



DPAA Family/VSO Quarterly Call and Update
October 9, 2024, 3:00-4:00 PM EDT
‘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: Alyson Stapleton
- Disabled American Veterans (DAV): Marty Pennock
- Jewish War Veterans of the USA: Ken Greenberg
- Korean War Veterans Association (KWVA): Rocky Harder
- Special Operations Association/Special Forces Association (SOA/SFA): Wade Ishimoto
- Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW): Brad Hazell
- Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA): Grant Coates
- Coalition of Families of Korea/Cold War POW/MIAs: Donna Knox
- Mission: POW-MIA: Dave Huffman
- National League of POW/MIA Families: Ann Mills Griffiths
- Sons and Daughters in Touch: Colleen Shine

Director’s Update (Kelly McKeague)

Fiscal Year (FY) Budgets. For FY 2024, although we received our appropriation halfway into the year and \$40 million (M) more than the prior FY, we executed 99.3% to successfully close out our budget year. Although the Congress passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) just before FY 2025 began on 1 Oct, funding the Federal Government through 20 Dec, unlike last FY, our apportioned funding is set at our higher FY 2024 budget amount. As such, we will be able to fully execute our increased operations and attend to other requirements commencing this first quarter.

Southeast Asia Trip. In May, our Principal Deputy Director and IP Director completed a productive trip to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. Engagements in each country were with counterpart government officials from the host nations and U.S. Embassies. Among the key Agency issues addressed were Detachment transition plans from Laos to Thailand, support to the upcoming Anniversary Year Recognition Events in Vietnam, and the impasse of DPAA operations in the disputed Lao-Cambodian border region. In Vietnam and Laos, there was strong support for our significantly increased operations plans for FY 2025. While in Vietnam, she was also able to visit our underwater Recovery Team (RT). In Laos, she was our lead at the Annual Consultations, which we had accelerated from September, to primarily address the protections and immunities issue there.

Laos Issue. Despite strong advocacy from multiple levels of the US Government and some of you, the Lao Government did not agree to the diplomatic protections necessary for our military and civilian members who are permanently assigned to our detachment (DET) there. Recognizing resuming operations was critical [we ended up cancelling 3 Joint Field Activities (JFAs), which had 9 Recovery Teams (RT) and 3 Investigation Teams (IT)], we mitigated the immunities issue by preventing DPAA personnel driving in Laos, successfully conducted the 5th JFA (1 RT and 1 IT) this summer and have a full JFA (4 RTs and 1 IT) commencing this month.

Annual Conventions. Over the summer, I was privileged to speak at the National Conventions of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (Orlando), VFW (Louisville), DAV (Phoenix), and American Legion (New Orleans). We also had an information booth at the latter three where a significant number of attendees visited. We very much appreciate these opportunities to provide updates on our mission and to connect with your members about accounting for their Comrades-in-Arms.

New Leaders. We filled the leaderships vacancies in our Outreach and Communications (OC) Directorate. Jennifer Nasarenko will take over as OC Director 1 Nov (she has been our Plans and Policy Deputy Director since 2015 and associated with the mission for 35 years). Ashley Conner is the OC Deputy Director, which is based in Hawaii (she has extensive public affairs experience, last working at US Indo-Pacific Command, and is an Air Force Reservist).

Acting DDO. As you know, the O-7 (brigadier general/rear admiral) grade we had against our Deputy Director for Operations billet in Hawaii was downgraded to an O-6 due to mandated general/flag officer reductions. The Navy is in the process of finding us a captain, but the fill may not take place until the early part of the year. Until then, John Figuerres, our Senior Operations Officer (and a retired Navy Captain) is serving as Acting DDO.

Acting Deputy Director for Operations (DDO) Update (John Figuerres)

Operations Outlook. Since the last call, we conducted 67 missions, deploying 19 ITs, 31 RTs, and 18 disinterment missions. We completed Phase 5 of our 7-phase Korean War Disinterment Project at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP), paving the way for the West Loch Project (World War II) which began with a disinterment on 7 Oct.

