



World War II



Presenter: Josh Fennell (DPAA)

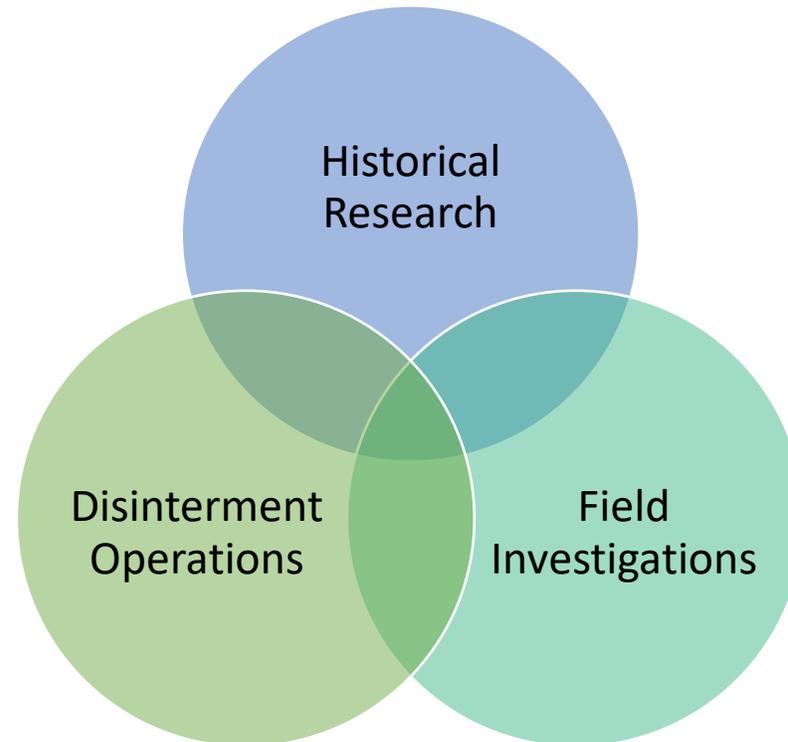
7 November 2020



Agenda



1. A Brief History of Casualty Recovery
2. The first step: historical Research at DPAA
3. Pathways to Identification
 - Field Investigations/ Recoveries
 - The Disinterment of Unknowns



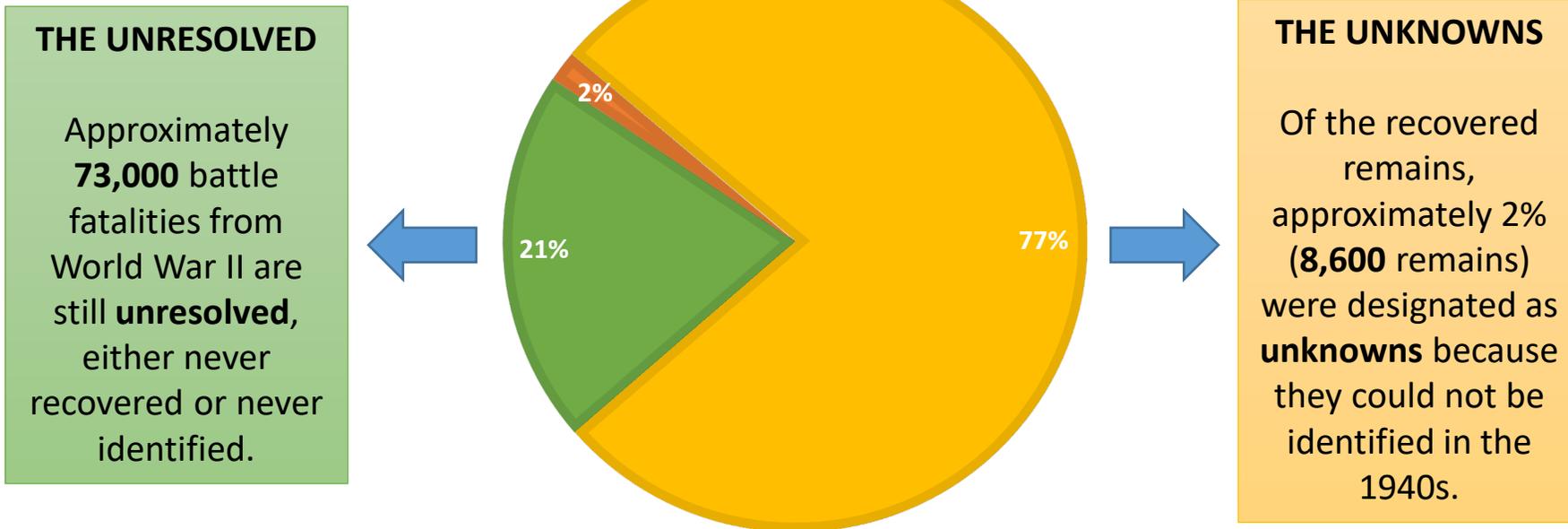


World War II Casualties



360,000 OVERSEAS FATALITIES

■ Unresolved ■ Buried at Sea ■ Recovered



405,399 U.S. casualties during World War II



Military Burials in World War II



Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands



Normandy, France



Burial of battle casualties largely handled by organic graves registration teams (often attached to combat units), or on an ad-hoc basis by available personnel.

