



DPAA Family/VSO Quarterly Call and Update
Wednesday, January 31, 2024, 2:00-3:00 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
- Coalition of Families of Korea/Cold War POW/MIAs: Donna Knox
- Disabled American Veterans: Justin Hart/Marty Pennock
- Korean War POW/MIA Network: John Zimmerlee
- Korean War Veterans Association: Rocky Harder
- Mission: POW-MIA: Dave Huffman
- National League of POW/MIA Families: Mark Stephensen
- Sons and Daughters in Touch: Colleen Shine
- Special Operations Association, Inc. / Special Forces Association: Dave Gordon

Director’s Update (Kelly McKeague)

Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Budget. The current Continuing Resolution (CR) expires on March 8, which is very problematic for DPAA because our budget remains capped at FY 2023 levels until an Appropriations Bill is passed. This means we are still unable to access the \$46M increase included in our FY 2024 budget. To date, we have been able to manage the shortfall, but should the CR be extended, we will have to cut field missions that were planned with the additional funds.

Disinterment Pause. On December 12, the Undersecretary of Defense (Personnel & Readiness) issued a pause of Phase 5 of the Korean War Disinterment Project (16 Phase 5 disinterments had been completed in the fall) as well as any approvals of World War II (WWII) disinterment requests. We responded with a thorough and comprehensive package addressing the various concerns and are awaiting feedback. Given the adverse impacts to our analytical and identification efforts, we are keen on disinterments resuming soonest.

China Engagement. The U.S. Ambassador and Chinese Foreign Minister have been strong advocates for leveraging DPAA’s mission as a people-to-people bilateral opportunity. As a result of the issue being raised at the November Summit between President Biden and President Xi in San Francisco, there has been increased activities. At the early January US-China Defense Policy Coordination Talks held at the Pentagon, the Chinese principal pledged their support to resuming joint field operations and archival exchanges. Also, the US Ambassador to China visited our Hawaii facility in late January and encouraged us to push forward with these actions.

Laos Mission Cancellations. Our military and civilian members permanently assigned to our detachment in Laos do not have diplomatic protections like other US Embassy employees. We have tried working earnestly with the Lao Government over the last 6 months, but resolution is still elusive. In December, we were forced to cancel the second Joint Field Activity (JFA) of the year (24-2LA), and two weeks ago, cancelled the 24-3LA mission; each JFA had four recovery teams (RT) and one investigation team (IT) planned. We appreciate the strong advocacy letters from the National League of Families to the Lao President and Mission: POW-MIA to the Lao Deputy Foreign Minister.

Agreement Expansion. Included in the Defense Cooperation Arrangement that the Secretary of Defense signed with his Indonesian counterpart in November is a provision that strengthens the cooperation in searching for Americans missing from WWII and expands DPAA's current access beyond a single island. These updates build upon the August 2023 IT in Indonesia, which was the first since the original agreement was signed earlier this year. We are beginning discussions with the Indonesian government to expand into other areas where more unaccounted-for Americans are located.

VSO Visits. In December, we were privileged to host in HI the American Legion National Commander and American Legion Auxiliary President, and then the DAV National Commander in January. The Legion National Commander had returned from visiting the detachment in Hanoi and the RT operating in Vietnam as well as meeting with Vietnamese officials.

Ambassador Visits: Last week, 9 U.S. Ambassadors or Acting Ambassadors from the Indo-Pacific Region visited our HI facility - the senior U.S. official in China, India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Papua New Guinea/Solomon Islands/Vanuatu, Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Brunei. Each of them greatly appreciated our contributions to their mission, unequivocally reinforced their support, thanked those they met about DPAA professionalism and dedication, and offered their strategic perspectives.

Deputy Director for Operations (DDO) Update (Col Matt Brannen)

Operations Overview. In the past 3 months, we successfully executed 14 DPAA and partner field missions across 9 countries, including disinterment operations in the Philippines and Hawaii. DPAA scientists continue to provide episodic support to Maui's recovery and identification operations in the aftermath of the Lahaina wildfires.