People's Republic of China (PRC). Building upon the Jan mission surveying 2 WWII crash sites in Hunan and Guangxi Provinces, cooperation from the PRC continued. In May, our we resumed archival exchange visits with the PRC. Last month, a 16-person team completed a recovery mission at the Hunan site, successfully recovering osseus material. The team then moved to Liaoning Province, near the North Korean border, to investigate a Korean War crash site. The PRC Government's support has been strong throughout the past year, and we will leverage it this year.

Key Leader Engagements: In Hawaii, our team hosted high-level visits, among which were the German Minister of Defense, the US Ambassador to the Marshall Islands, the Deputy Minister of Defense of Vietnam, the Republic of Korea (ROK) Minister of Interior and Safety, and the US Deputy Secretary of State. These visits provide valuable opportunities to highlight our mission and the work of the Agency and to promote continued engagement and support.

Papua New Guinea (PNG). In May, I traveled to PNG to meet with their Minister of Defense and the US Ambassador, and to speak at a Memorial Day event at the US Embassy. Both officials desire for us to expand our missions there. I also held productive meetings with representatives of Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare and the Japan Association for Recovery and Repatriation of War Casualties, organizations with whom we collaborate.

Europe-Mediterranean (EM) Regional Team Update (Heather Harris)

Field Operations. In May, we wrapped up two recovery missions in France and Italy. The one in France, which we mentioned at our last call, concerned the D-Day loss of a C-47A. Everyone involved in the planning and execution of the recovery felt the extra significance that came with conducting the work so close to the 80th Anniversary of D-Day and a few miles from Normandy.

We also conducted recoveries in Bosnia, Germany, and Great Britain. Our work in Germany marked our return to a private cemetery in Neustadt, in the hopes of finding the remains of 3 crew members still unaccounted-for from a 13 Sep 44 B-17G loss. One of our predecessor organizations conducted an initial excavation of the cemetery in 2008 but was unable to recover additional remains from an area they were not allowed to excavate. This year, the lease of the area expired, so we sent a team back and they successfully recovered remains.

We also concluded our underwater remote sensing survey mission in Kuwait and conducted additional investigation missions in Poland, Italy, France, and Germany. While working at a former German POW Camp, at which 17 US personnel are still missing, our team in Poland serendipitously met a German citizen who had lived in the area during WWII but had only returned from Germany that day for the first time since the war. He was able to provide valuable new information about where we might focus our efforts to locate the missing US personnel.

Research and Analysis. In addition to routine archival research and retrieval of historical aerial imagery from the National Archives Facility in Maryland, EM Teams conducted research-focused trips to Croatia and Bulgaria. In addition to working with local host nation officials to determine how to conduct future operations in both countries, the teams visited local archives, including church and municipal repositories to review documentary materials.

Disinterment Operations. The EM Disinterment Team achieved a record number of disinterments for FY 2024, a total of 91 Unknowns from 10 American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) Cemeteries. The Unknowns disinterred represent individuals lost from aircraft crashes, ship sinkings, and ground battles in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, and Luxembourg. While we did not conduct disinterments in the ABMC Cemetery in Tunis during this period (2022 was the first year the US Government conducted them there since the end of WWII), in May, another identification was made. SSgt John Tarbert, a waist gunner aboard a B-24 shot down over Germany in 1944, was identified from both the disinterred Unknown and remains we recovered during an investigation of that crash site last year. This Unknown was frequently discussed with the Government of Tunisia over the years as we patiently worked at many levels for approval to disinter.

Planned Field Operations. There are no DPAA-led field investigations or recoveries planned for October. The EM Team's first operation for FY 2025 will be an Italy investigation set to occur in November.

Planned Disinterments. We do not plan to conduct disinterments in the EM Region this quarter.

US–Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs (USRJC). As we have regrettably noted in our last few meetings, engagements and activities related to the USRJC are limited by the current strained bi-lateral relationship. The US Side of the Commission is currently focused on finding a way to restore access to Russian Ministry of Defense Archives and on preparing to work the process to replace retiring commissioners, Senator Manchin and Representative Wenstrup.