*The recovery, processing, and identification of WWII remains is run by the **American Graves Registration Service (Pacific)** or **American Graves Registration Command (Europe)**, organized under the Office of the Quartermaster General.*



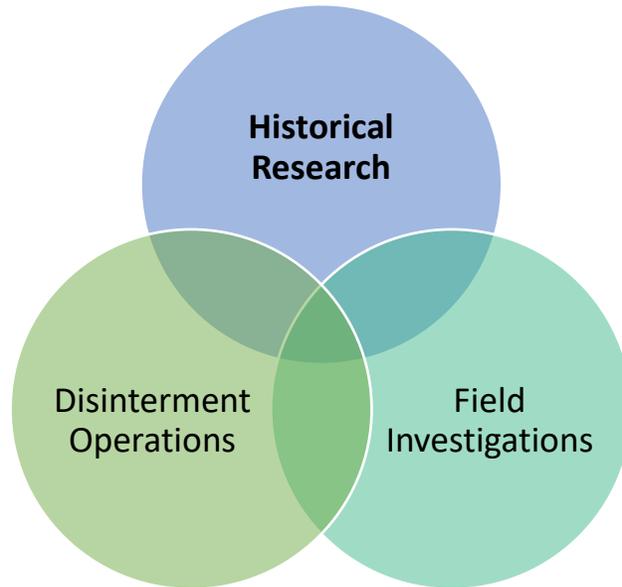
Temporary Cemeteries



Across all theaters of World War II, U.S. fatalities were buried, disinterred, and re-buried across a series of cemeteries as remains from around the world were concentrated to be returned to the U.S. or buried in one of its permanent cemeteries abroad.



Our Research



The AGRS/AGRC spent years searching for the remains of U.S. casualties after the war and trying to identify those remains that were classified as unknowns.

What might we be able to do that they couldn't?

Historical Records

- Concentrated archival collections
- Digitization efforts make records more easily accessible

New Discoveries

- Access to witnesses that may not have been found before
- Wreckage or other evidence found by local residents

New Technology

- GIS technology
- DNA testing and other new scientific methods of identification



Challenges of Archival Research

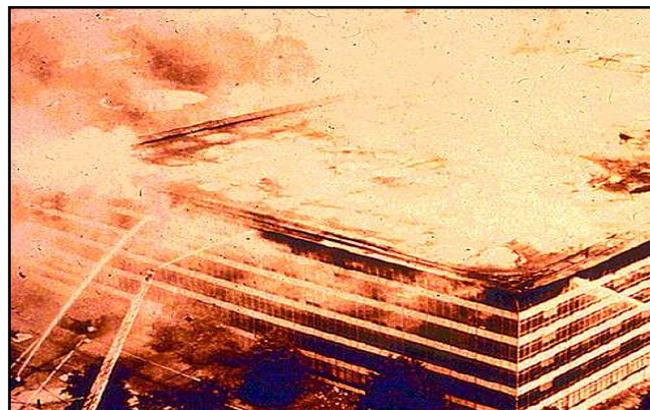


Before we can digitize records, we have to find them!

- National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)
- National Personnel Records Center (NPRC)
- Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA)
- Presidential Libraries, University Collections...
- Foreign Archives

NPRC Fire in 1973

- Army lost 80% of personnel records from 1912-1960 (and no duplicate copies)
- Navy and Marine Corps records largely unaffected
- Efforts underway to restore damaged records



Missouri Fire Ruins Data on Veterans

ST. LOUIS, July 12 (UPI)—A fire in the United States Military Personnel Records Center destroyed today the files of hundreds of thousands of servicemen and veterans.

The fire, which broke out at about 10:30 p.m. on July 11, destroyed the top floor of the building in a matter of minutes. Fire continued for several hours into the night. Firemen worked for hours to contain the fire, which destroyed much of the records stored in the building.

The records center is used in handling requests for replacement of discharge certificates, furnishing records to the V.A. for adjudication of claims, verifying military service for Social Security purposes.

A spokesman said that the fire had not yet been fully contained. He said that the fire had not yet been fully contained. He said that the fire had not yet been fully contained.

Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation are working to determine the cause of the fire. One center official said that the fire had not yet been fully contained.