Tarawa Trip. In November, I had the privilege of traveling to Tarawa to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Tarawa, as the senior Marine Corps representative. Walking the hallowed grounds allowed for reflection on the profound sacrifice made by those Marines and Sailors in 1944. I was accompanied by 4 VFW members from Montana, which highlighted their commitment to DPAA operations on Tarawa. During the ceremony, we repatriated the recovered remains of a Service member, after which it was humbling to escort those remains back to our Hawaii Lab.

Evidence Turnover. After concluding their bilateral meeting, the Indian Minister of Defense turned over to our Secretary of Defense a box of material evidence a DPAA partner team recovered earlier this year from a B-24 site in Assam State. Although the osseous material was repatriated this summer, the material evidence was left behind so the turnover could amplify and advance cooperation from their government in approving DPAA missions to India. For the upcoming February mission, we received approval 5 days before the cancellation date.

Key Leader Engagements. Our Hawaii team hosted several distinguished guests, including the US Transportation Command Commander; the Republic of Korea (ROK) Ambassador to the US; a Korea-US Alliance Foundation delegation headed by the former ROK Foreign Minister; the new Japanese Consul General to Honolulu; 53 Foreign Naval Attachés; and 53 international students from the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. These visits serve as valuable opportunities to educate and garner support for DPAA's noble mission.

Regional Teams Overview

Europe-Mediterranean (EM) Region (Heather Harris)

Field Operations. We kicked off field operations for FY 2024 extending excavation activities in Germany at a site associated with the loss of a B-24 from which all 10 crew members are still unaccounted for. In a first of its kind experiment for the EM Region, this mission followed immediately on the heels of a recovery on the same site which we conducted from August through the end of September. The recovery concluded with excellent results and evidence gathered, by focusing 2 teams in this way, we were able to complete the excavation ahead of schedule. In late October, a DPAA-led IT conducted local research and field investigation of 3 single-seat fighter aircraft losses in Italy.

Planned Field Operations. In accordance with our usual lull in field operations during winter in Europe, there are no planned recoveries or investigations occurring in the next 2 months. Field investigations resume in March with a DPAA-led team conducting investigations in France and recoveries resume in early April with missions in France, Germany, and Poland.

Research and Analysis. Two researchers continued scheduled visits to the National Archives in College Park, MD, locating and digitizing unit records associated with missing WWII Service members. Additionally, we initiated an effort to obtain a large collection of digitized WWII-era Missing Air Crew Reports from the National Archives for inclusion in DPAA's Case Management System. Researchers also developed investigation strategies for WWII ground battle areas using recently acquired geospatial data and LiDAR imagery from host nation sources in eastern France and western Germany. Increasingly, our ability to obtain historical aerial imagery and combine it with traditional archival research, modern imagery, and modern geospatial data from diverse sources is leading to novel approaches in our efforts to investigate and plan recoveries of those still missing from large ground campaigns. Further, this research leads to a unified approach in which we disinter Unknowns related to those ground campaigns, resulting in shorter-term identifications from the Unknowns and new knowledge gained through the identification process which informs field work.

Family Member Update (FMU) Support. Supporting the Atlanta Virtual FMU, our researchers wrote 41 WWII Case Summary documents and conducted 27 Case Summary Reviews. Among those provided were for Service members lost during D-Day in France; the Battle of the Bulge and Battle of Huertgen Forest in Germany; and the Ploesti Raid in Romania.

Disinterment Operations and Plans. With plans to start our disinterment operations for the FY in Italy in November postponed due to the timing of the first CR, we currently plan to conduct those in March at Sicily-Rome American Cemetery (4 Unknowns) and Florence American Cemetery (7 Unknowns), as well as in France at Rhone American Cemetery (7 Unknowns)

US–Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs (USRJC). The USRJC Chairmen conducted a call in September to discuss the future of the USRJC; during the call both Chairmen expressed their country’s desire to continue the joint work of the Commission. The DPAA contractors conducting work on the behalf of the US Side of the USRJC continued their research in the Central Archives of the Russian Ministry of Defense until December 31 when the Government of the Russian Federation notified them that their archive access was suspended. The Russian Side did not notify the US Side Chairman of the suspension and they have not had any further communications with US Side personnel.