Indo-Pacific (IP) Regional Team Update (Lt Col Jeremy Smith)

Field Operations. Since May, we resumed operations in Laos, completing a recovery and investigation, and completed two JFAs in Vietnam (an underwater RT, 6 terrestrial RTs, 5 Host-Nation (HN) RTs, 5 ITs, and 3 HN ITs). In South Korea, we completed one terrestrial and an underwater IT. For WWII, we conducted an IT in Indonesia; two RTs and an IT in PNG; and a terrestrial RT, an IT, and an underwater IT in the Solomon Islands, as well as the PRC mission.

Unique Augmentees. Four midshipmen and one staff member from the US Naval Academy augmented an RT that operated in Thua Thien Hue Province, Vietnam. We have had Academy midshipmen and West Point cadets visit our teams in the past, but this was the first time they have deployed for the full 45-day period to assist with site set-up, screening, and digging.

Malaysia Engagement. In Aug, we successfully completed the 2nd Annual Joint Committee Meeting with Malaysia and established a way forward that included cases to be pursued. Discussions addressed a Concept of Operations, permitting requirements, trilateral coordination with the Brunei Government for underwater cases there, utilizing Malaysian indigenous people, possible military-to-military operations, and repatriation of human remains.

Southeast Asia Talks. In Sep, the IP Director led the US delegation that included DPAA, Stony Beach, and US Embassy representatives at the annual Technical and Consultative Talks in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam engaging with the respective HN counterparts. All the Talks were successful in finalizing operational plans for the upcoming FY and identifying opportunities for increased efficiency in each country.

Research and Analysis. Researchers attended the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association Reunion in Jun (DC), speaking with dozens of members about Vietnam actions. An analyst attended the USAF Academy's Class of 1964 Reunion, where he gave a presentation and had discussions with members about several specific cases. Another analyst conducted language immersion refresher training in Hanoi, where he also helped to train a new Casualty Resolution Specialist. Analysts and historians also continued to conduct virtual Case Summary Reviews for families who were unable to attend the Vietnam War Annual Government Briefings (AGB).

At the Korean/Cold War (K/CW) AGB, the team completed nearly 300 Case Summaries in preparation for the event. The team also conducted a targeted archival research trip to South Korea to continue to build foundational knowledge and advance cases. Last month, 3 researchers supported the investigation near Dandong, PRC.

WWII research personnel supported the annual JCM with Malaysia; ITs in Indonesia, PNG, and the Solomon Islands; conducting research at the Truman Presidential Library; and the Philippines Technical Engagement, an annual event to collaborate with 13 Philippine Agencies to ensure mission success in the future.

Disinterment Operations. The IP Disinterment Team conducted 8 disinterments from the NMCP resulting in disinterment of 58 Korean War Unknowns and completion of Phase 5 of the project.

Planned Field Operations. In Oct, we will be conducting JFAs in Vietnam (2 RTs, 3 HN RTs, 3 ITs, and 2 HN ITs) and in Laos (3 RTs and an IT).

Planned Disinterments. This quarter, we currently have scheduled 1 Manila disinterment mission for 35 WWII Unknowns, and 5 NMCP disinterment operations for 30 WWII Unknowns.

Partnerships and Innovations (PI) Update (Rocky Gillette)

Field Activities. Since the last call, we conducted 20 partner field missions in Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Malta, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Poland, Portugal, and Vietnam. For FY 2024, we conducted 53 partner field activities.

PI continues to leverage specialized partner expertise and capabilities, complementary to ongoing DPAA efforts, to save valuable resources and time. For example, the underwater IT in Malta was accomplished by the University of Malta, which had extensive knowledge of the survey area and could execute this mission in their backyard at a cost savings. Another underwater partner, Trident Archäologie, executed a successful recovery mission of a B-24 off Langlands, Denmark. They found an abundant amount of extremely well-preserved evidence and key to their success was the assistance the Royal Danish Navy and a local heritage museum provided. The US Ambassador to Denmark also made a visit to the site and lauded the efforts.