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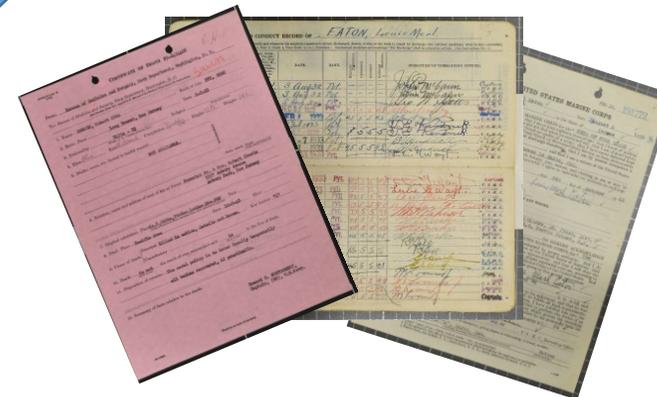
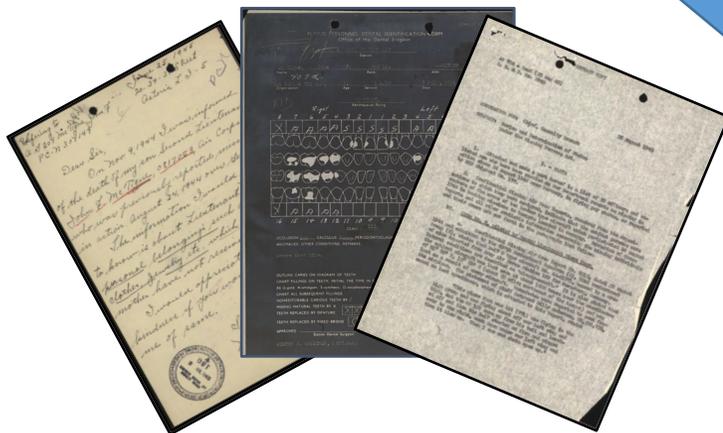




Casualty Records

**Individual Deceased
Personnel File
(IDPF)**

**Official Military
Personnel File
(OMPF)**



3

IDPFs (created for every serviceman who died) and OMPFs (created for every serviceman who enlisted) often provide the foundation of what we know about a casualty's loss.



Casualty Records

Individual Deceased Personnel Files (IDPFs)

- Foundational resource for casualty research
- Basic information about each casualty and their circumstances of loss.
- Medical records
- Dental records
- Correspondence with families
- Personal effects
- Value can vary by individual and service branch
- Project underway to scan all IDPFs and make them available to DPAA in Case Management System (CMS)

QENF 293
Somier, Swart T.
O 724 270

17 November 1955

Mrs. Ida P. Somiers
6 Smith Hall, A.P.I.
Auburn, Alabama

NAME SOMIERS, Swart T.
RANK 1st. Lt.
ASN O-724270

MAP SHEET POLAND
23 Nov 51

***REPORT OF DENTAL SURVEY**

UPPER TEETH

8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
X															X

LOWER TEETH

16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
X															X

CLASS #

Occlusion: Calculus: Slight, Medium, Heavy

Periodontoclasia

Dental foci suspected: Yes No

Other conditions *Intermittent Defective*

bridge

Date *1-30-47*, 19*47*

[Signature]
Dental Corps, U. S. A.

*Restorable carious teeth by O
Nonrestorable carious teeth by I
Missing natural teeth by X

Teeth replaced by denture (horizontal line)

Teeth replaced by fixed bridge (oval to include abutments)

DEFERRED SEARCH CASE

293 FILE

DATA ON REMAINS NOT YET RECOVERED OR IDENTIFIED

NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial) <i>Somiers, Swart T. 1st Lt.</i>	GRADE <i>1st Lt.</i>	PRESENT SERIAL NUMBER <i>072470</i>
ORGANIZATION	RACE	CREED
		FORMER SERIAL NUMBER (if applicable) <i>7007341</i>
DATE OF DEATH/MIA	CAUSE OF DEATH	PLACE OF DEATH OR PLACE LAST SEEN IF MIA
DATE OF FOD		
HEIGHT	WEIGHT	COLOR EYES
		COLOR HAIR
		SHOE SIZE

DENTAL CHART

UPPER RIGHT	UPPER LEFT
8 7 6 5 4 3 XX	XX 3 4 5 6 7
LOWER RIGHT	LOWER LEFT
16 15 X 13 12 11 10 9	9 10 11 12 13 X 15 16

X - Extracted O - Caries I - Caries Non-Restorable

FRACTURES AND/OR BREAKS

TATTOOS AND/OR BIRTHMARK

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

*1 Form 79 loaned OMB
23 Sept 46*

*1 Form 79 loaned OMB
11 Aug 48.*

FILE
SEP 24 1948
U. S. ARMY, 2nd Lt., 1945



Military Records

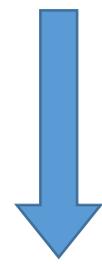
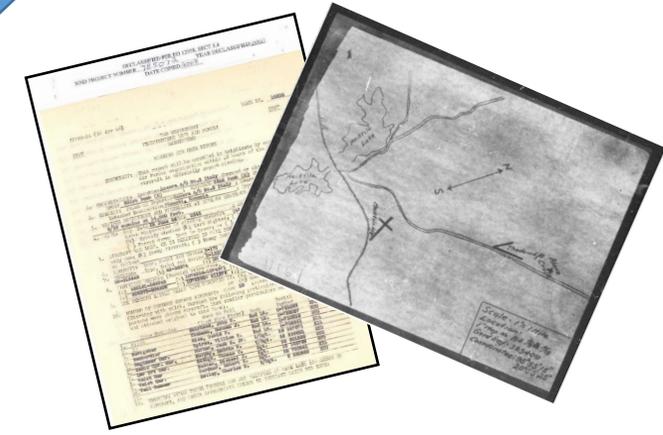
Unit Records (Morning Reports, Muster Rolls, Mission Reports, War Diaries...)