Indo-Pacific (IP) Region (Chris Phelps)

Field Operations. Vietnam War. We completed a JFA in Laos consisting of 5 RTs and 2 ITs; and deployed 3 RTs, 2 unilateral Host Nation (HN) RTs, 1 IT, and 1 HN IT to conduct field operations throughout Vietnam. WWII: Staff visited Indonesia to coordinate FY 2024 field activities with the HN. After participating in a virtual conference with Chinese civilian and military officials, field operations were conducted in January after a several years hiatus with a 7-person Pre-Deployment Site Survey Team operating at 2 WWII aircraft crash sites. We plan to build upon this effort and establish repeatable activities.

Planned Field Operations. Vietnam War: For the upcoming JFA in Vietnam in late February, we plan to field 3 RTs, 1 Vietnamese RT (with 2 DPAA personnel), 2 unilateral HN RTs, 1 IT, and 1 IT-Light (a combined US and Vietnamese element with DPAA in the lead). WWII: We have upcoming staff visits to the Philippines and Papua New Guinea (PNG), an IT-underwater in Fiji, as well as an IT to Malaysia and an RT to Thailand.

Research and Analysis. Vietnam War: Our Vietnam War research team – supported by members from DPAA Lab and DIA Stony Beach – completed its semi-annual Case Coordination Conference this month. Nearly 400 cases were reviewed to develop and validate next steps for research and investigation, which will shape our operational plan for the upcoming FY.

Korean/Cold War: In November, 8 of our staff participated in the Annual MAKRI Case Coordination Meeting at their HQ in Seoul. Also attending were personnel from Australia’s Army and Air Force Unrecovered War Casualties agencies. Research strategies, potential field sites, and ways to improve communications and coordination between the agencies were discussed. WWII: Two researchers conducted archival research at the National Archives Facility in San Bruno, CA.

FMU Support. In support of the Atlanta Virtual FMU, our researchers wrote a total of 111 Case Summary documents and conducted 86 Case Summary Reviews. In addition, our historians conducted group family briefings regarding losses from Cabanatuan (6 families) and *Enoura Maru* (10 families) Disinterment Projects.

Disinterment Operations. We completed 3 disinterment missions at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP) consisting of 16 Korean War Unknowns (Phase 5) and 6 WWII Unknowns. The one disinterment mission at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial (MACM) consisted of 35 WWII Unknowns.

Planned Disinterments. Until the disinterment pause is reversed, the only planned disinterment events are for requests previously approved – two at NMCP (14 WWII Unknowns) and one mission at MACM (35 WWII Unknowns). If we are unable to resume disinterments by April 19, we will not be able to complete Phase-5 during FY 2024.

Partnerships and Innovations (PI) Update (Dr Jesse Stephen)

Field Activities. We conducted 7 partner field missions in Germany, the Netherlands, Kiribati, the Philippines, and Cambodia, and this month, commenced 3 in Philippines and Cambodia. We continue to leverage specialized partner expertise and capabilities to save valuable resources and time, such as the November mission at a B-24 crash site off the coast of the Netherlands. The survey was completed by a marine archaeological services company adept at operating in the strong currents, very limited visibility, and volatile weather of the North Sea.

Research. One project concluded this month after the successful production, review, and acceptance of over 80 deliverables (case summaries, a casualty list, and photographs). Among the 3 new partner research projects initiated was a 3-part Iwo Jima Project Group led by researchers at the University of Missouri and East Carolina University, who will generate detailed histories of individual losses as well as geospatial analysis of the Iwo Jima campaigns to assist IP researchers. Another new research project is with San Diego State University whose digitization and analysis of over 4,000 pages of San Diego Air and Space Museum holdings which DPAA researchers will use to gather information relevant to WWII air losses. We now have 73 active research projects and 11 research projects under development.

Research Symposium. We conducted the Fourth Annual “Hub and Spoke” Fellows’ Research Symposium last month. The 64 attendees at this virtual event were from “Hub & Spoke” Institutions and multiple DPAA Directorates. The briefings focused on leveraging resources, expanding collaboration among stakeholders, and “spoking out” to the greater research community.

New Arrangements. We established new partnerships through a signed Memorandum of Understanding with Mission: POW-MIA, Florida State University, Missing Air Crew Project, Acadia University, and Underground/Overground Archaeology. The total number of active partners is 106. In the last DPAA Academy, our partner orientation program, 15 partner or prospective partner personnel participated.

