

Remarks of John Hamilton
Director, Policy and Plans
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Good afternoon; thanks you Ann for the introduction.

As a former soldier, spouse of a Gold Star Sister from Vietnam, and son of a Korean & Vietnam War Veteran, it is an honor and privilege to serve as the Policy and Plans Director for DPAA and have the opportunity to speak to you today.

The purpose of my comments today are two-fold:

- 1) First, to provide a perspective on the role policy plays in shaping past conflict personnel accounting issues and operations, which is especially important for an organization like DPAA tasked to combined the capacity/capabilities of three predecessor organizations, and;
- 2) To provide an update on current policy and policy initiatives that will enable our missions into the future

NOTE: Inform not solely focused on the Vietnam War; explain that discussion will cover global requirements.

So Why Policy ... and for purposes of my remarks, the Plans that operationalize policy – as you all know all too well, “Policy without a plan is useless”:

AND No one understands past conflict personnel accounting policy better than the folks in this room, and especially Ann and Richard Childress, and others who have been involved in this missions for years, so am not going to attempt to explain what policy is ...

BUT I do want to highlight how policy is evolving for DPAA as a relatively new organization AND while doing so, we cannot ignore the deep rooted history of our predecessor organizations

SO, we must, AND ARE in the process of evolving our policies and processes to meet the needs of a very much changed political and security environment – new administration, changing threats and international dynamics, and the increased distance in time separating us from conflicts in question ... all impact our ability to shape future policy

Recently I was fortunate to sit in briefing with SECDEF Mattis and I thought he provided one of the best definitions of Policy and why Policy was important

“Impose reason over Impulse”

So in simple terms, Policy provides the necessary direction and stability to DPAA missions worldwide; it enables operations at all levels and provides the critical framework for Strategic/Operational Planning, Foreign Engagements, and external communications – I see further developing this direction and stability in a changed strategic landscape as a priority for the Agency over the next year.

AND more specifically for DPAA, WE ARE developing and promulgating the internal policies, strategies and processes/procedures that standardize the Agency’s operations, but also include the development and coordination of critical DoD-Wide Policy directives/Instructions that supports the larger past conflict personnel accounting community

Significant achievements this year included:

The approval of the Agency’s Charter, DoD Directive 5110.10 signed by the SECDEF in Jan 17 which provides the Agencies authorities and translates the NDAA into practice,

We also gained approval of a Past Accounting Policy Directive signed by DEPSECDEF in April 17(2310.07) (Roles/responsibilities);

These are both key policy directives that operationalize the law prescribed in the NDAA and give us the authorities necessary to carry out our mission....these documents took almost two years to develop, coordinate and gain approval, and are significant milestones that provide the Agency’s right and left limits — and that stability and direction at the strategic-level

We are also currently staffing and coordinating DPAA’s internal operating procedures; while this document will capture many of our internal policies/processes necessary to account for missing and communicate, it extends to the broader past accounting community, such as the services and service casualty officers and our other partners this specific product is our next major policy related document that codifies our policies and operating processes and extends across the community.

In addition to these documents I mentioned, there are numerous other internal SOPs and instructions for how we operate as a single agency..... and they are critical in resolving potential policy gaps (where no policy exists).... Or differences (conflicts in policy) internally and across the accounting community This will provide standardization across the agency and broader community – but this takes time!

As important as codifying our policies, processes and procedures, there is the requirement for staying engaged at the strategic/national levels; we must stay connected with the NSC, OSD, Joint Staff and DoS staff and the development of policy for past conflict accounting; we must continue to support the establishment of USG Policy Objectives and serve as a key USG engagement tool where possible, as we did in Vietnam years ago that many of you played an important role in – we must continue to ensure past conflict accounting equities are addressed and included in senior official engagements – examples past President’s visits to Vietnam, Laos, SECDEF and SECSTATE visits, etc..... We don’t always get everything we ask for, but we have never been excluded from making recommendations

One other key point is that Policy and strategic planning is intrinsically linked (“Policy means nothing without a plan”),so as mentioned, we have to operationalize our Policy through development of the strategic plans in DPAA, to include the 6-year GCP and 2-year OPLANs that ultimately drive our operations and set our budget requirements; we just completed Operational planning for FY18-19 and are working the final details of those plans – BG Spindler will provide more during his remarks Friday afternoon.

In addition to a traditional Policy and Plans portfolio mentioned above, we also have reorganized a bit and have included other significant capabilities/capacities in policy that enable Agency success and are evolving as we continue to grow as a single agency and I just want to highlight a few:

We in Policy/Plans, through our Enterprise Operations staff located in HI oversee the Worldwide Operations Center in direct support of global field activities and the Regional Directors and Strategic partners.