AGRS and AGRC Records of 1940s Investigations



Missing Air Crew Reports (MACRs) for USAAF losses

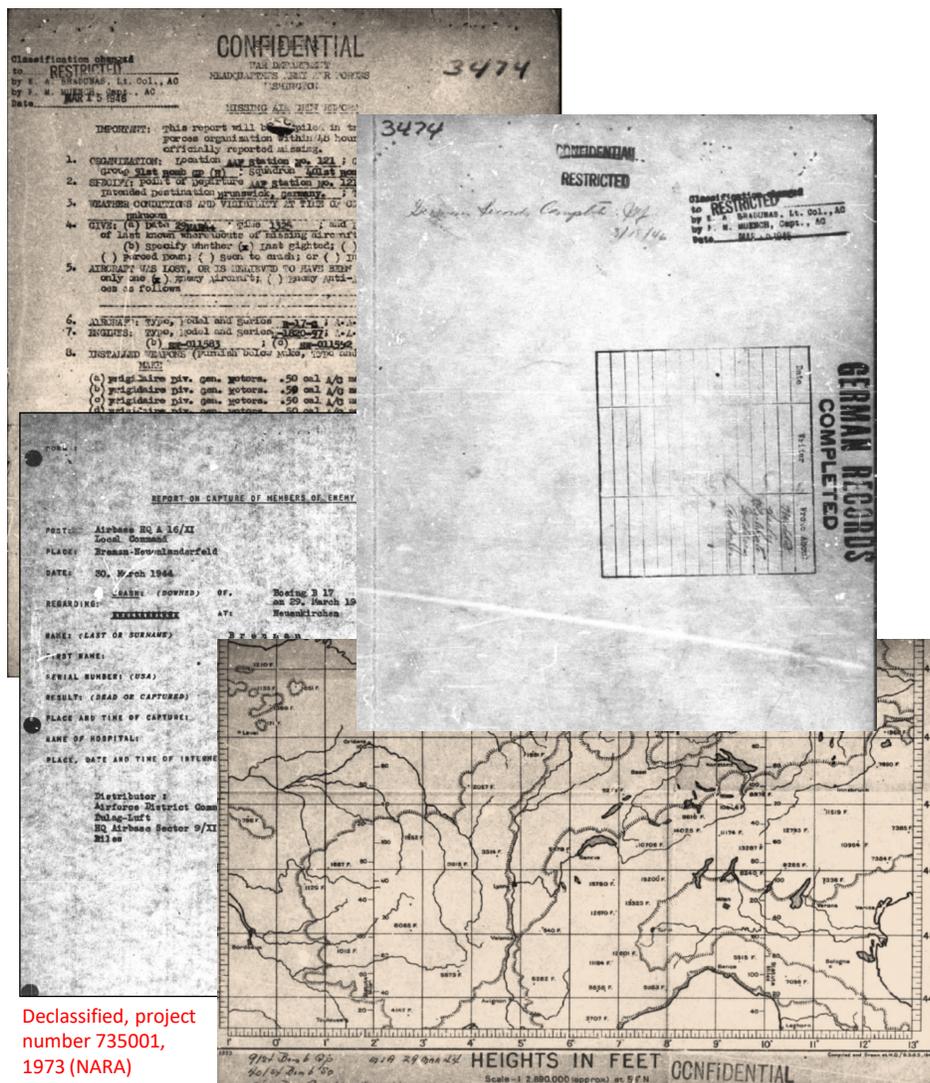


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Military Records

Missing Air Crew Reports (MACRs)



Declassified, project number 735001, 1973 (NARA)

- War Department mandated their use for all AAF losses in mid-1943.
- Basic information on aircraft loss:
 - date, time, location of loss, weather
 - names of crewmen, service numbers
 - model, serial number of aircraft, unit
 - serial numbers of engines, armaments
 - survivors and witness statements
 - maps/photos
 - enemy records (KU reports)
- Available to anyone through the National Archives or Fold3



Maps

Operational Records

January 1943 **Guadalcanal**

**XIII CORPS PLAN
FIRST JANUARY OFFENSIVE**

- U.S. Front Lines, 0800, 10 January
- Secondary Areas
- Axis of Attack
- Japanese Positions, 0800/0900
- Japanese Plans, 0800/0900

