts with about 100 viewers throughout the event.

On April 23, we resumed in-person FMUs for the first time since February 2020. In Minneapolis, MN, the event had 140 family registrants, 77 of whom were first-time attendees. Our video post reached 2,800 accounts with about 100 viewers throughout entire event.

Scheduled to be held in-person in Boston, MA on May 21, our next FMU will now be a virtual one. We are making the switch due to the county (like most of the state and region) having a “High” CDC COVID-19 Community Level, which imposes higher thresholds for DoD to host as well as stricter health and safety requirements.

To view our past FMUs, our archive may be found at: <https://www.dpaa.mil/Livestreams/>

**Spike Lee Assistance.** Producer and Director Spike Lee is the cousin and primary-next-of-kin of an unaccounted-for Soldier who served with the 92d Infantry Division – the ‘Buffalo Soldiers,’ during the Gothic Line campaign in Italy. Commemorating Black History Month in February, he did an interview and public service announcement to promote efforts to expand genealogical research and DNA Family Reference Sample collection from African American families associated with the losses, which are directly impacting our ability to identify those unaccounted-for from the 92d Infantry Division.

**Engagements of Note.** Two social media campaigns for African American Heritage Month and Women’s History Month educated the public on DPAA efforts and encouraged FRS submissions; each campaign carried an audience of 200,000. In association with Vietnam Veterans Day and 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Bataan Death March, we published 54 press releases and 250 photos and videos. For National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, we coordinated the Washington Capitals hockey team introducing Korean War POW David Mills to an audience of 17,000 fans. We have several DPAA personnel speaking at various Memorial Day commemorations.

**DPAA in the News.** There have been more than 1,800 articles mentioning DPAA over the past quarter with a potential reach of 2 billion. Leading publications were Yahoo!, MSN, Daily Mail and Washington Post. Most of the articles featured accounted-for Service members and their family stories. The Director and 3 DPAA experts were featured in a VFW Podcast focused on the the Bataan Death March and our work on the Cabanatuan Prison Camp disinterment project. Some examples:

Mississippi soldier, missing in action in 1942, finally identified (on both NBC and AP)  
<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/mississippi-soldier-missing-action-1942-finally-identified-rcna15085>

Home again: Korean War vet's remains delivered to Hagerstown (also picked up nationally)



[https://www.fredericknewspost.com/news/politics\\_and\\_government/military/home-again-korean-war-vets-remains-delivered-to-hagerstown/article\\_f28c718a-f350-52d0-96df-d79aa212675a.html?fbclid=IwAR2cg0fiw6\\_KWjxX0\\_zvmCDZdGd-IZWHoDSq6QCbaHvLEE9kwpVzEC9VLJM](https://www.fredericknewspost.com/news/politics_and_government/military/home-again-korean-war-vets-remains-delivered-to-hagerstown/article_f28c718a-f350-52d0-96df-d79aa212675a.html?fbclid=IwAR2cg0fiw6_KWjxX0_zvmCDZdGd-IZWHoDSq6QCbaHvLEE9kwpVzEC9VLJM)  
Remains of Navy pilot returned to Alaska family over 50 years after disappearance during Vietnam War  
<https://www.stripes.com/veterans/2022-01-27/remains-navy-pilot-vietnam-war-returned-alaska-family-4435016.html>

## Q & A

**Special Operations Association:** – *How many vacancies in analytical slots does DPAA have that are unfilled?* **Answer:** The IP Directorate currently has 6 vacancies for the Vietnam War, 2 for WWII, and 3 for the Korean War. We have onboarded several researchers and analysts in the past couple of months and are actively working to fill all vacancies as quickly as possible in line with established hiring processes. The EM Directorate currently has 1 vacancy for the Korean War (JCSO) and 1 for the WWII Supervisory Historian.

*Regarding the mentioned recovery attempt in Kuwait, is that affiliated with the AC-130 gunship that went down during Desert Storm?* **Answer:** The mission this summer is for a Navy A-6 loss, not the AC-130.