Scientific Analysis (SA) Update (Dr John Byrd)

FY2024 Identifications (newly accounted for)

Total IDs = 21

WWII = 17

Korean War = 3

Vietnam War = 1

In addition, there have been 7 additional portions of remains identified and 2 identifications of remains that were from Service members previously accounted for.

Accessions. Thus far this FY, 203 batches of evidence were accessioned into our laboratory system, consisting of skeletal, dental, and/or material evidence. The evidence originated from disinterments (78), DPAA field activities (15), partner activities (28), unilateral turnovers (81), and 1 consultation. The conflict associations were WWII (165), the Korean War (24), and the Vietnam War (14).

Vietnam War Identification Project. The VWIP team is engaged in a data audit with other DPAA Directorates to validate records. The JFA in Vietnam and Laos returned 17 batches of evidence, all of which are currently undergoing forensic testing. After the Vietnam JFA, DPAA and Vietnamese forensic experts performed a Joint Forensic Review and recommended a set of remains to be repatriated to the US for further analysis. The VWIP team made 1 first-time identification and 2 additional portion identifications. A recent case scrub summary sent to Stony Beach staff reported less than 10 active cases remaining that were sent to us from Stony Beach.

Trilateral Collaborations. Since the 2019 initiation of trilateral collaboration with scientists from the ROK and Japan regarding possible Asian remains found from DPAA's WWII recoveries, we supported several visits during which they sampled the remains for DNA and isotope analyses. The ROK made a match to a Korean conscript to the Japanese Army who died in the Battle of Tarawa in 1943. After a 4-year delay due to the COVID lock-down, the remains were transported to our Hawaii Lab and on December 1, the conscript's grandson accepted them in a repatriation ceremony.

Interesting Identifications. Last November, we accounted for US Army Air Forces 2Lt Porter Pile and TSgt James Triplett, crewmen aboard a B-24 that was shot down over Germany in September 1944. From 3 excavations at a site discovered by a local German historian, remains were recovered and identified, and also associated by EM historians and Nebraska Lab scientists with remains from 2 disinterments from the Cambridge and North Africa American Cemeteries. The latter took seven years of coordination with the Government of Tunisia to allow the disinterment of Unknowns. In December, the families of 2d Lt Pile and TSgt Triplett chose to have a single funeral service and inter them in adjacent graves at Arlington.

Scientific Summit II. Building upon the first Scientific Summit we hosted at the Hawaii Lab in 2021 with 14 countries represented, DPAA and MAKRI commenced planning to co-host the next summit in Seoul May 20-24. The purpose of the Scientific Summit is to bring together international subject matter experts for a scientific exchange on best practices in recovery and identification of missing persons from past conflicts worldwide.

Laboratory Accreditation. The laboratory system was subjected to an annual surveillance review of procedures and operations from the accrediting body, ANSI National Accreditation Board in the late fall and was re-accredited on December 7, in numerous disciplines under the ISO 17025 and ISO 17020 Standards. This remarkable achievement stands as a testament to the dedication and expertise of our team, reaffirming our commitment to excellence in fulfilling our mission.

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

Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) of mitochondrial (mt) DNA analysis supports all chemically treated and highly damaged samples from WWII, the Korean War, and Vietnam War. In FY 2023, a \$4M one year supplemental appropriation allowed us to purchase new instruments and renovate lab space, which in turn increased NGS processing samples from 97 to 131 per month. We hope to maintain this 33% increase over last year throughout FY 2024.

As a global leader in human remains identification, we have been fostering continuing interactions with countries that are developing or have existing capabilities:

- MAKRI DNA scientists are spending 4 weeks with us, learning our NGS methods through hands on training. In sharing our Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with them, we hope to foster faster exchanges of data through a common testing platform.

- The International Commission on Missing Persons, who is developing Vietnam's forensic capabilities, will be sending 3 of their scientists in the coming months to learn our NGS methods as their methods are not working well in Vietnam. Robust testing methods would allow for the identification of Vietnamese remains and potential American.

- Israeli Defense Forces were with us the last week in October as we assisted with difficult samples to identify their fallen. We will be providing training to their staff in the coming months on all of our NGS methods.