5 January 1943 **Guadalcanal**

197
72

3

K+1pl M
I+1pl M
J+1pl M
A+1pl D
B+1pl D
C+1pl D

2

1

OVERLAY SHOWING 132ND INFANTRY TROOP DISPOSITION
From 1800L 4 Jan. to 1800L 5 Jan. 1943

MAP: Uncontrolled Mosaic.
RF: 1/14545

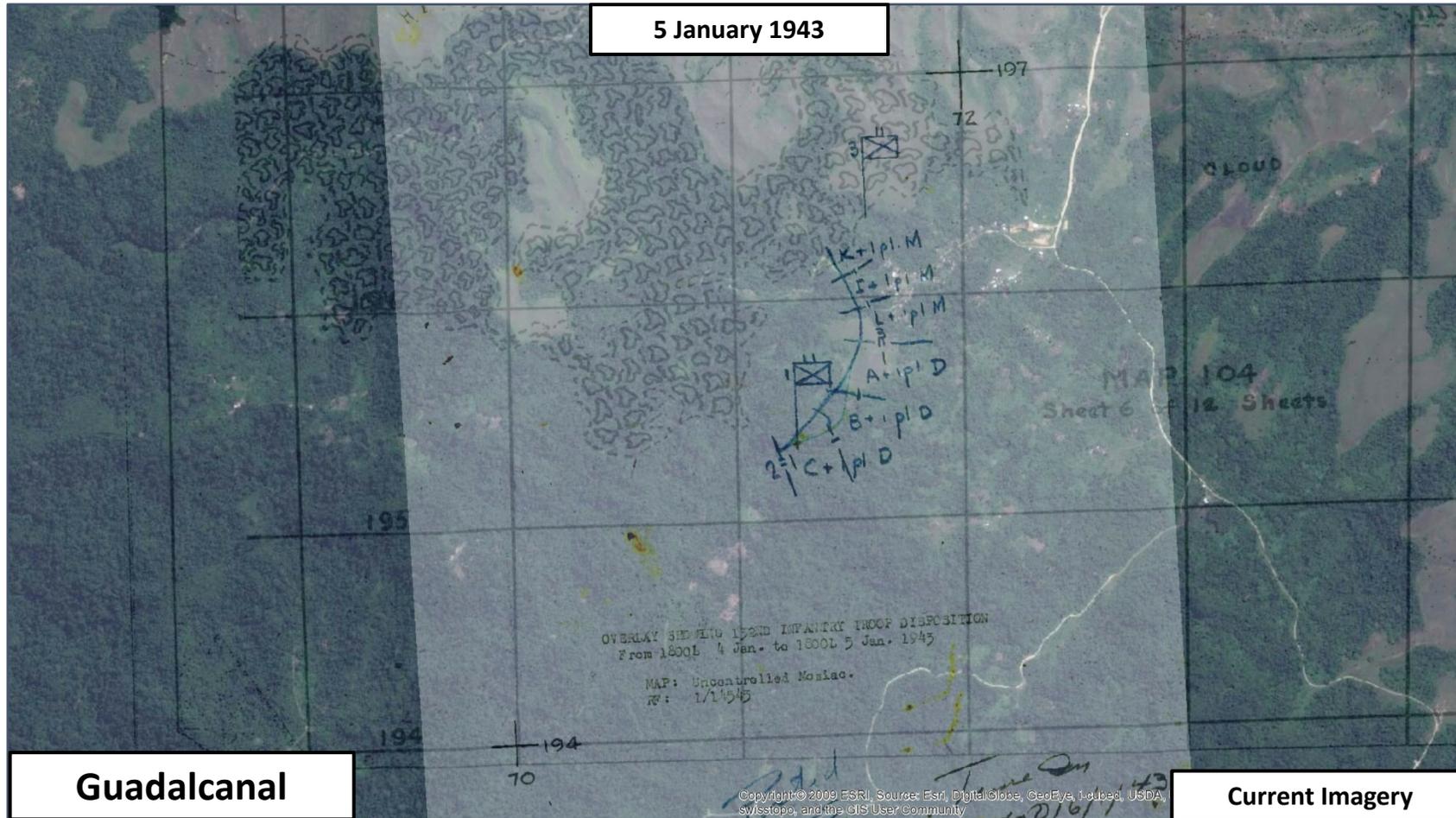
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Original archival records often provide more detailed information than is generally available in published sources.