Also worth noting, we successfully executed the first partner-led underwater recoveries in the Philippines and Vanuatu. In the Philippines, we partnered with Marine Imaging Technologies who excavated a site off the coast of Culasi, a PBV Catalina crash site that is difficult to excavate because of the thick mud in which the aircraft sank. The team benefited from 3D models that another partner, MITech, was able to create in 2023, which showed nearly intact aft and wing sections. In Vanuatu, our partners, Cosmos Archaeology and Professional Diving Services, began excavations on another PBV Catalina, which had been located by another partner, Sealark Maritime, in 2023. Both recoveries enjoyed close collaborative efforts and oversight from essential HN organizations such as the National Museum of the Philippines. Partners will be conducting three field missions in Philippines, Germany, and India in October.

Research. The SS *John Harvey* Bari Harbor (Italy) Research Project concluded in Jun after the successful production, review, and acceptance of 65 case summaries and 2 casualty databases. Seven new partner research collaborations include WWII and Vietnam War projects with researchers at Texas A&M University, National WWII Museum, Florida State University, and University of Illinois-Chicago, as well as a large collaborative effort between Research Partner Fellows at the University of Wisconsin and San Diego State University concerning WWII losses in the Northern Mariana Islands. We now have 79 active research projects and 21 research projects under development.

Innovation Forum. We conducted the first Innovation Forum in Aug which focused on exploring and developing best practices for applying Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)-based emerging technologies to our site investigations and recoveries. The meetings successfully facilitated exchanges between our subject matter experts and partners to further research related to UAVs. A total of 52 personnel participated in-person and virtually.

New Arrangements. We are establishing new partnerships through signed agreements with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Beloit College; Texas A&M; Tuskegee University; Novetus (Austria); Blake Emergency Services (UK); Oxford Archaeology (UK); Agence D'Investigations Memorielles (France); Archaeo-Geophysical Associates (Texas); Brockington and Associates (Georgia); and Nalaquq LLC (Alaska). The total number of active partners is 110.

Scientific Analysis (SA) Update (Dr. John Byrd)

Total Identifications (newly accounted for) for FY 2024

Total IDs = 172

WWII = 135

Korean War = 33

Vietnam War = 4

In addition, there were 32 additional portions of remains identified and 19 IDs of previously resolved individuals (of this, 7 were Individual IDs and 12 were second-time Group IDs).

Accessions. For FY 2024, 441 batches of evidence were accessioned into our laboratory system, consisting of skeletal, dental, and/or material evidence. They originated from disinterments (255), DPAA field activities (37), partner activities (39), and unilateral turnovers (110), and associated with WWII (312), the Korean War (96), and the Vietnam War (33).

Korean War Identification Project. We recently achieved a significant milestone by successfully identifying the 700th missing person from the Korean War. Since 1982, various initiatives have been aimed to increase our effectiveness. The KWIP team of scientists has been dedicated to sorting and identifying the remains from unilateral turnovers (the K208 and K55), field recoveries (JROs), cemetery disinterments (NMCP Unknowns), and cases turned over by our ROK partner, Ministry of Defense Agency for KIA Recovery and Identification (MAKRI).

Cabanatuan Project. During WWII, over 2,600 Americans died as POWs at the Cabanatuan Prison Camp in the Philippines. After WWII, historical identification efforts resolved over 1,600 of the casualties and the remainder representing approximately 1,000 Unknowns were buried in what is now the Manila American Cemetery. Analytical efforts rely on anthropology, DNA testing, odontology, and stable bone isotopes to identify individuals from extremely commingled and fragmentary remains. In Aug, this complex and challenging project achieved its 100th ID.

Vietnam War Identification Project. The VWIP team is engaged in a data audit with other DPAA Directorates to validate records. In the most recent quarter, we received 11 batches of evidence from SEA, including a unilateral turnover of ID cards given to Secretary Austin by the Vietnam Minister of Defense. In FY 2024, the VWIP team made 4 first-time IDs and 9 additional portion IDs, a result slightly exceeding last year's effort.

Scientific Summit 2024. The third Scientific Summit was held in June in Seoul, noteworthy because it was co-hosted by MAKRI and had the largest participation to date, scientists from 12 countries across the Indo-Pacific Region. Highlights of the meeting were presentations on advanced methods in DNA testing, stable isotope testing, and field recovery procedures. The Vietnamese participants visited a MAKRI Recovery Team to see how excavations are conducted there.