*Last September, Mike Taylor said he received three different figures of the numbers of remains from Vietnam, but that he had not received the actual number. What is that number?* **Answer:** There are approximately 150 active accessions in the DPAA Laboratory from the Vietnam Conflict believed to contain possible skeletal material. Of these, the number believed to contain possible American remains is estimated to be 20-30 accessions, of which, many will contain additional remains of accounted-for individuals. Many of the active accessions consist of very small fragments of bone which are highly degraded, and in previous years, did not support DNA testing or produced inconclusive results when tested. The primary goal of the Vietnam War Identification Project (VWIP) is to analyze these accessions in light of new technological advances with DNA and isotope testing to lead towards case resolution (e.g., non-human, not American, consolidated, additional portions, new identification). All new accessions are analyzed and forensically tested when material supports testing. The numbers will remain fluid as the VWIP continues analysis.

*During the Partnerships briefing, there were no universities from Southeast Asia mentioned. Are you also considering approaching those governments to help with research activities?*

**Answer:** We are making progress with partnerships in Southeast Asia after Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia had been reluctant. We are working with partners that have good contacts with respective government offices, and our partners are using these connections to be better able to pursue all aspects of pursuing the accounting mission in Southeast Asia. We also do continue to raise research opportunities with those governments.

**DAV:** *Noted the Zoom audio quality was poor. Asked about progress on last known alive cases.*

**Answer:** To update on the LKA cases briefed during the last quarterly update, the VNOSMP IT conducted interviews for 7 LKA incidents. Of those, one, a Cambodia LKA case, resulted in an additional witness to be interviewed by the next IT conducting LKA interviews. Our analysts are currently translating the remaining 6 (1 Cambodia and 5 Laos), but an initial review indicates the information did not correlate to any of the

LKA incidents being investigated. There was also one LKA incident scheduled for a joint investigation, but the witness was not available due to COVID restrictions in the province. Additional work is being planned for these cases. We will include an LKA update in all future quarterly updates.

**VVA:** *We also have problems with NARA research appointments. Thank you for the briefing.*

**Coalition of Families:** *Nothing was said about getting back into North Korea. Can you specify what the obstacles that keep us out?* **Answer:** The Administration has made repeated attempts over the last year to communicate with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) at multiple levels. Unfortunately, DPRK has shown no interest and they have instead engaged in hostile rhetoric and provocative actions. U.S. sanctions, a stronger U.S.-ROK relationship, and managing COVID-19 appear to be the primary obstacles to any direct dialogue.

*Are there sanctions or policies the U.S. has against North Korea that are sticking points in this effort?* **Answer:** Since 2006, there have been numerous economic and financial sanctions imposed on DPRK by the United Nations Security Council and unilaterally by the U.S. and other countries. The sanctions are in place mainly for nuclear weapons development, but also cyberattacks, money laundering, and human rights violations. The DPRK has long sought relief from these sanctions and directly ties relief to not moving on the underlying strategic issues.

*Is it possible that the accounting effort could be separated from the political stuff and get North Korea to engage on that level?* **Answer:** Since the June 2018 Singapore Summit, the U.S. has delinked POW/MIA discussions from denuclearization negotiations. More specifically, the U.S. Secretary of State allowed DPAA to communicate directly with the North Korean Army (KPA). We made no progress in two face-to-face meetings and multiple letters and phone calls over the course of seven months and March 2019 was our last communication. Clearly, they connected all the issues in a quid pro quo manner.

*Has it ever been broached for private citizens to gain entry into North Korea to pursue losses?* **Answer:** There have been private citizen overtures and efforts that gained traction with DPRK in the past. A current overture for a private investigation of a crash site received State Department approval for travel, but the DPRK has not responded due to their COVID-19 situation. We believe this effort could build trust for separating the humanitarian POW/MIA issue.

*When we get back into North Korea to perform recoveries, will there be an increase in funding, or will it still be only one or two Joint Recovery Operations (JROs) at a time?* **Answer:** After the Singapore Summit Commitments included the repatriation and recovery of remains from North Korea, the DoD increased DPAA's funding to fully cover four JROs, the optimal number when we last operated there. If we are allowed back in, we expect DoD to augment DPAA's budget with the necessary funds.

*Can family organizations or NGOs reach out to North Korea and if so, we could give them advice and help?* **Answer:** There are NGOs who have successfully operated inside North Korea, however, we are not sure of their status since the COVID-19 border closures. Former U.N. Ambassador and New Mexico Governor Richardson and his organization have had success in the past in communicating with DPRK officials and are very much committed to trying to advance the POW/MIA issue.