Maps

An Investigative Clue





Photographs

Historical Imagery



Monterotondo, Italy

August 1943



Photographs

An Investigative Clue



Current

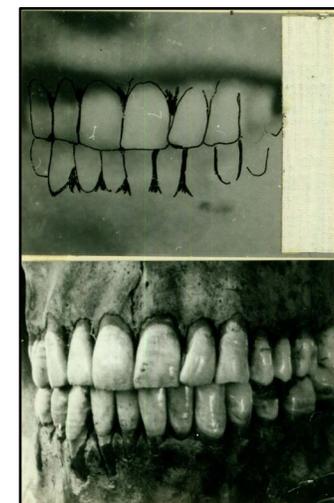
May 1944



People as Sources

Families of the Missing

- Letters & other documents
- Photos
- Health information
- DNA (Family Reference Samples)

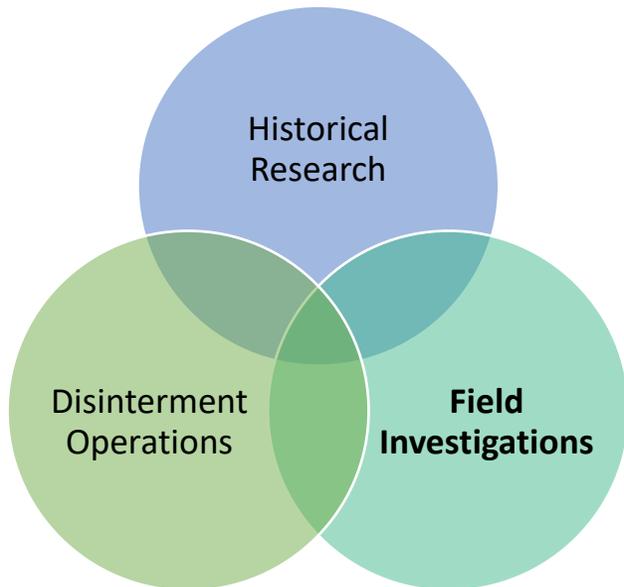


Local Witnesses

- Material evidence
- Wreckage
- Evidence of human remains



Field Investigations



How does DPAA use field investigations to help find remains?

- Locate and review local records
- Locate sites – land and/or underwater
- Interview witnesses
- Survey sites – crash and/or burial
- Collect material evidence
- Establish merit for excavation





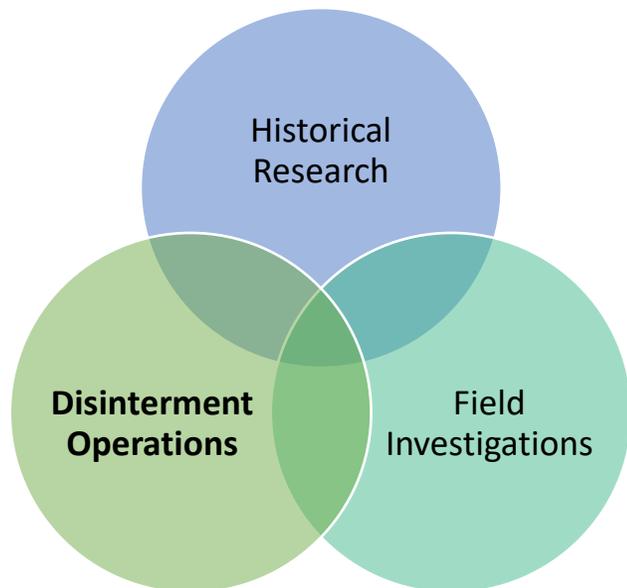
2020-21 Planned Missions

DPAA and Partners





Disinterments



An Unknown can consist of as little as a single bone fragment from one person, or many hundreds of bones from multiple individuals

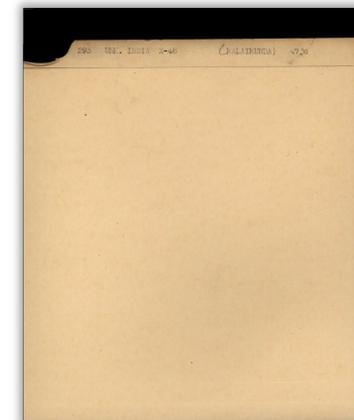
What is an Unknown?

- A believed-to-be U.S. Service member recovered during or after past conflicts determined to be “unidentifiable”
- A group/set of remains that, for a variety of reasons, was unidentifiable at the time of recovery



What is an X-File?

- The file of documentation for each Unknown
- Ideally, a record of the recovery of the remains and what the AGRS did to try to identify them