Laboratory Accreditation. The DPAA Laboratory System is accredited under the International Standard Organizations (ISO) 17025:207 Standard. In order to maintain this accredited status, we are assessed by the ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB) on a yearly basis. In May, we completed a remote document review assessment and were awarded an extension of accredited status in the major disciplines of Anthropology, Odontology, and Scene Investigation.

Interesting Innovation. Skull-Photo Superimposition, a procedure for comparing skeletal features to photographs taken during life, has been around for many years but was more subjective than scientific and generally not considered reliable. Partnering with the University of Queensland (Australia), we have developed the technique into a rigorous method that involves accurately estimating the soft tissue features of the face and accurately determining the distance of the camera from the person when the photograph was taken. A Korean War Soldier who had no DNA references because of his adoption as a child was a good candidate since his adopted family had provided photos. Together with a stable isotope result consistent with his European birthplace, the superimposition application was enough to solidify the ID at a high scientific standard.

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

Laboratory Accreditation. Our Laboratory System underwent its annual surveillance review of procedures and operations from the accrediting body, ANAB ISO 17025 and Federal Bureau of Investigation Standards and was granted full accreditation on 22 Aug.

Research Initiatives. Our Emerging Technology Section received a 3-year \$990,000 grant from the National Institutes of Justice to advance forensic genetic Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) analysis by utilizing high-density SNP data from major US populations. This will allow for the growth of forensic databases needed to support DPAA casework.

DPAA Casework. Year to date, the AFMES-AFDIL Past Accounting Section has seen a 12% increase in the total number of DNA analyses reported to DPAA. Major contributors to this have been the implementation of new higher throughput Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) instruments, new optimized DNA processing methods, and the cross-training of additional scientists.

Last FY, we reported out 3,604 DNA analyses. By the end of Aug, we had reported out 3,896; we estimate we will report out 4,000 or more analyses by the end of the FY. Last FY, we reported out 1,165 NGS analyses with a 57% success rate. At the end of Aug, we had already reported out 1,452 NGS analyses with a 63% success rate; equating to approximately 130 analysis per month, a 30% increase over last year.

Finally, the optimized extraction method we brought online is making a difference with Cabanatuan Unknowns. The samples sent for testing have been chemically treated, but not to the extent of Korean War samples. Initially, we were not able to get nuclear and Y-Short Tandem Repeat (STR) results, but this year with the optimized extraction method, we have been able to generate STR results approximately 20% of the time. This sounds low, but in previous years, we were not able to get STR results.

New and Emerging Technology. Regarding our Nuclear SNP Assay that is a custom-developed method and the data analysis software, during the review of all the data and the writing of the final validation report, we had to increase certain population data sets to allow for greater discrimination and increased identification potential. Our goal is to bring this testing online by Sep. The 82-page report has been completed and is undergoing scientific review per our accreditation standards, the laboratory operational manuals are being written and reviewed, and the staff are being trained. We are looking at the end of the year to have the new method up and running.

FY 2024 Statistics (as of August 31, 2024)*:

1. DNA Results Reported: 3,896 (350 per month / the goal is 300 per month)
 - a. mtDNA traditional: 931
 - b. NGS: 1,452 samples (this is 130 samples per month – a 30% increase over last year)
 - c. Autosomal Short Tandem Repeat: 938
 - d. Y-STR: 572
2. First-time Named Believed-to-Be (BTB) supporting new IDs: 138
3. Total BTB Reports (First time + additional samples): 234

* AFMES-AFDIL closes monthly metrics on the last working day of each month and collates them by the 15th of the following Month.