We provide oversight of the Agency Disinterment program; a major line of effort for the Agency (WWII/Korea)

Provide oversight for Records Management, which is critical to our research and case management system (CMS) development -- you will hear more about later

And lastly as already mentioned, we provide overall support and counsel to DPAA leaders in transforming the organization through improved metrics, processes, data governance, and strategic planning ... all part of enabling the two fundamental Agency Mission Essential Tasks – accounting for missing and communicating to families!

Take a quick moment to highlight some Current Policy, as well as policy initiatives:

As you all know, national policies and strategies are still evolving with the new administration; some of this is tied to new appointees that are yet to be identified and confirmed ... so it is slower than you would want, but it continues to evolve

- However, all indications are that overarching policies will continue to support the past accounting mission and we see no major policy shifts away from that

Also, as mentioned up front, we are operating in a new political and security environment where near-term priorities are focused on ISIS, North Korea, Afghanistan, budget constraints ... AND with that, policy development is shaped through the lens of these issues ... North Korea is a good example of very dynamic environment that we are keeping a close eye on as both a potential opportunity (for the USG as another diplomatic tool) and a constraint (not being able to engage directly nor operate)

So with that in mind, let me highlight a few points specifically on SEA:

Vietnam War accounting remains DPAA's priority; you have heard that from Mrs. Sumpter Winbush and will hear it again from others and BG Spindler.

As mentioned, there is no indication there will be a change in existing US policy wrt past conflict personnel accounting in Southeast Asia: it will remain an important USG priority.

President announced that he plans to attend APEC conference in Hanoi in November; opportunity to advance accounting equities

Every indication that the new Administration sees Southeast Asia as important to USG.

- Recent Viet PM Phuc (*Fooc*) visit
- And the Vietnam War accounting issue remains an important pillar of US policy in Southeast Asia – mentioned in recent US-Vietnam Joint Statement AND remains an important component of US bilateral relations w/both Cambodia and Laos

So while current policy is evolving, we see no change in US Policy towards past accounting missions.

New Opportunities/Approaches:

I think it is important to highlight that while we continue to work to synch our policies with the new administration and address our internal policies, we are continuing to evolve how we are doing things both as a new agency, and with different approaches; which requires new policies, practices and procedures. I just want to highlight a few very briefly since you'll get detailed briefing later this afternoon and tomorrow:

Public- Private Partnerships – to be briefed by Dr. Tom Holland shortly. The Charter I mentioned earlier gives us the authorities to explore this area, so now we have to integrate into

our policies and practices/procedures, as well as integrate into our operations to take advantage of the new capabilities/capacities these partnerships offer – Dr. Holland will provide a good overview.

Outreach and Communications policy continues to expand as does social media and other means of communicating.... Mr. Todd Livick will expand on it in the next briefingand we are working collaboratively reviewing Policy and processes in the outreach and communication area, to include new capabilities like the public portal ... more later.

Working future changes to policy with services/OSD ranging from clarifying authorities, supporting and developing additional methodologies for identification (radiographic chest x-ray), exploring new disinterments concepts for the futureAll of this requires adjustments to policies, processes and procedures.

COL Chris Forbes and other distinguished guests will talk about the increased activities of the US-Russian Joint Commission and the increased access to archives

Case Management System (CMS) – to improve capability/capacity for individual case management internally to help speed up and refine our processes and procedures, to be discussed by Mr. Chris McDermott

Again, a lot is happening in refining/developing polices to meet and support these new opportunities and approaches

So in Conclusion, I just want to provide a Recap that Policy (...and the operationalizing plans) are shaping and enabling all aspects of the DPAA mission and continues to evolve as the Agency matures, but also in light of the changing global strategic landscape

Vietnam War accounting remains a policy priority for the Agency

And lastly, just an observation as a new guy to the mission ... DPAA employees are not your average government employee Their dedication and commitment is to you and this mission ... more than anything else....this is not a job, it is a mission.... and a passion!!!!

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today and to see first-hand your dedication to this mission and your willingness to work with us as a significant partner in achieving the fullest possible accounting for your loved ones and all Americans who remain unaccounted for from past conflicts.

When I first came to DPAA I was schooled on the extraordinary role the League has played in keeping this issue in the forefront of our nation's consciousness. I admire and respect the work you have done and continue to do and I look forward to being a strong partner with you.

Thanks you and I will be here tomorrow and I look forward to answering any questions you may have Saturday morning.