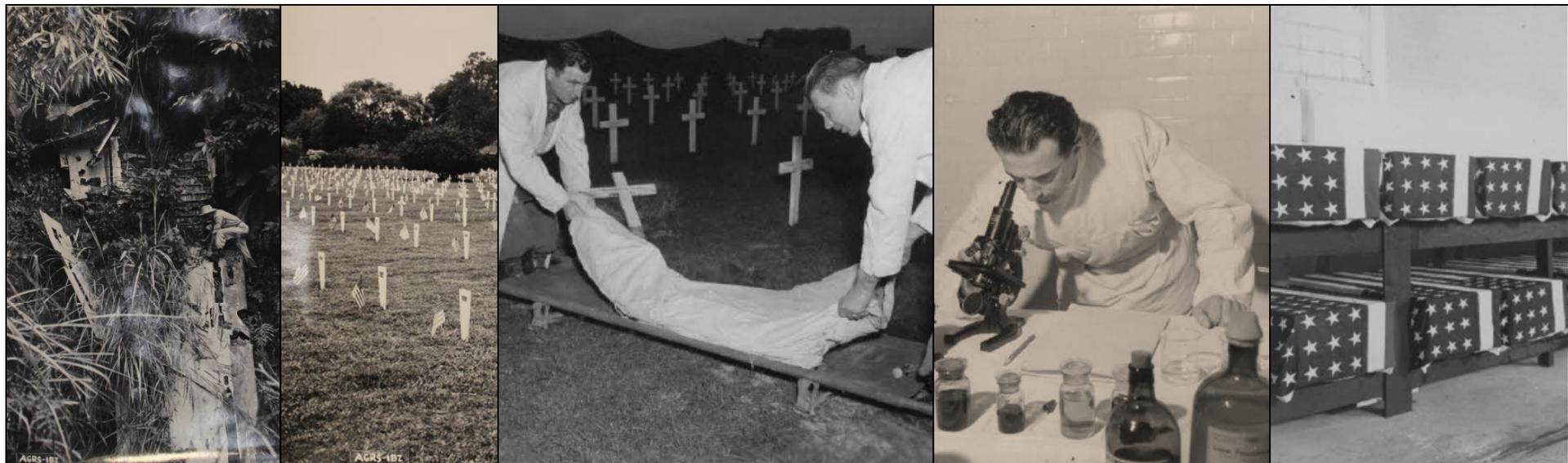




World War II Identification Efforts



World War II Unknowns went through a multi-stage process of review and analysis in an attempt to identify as many remains as possible.





Why X-1?



- The first Unknown buried in (or recovered from) a cemetery starts with X-1
 - In Cabanatuan, these initial designations were usually written as C-1
- Unknowns are initially tracked this way
 - Example: C-708 Cabanatuan
- Some numbers were changed when remains were transferred to a different cemetery
 - Example: C-708 Cabanatuan became X-1790 Manila #2
- Most unknown files have documentation explaining the original designation and the new designation and numbering



C-708 Cabanatuan	X-3051 Manila Mausoleum	X-1790 Manila #2
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All the same unknown!



The CIP and the CIL



Central Identification Point (CIP)

Strasbourg, France
Manila, Philippines



Central Identification Laboratory (CIL)

Honolulu, Hawaii



Examining the body with a fluoroscope. The fluoroscope detects any part of metal that might be in the remains. Many identification tags are recovered in this manner. Teeth that have been filled and become dislodged are recovered by this means, also bone fractures show up readily. All of these points are clues that may lead to positive identification.





How were Unknowns identified?

Initial Recovery

Across all theaters of World War II, AGRS laboratories reported that over 97% of recovered Unknowns were successfully identified in the 1940s.

- Witness statements
 - Confirmation of identity by someone who knew the person
- Identifying media
 - Dog tags, wallets, other identifying documentation
- Association with a known incident
 - Recovery from the wreckage a clearly identified aircraft (often a group identification)
- Discovery of hidden identifying media
 - Found through laboratory methods
- Skeletal and dental analysis
 - With dentition being particularly important in individual identifications

Laboratory



Why weren't Unknowns identified?

- *There are a number of reasons why remains were not identified at the CIP or CIL, these include:*
 - The circumstances, location, and timing of loss (or lack of available information on such details)
 - Challenges with the recovery and condition of remains
 - Contradictory “identifying” media, e.g. material evidence found with the remains belonging to a resolved casualty or a survivor of the war
 - Issues with incomplete, or inaccurate historical and/or personnel records
 - Inaccurate records from opposing forces
 - Limitations of scientific methods at the time

DESCRIPTION OF TATTOOS OR SCARS ON BODY AND/OR SUCH INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM OTHER SOURCES		
U N I D E N T I F I A B L E		
BY REASON OF LACK OF SUFFICIENT IDENTIFYING DATA		
F. H. WATERS Capt. Sp. S. 0-240085	<i>F.H. Waters</i>	<i>21 Feb. 1949</i>