Outreach and Communications (Jennifer Nasarenko)

Family Member Meetings. On 18 May, we held an in-person Family Member Update (FMU) in Billings, Montana, which included 81 family members (representing 46 cases), of whom 65 were first-time attendees (80%). We held the Vietnam War Annual Government Briefings (AGB) in Washington, DC, 27-28 Jun. There were 170 family members (representing 95 cases) who attended, of whom 56 were first-time attendees (33%). We then hosted the Korean/Cold War AGBs 15-16 Aug, in Arlington, Virginia. There were 375 family members (representing 186 cases) who attended, of whom 149 were first-time attendees (40%). All three events were livestreamed on our DPAA Website as well as Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn social media sites; the archived videos are at www.dpaa.mil/Livestreams. The next FMU will be on 2 Nov in Portland, Maine.

Memorial Day Speakers: DPAA provided 30 staff members who spoke at Memorial Day commemorations in 22 states and at ABMC's Rhone American Cemetery (France). Besides the outreach opportunity in being able to educate new audiences on our mission, there were ancillary engagement that most of the speakers had with Governors, US Senators, US Representatives, Veterans, and media who were also in attendance. For example, an EM historian was interviewed by Rep Raskin (D-MD) for the Congressman's "Local Heroes" Podcast.

2024 Poster: On 20 Jun at a Pentagon ceremony, the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff and 3 family members unveiled our annual poster in honor of National POW/MIA Recognition Day. In his remarks, Gen Brown acknowledged our important work against the backdrop of his trust goal. The poster's design was spearheaded by a DPAA Sailor and Soldier. The poster can still be ordered from our website which also has a link to the ceremony.

POW/MIA Recognition Day: On 20 Sep, we were out-in-front on ceremonies across the globe commemorating this day. At the Pentagon ceremony, in his remarks, Secretary Austin recounted his "memorable and impactful" visit to DPAA in 2021 and told the story of Marine Capt Forrester being accounted for from Vietnam. Gen Brown relayed our accounting for Army PVT Dent, a "Buffalo Soldier" from the 92nd Inf Div. At the NMCP ceremony, AF Maj Gen (Ret) Bannister, who was 6 when her dad went missing in Laos then accounted for in 2007, provided the keynote. By far, there were more family members (of both accounted and unaccounted for) attending this ceremony than in the past. Our Detachment (DET) 1 team, in addition to hosting the ceremony at the US Embassy in Cambodia, hosted one in Lampang, Thailand; the first of these to be held there, which was close to where 2 RTs had operated. In Hanoi, the US Chargé d'affaires provided keynote remarks, and she and the Defense Attaché placed a wreath in honor of POWs and MIAs at the ceremony which was held at the DET House. In Vientiane, the US Ambassador provided the keynote and expressed gratitude to the DET and visiting JFA Teams.

Rosette Ceremony: Incorporated within the Hawaii event was a ceremony where the ABMC (who owns the NMCP Tablets of the Missing) installed bronze rosettes next to the names of those who have been accounted for. Among the 162 rosettes placed that day, 50 Gold Star family members placed the rosettes themselves, including Karoni Forrester, Capt Forrester's daughter, and Colleen Shine, daughter of AF Col Anthony Shine.

Public Affairs. We kicked off June with national outlets including CNN and the Washington Post covering our efforts to recover and identify missing Service members from D-Day and continued to push DPAA messaging through media engagements at the K/CW and Vietnam War AGBs. Through our booths at the VSO National Conventions, we distributed thousands of educational materials on our mission. We also launched our official podcast, *Missing and Not Forgotten*, which is available for listening on all major platforms; please help spread the word. We published more than 900 photos, videos, and stories; pushed 71 press releases out about IDs; and answered 69 media queries.

News Articles of Note.

CNN - [80 years after D-Day, a dedicated team works to bring missing airmen home](#)

CNN - [US expresses frustration that North Korea is blocking efforts to recover remains of American casualties from Korean War](#)

DPAA - [What the soil leaves behind: A friend's journey for Bernie and the fallen](#) (written by the Sailor who helped design the 2024 Poster)

Odessa American- [Odessa pilot accounted for from Vietnam](#)

Q & A Session:

The American Legion: *No questions; thanks for attending our national convention. Also, expressed strong support and advocacy and asked to let the American Legion know if there are any messages they can bring forward to their membership.*

DAV: *No questions; best regards from the DAV Director and expressed appreciation for everything DPAA does.*

Jewish War Veterans of the USA: *No questions; thanked DPAA for the update and the good work across the globe.*

KWVA: *Congratulations on the 700th identification. With over 5,000 service members in North Korea, any movement on resuming operations?*

ANSWER: There have been overtures at every level of the Administration, both formal and informal, but complete silence from the DPRK. DPAA's last communication with them was March 2019. Since COVID, they have closed all borders (roads, rail, etc) and continue to exhibit irresponsible behavior. Additionally, several NGOs who had been assisting North Korea (medical, agriculture, etc.) for decades were expelled during COVID and have not been permitted to return.