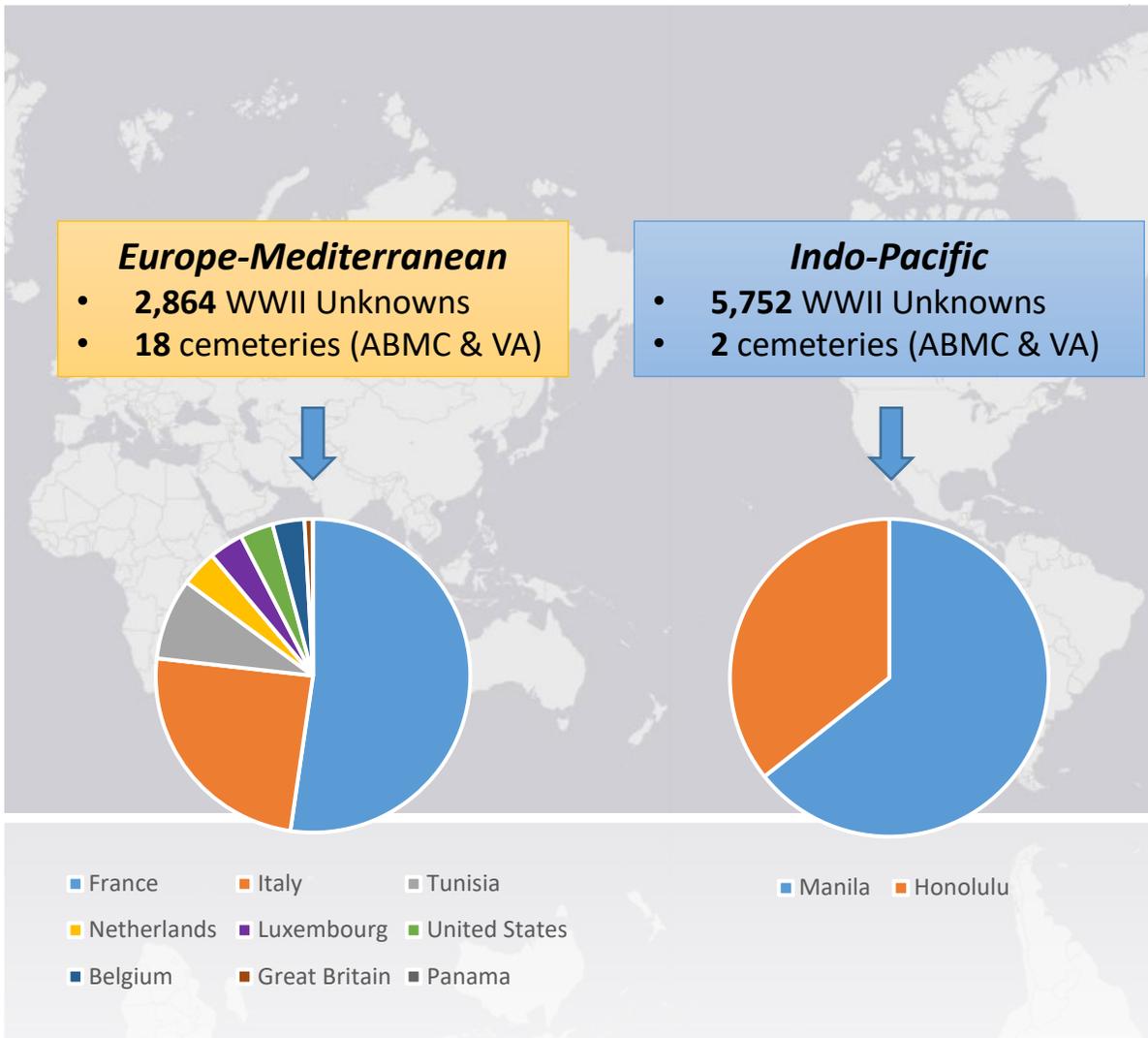
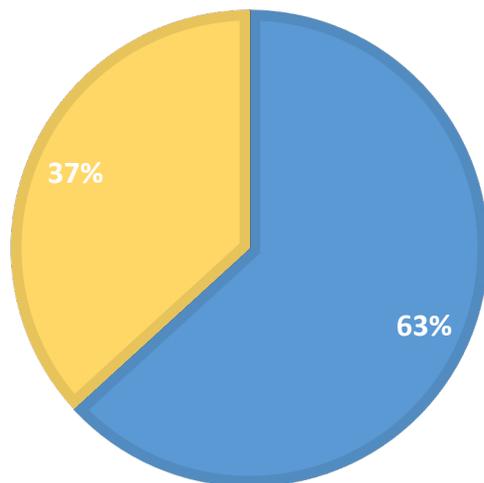


World War II Unknowns

Post-War Totals

OVER 8,600 UNKNOWNs
FROM
WORLD WAR II

■ Indo-Pacific ■ Europe-Mediterranean





DPAA Strategy



- Review and make recommendations to disinter all viable World War II Unknowns
- Group similar Unknowns into projects whenever possible
- Must meet DoD Disinterment Thresholds
- Must work with cemetery, AFDIL, and DPAA Capacity
- Numerous full-time researchers dedicated to disinterment operations, organized geographically





Disinterment Recommendation



- DPAA researchers generate disinterment recommendations for cases assessed to meet DoD thresholds

Table 5. Final list of unresolved U.S. casualties associated with X-number and summary of analytical options.

Rank	Name	Historical	Biological	Dental	Chest radiograph*	FRS on file
1	Name	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

- Agency researchers prioritize family disinterment requests over those that are internally generated
- Disinterment requirements:
 - Medical means of identification available for...
 - More than 50% for single unknowns
 - More than 60% for groups of unknowns or commingled remains



Disinterments 1999-Present