With resuming operations in China, was the site a Korean War loss?

ANSWER: The recent mission consisted of a WWII excavation in Hunan Province and a site survey of a site near Dandong of an RB-29A loss from the Korean War.

With 33 sets of Korean War remains identified this year what was the breakout of disinterments, recoveries and returned remains?

ANSWER: This FY's Korean War identifications were 28 from disinterments (14 Unknowns originated respectively from North Korea and South Korea) and 5 from DPRK unilateral turnovers (4 K-55 and 1 K-208).

SOA/SFA: *Received a list of local POWs from Mike Brazelton and hope more POWs attend the POW/MIA Recognition Day event.*

Any movement on the archival research in Vietnam?

ANSWER: We had positive conversations at the Technical Talks and are discussing the use of Vietnamese entities to pursue archival research through potential partnership arrangements.

VFW: *No questions; thank you for all you do and supporting our national convention. We fully support DPAA.*

VVA: *VVA is 100% behind DPAA and stands ready to assist.*

Coalition of Families of Korea/Cold War POW/MIAs: *Archival research in China seems to be cooling. Is the pause due to the revised MOA and what is the status of the MOA?*

ANSWER: We have enjoyed strong support and cooperation from the PRC in the last year. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense will sign the updated MOA soon and they are ready to sign; we anticipate it to be completed by the end of the month. Regarding the progress of archival research, our Research Team went to China and gained access to an area of the archives never accessed before. In relaying input from families to the PLA, the team reinforced the people-to-people impact of cooperation on this mission.

Mission: POW-MIA: *Discussed sharing a wallet turned over by a US Veteran and future exchanges from their trip to Vietnam this summer.*

Is there a maximum ceiling on open sites on the Master Excavation List (MEL)?

ANSWER: There is no maximum for how many sites can be on the MEL.

So, a site doesn't have to close for another one to open?

ANSWER: That is correct.

Is there a master list of families of active cases?

ANSWER: Service Casualty Offices have a list of active cases and know when DPAA is working on a site, for which DPAA notifies the SCOs, who, in turn, notify the families.

Press releases can be confusing, what is the difference between "accounted for" and "previously accounted for?"

ANSWER: The difference in announcements is between newly made identifications and updates to previously identified. Acknowledging they are confusing, we will review and adjust the process and announcements to provide better clarity.

National League of POW/MIA Families: *Reiterated the press releases are confusing and expressed appreciation for the briefings.*

Sones and Daughters in Touch: *Did DPAA get a pulse from the families (chief stakeholders) during the Vietnam Annual Government Briefing (AGB) regarding how well the case summaries went? Were families satisfied?*

ANSWER: Surveys from the AGB indicated there were no significant issues with the Case Summaries and no informal input was received from families.

Expressed concern about the current policy regarding comingled remains and final disposition of the group identifications.

ANSWER: The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness (P&R) is the proponent for this DoD policy which is found in DoD Instruction 1300.29, dated June 28, 2021. Typically, when an individual identification is presented by the Service Casualty Officer to the family, the family will be advised that if additional remains are discovered through later laboratory testing, they have a choice of whether to be notified, and whether they wish to direct disposition of additional remains of their loved one. As to group remains, the DPAA Laboratory will frequently segregate the unassociated remains from an incident and produce reports pertaining to the group identification itself. The disposition of the group remains is determined by the Service Secretary.

Provided an update on the number of rosettes placed during the ceremony, the original number placed was 162, but by Nov 1, 955 rosettes will have been placed.