All the above are examples demonstrating that our testing methods are globally accepted and recognized as the ideal methods for processing DNA forensic samples from highly challenging human remains.

Regarding our nuclear single nuclear polymorphism (SNP) assay that is a custom-developed method and the data analysis software, I am pleased to report that all the forensic accreditation validation and data analysis experiments and SOPs have been completed. The validation report is currently being written and then will be submitted for review. Our goal is to bring this testing online by this summer, pending any additional validation testing that may be identified. This test is like the commercial test that is being discussed in the news with regards to solving cold cases, but the commercial SNP tests have been shown not to work with DPAA cases.

FY 2024 Statistics (as of December 31, 2023)*:

DNA Results Reported: 911 (goal is 300 per month)

mtDNA traditional: 253

NGS: 359 samples (goal is 120 samples per month)

Autosomal Short Tandem Repeat: 172

Y-short Tandem Repeat: 127

First-time Named BTB (supporting new Identifications): 25

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

Outreach and Communications (OC) Update (Mark Abueg)

Virtual Atlanta FMU. On November 4, we held a highly successful FMU event, which included 265 family members, 152 cases, and 76 first-time attendees. Due to the uncertainty of a government shutdown and potential cancellation penalties we would have incurred, we conducted the FMU virtually. It was livestreamed on our DPAA website, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn social media sites, and the archived video is at www.dpaa.mil/Livestreams. The upcoming FMU is scheduled for February 24 in Phoenix, AZ.

Tuskegee Airman Funeral. On December 6, 2d Lt Fred Brewer, the second Tuskegee Airman we identified, was buried in his hometown of Charlotte. One of the attendees was Andrew Pendleton, a 101-year-old WWII Veteran who flew over 250 bomber missions. Looking at his mission logs, he realized that 2d Lt Brewer died protecting his group on their way to Germany. There was extensive national and local media attention and among the media covering the funeral was Morgan Freeman's documentary production company.

Medal of Honor Recipient Funeral. Last month, the Navy interred S1C James Ward, who was killed aboard USS *Oklahoma* on December 7, 1941, and posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor (MoH). Buried as an Unknown at the NMCP, we identified him in August 2021, the second MoH recipient from the ship and 5th Unknown from both WWII and the Korean War. His family was presented with Navy memorabilia by the Chief of Naval Operations.

Release of Information to Families. Once field activities conclude, reports are generally completed on average within 6 months. For Vietnam War cases, they are then reviewed for release and sent to the Primary Next of Kin (PNOK) via the respective Service Casualty Office. DPAA provides reports to the PNOK for the Vietnam War prior to release of such information to the public as required by the McCain Bill. Although the McCain Bill also addresses Korean War losses, the release of reports to families is not as frequent due to the dearth of field activities. As there is no requirement to make such information available to the public for WWII, those reports are incorporated into the Case Summary which are provided when requested.

Year in Review. Our 2023 Year in Review (YIR) is now in print, and copies will be mailed to your organizations. A comprehensive annual publication that chronicles the breadth and depth of our worldwide mission, the 2023 YIR is available electronically at www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Year-In-Review.

Stories of Note:

ABC News

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/flight-home-tuskegee-airman-laid-rest-80-years/story?id=105417846>
(2d Lt Fred Brewer, WWII)

Military.com

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2023/12/22/after-82-years-navy-pearl-harbor-hero-laid-rest.html>
(Seaman 1st Class James Ward, WWII)

The Repository

<https://www.cantonrep.com/story/news/military/veterans/2023/11/10/defense-pow-mia-alliance-william-herrington/71525023007/>
(Cpl. William J. Herrington, Korean War)

CBS 7 (Texas)

<https://www.cbs7.com/2023/12/08/odessa-native-vietnam-vet-remains-identified-after-51-years-being-mia/>
(Capt. Ronald W. Forrester, Vietnam War)

Questions and Answers

[Note: In an effort to provide the best answers and/or answers to questions that could only be answered partially, the answers below include the necessary clarifications.]

American Legion: *Expressed thanks to Detachment 2 and Headquarters in Hawaii for Vietnam visit. National Commander is very passionate about the mission and wants to ensure DPAA has the funding needed. With the cancellation of the Lao JFAs, request any info we can use to assist in getting the missions back on track.*

ANSWER: Both the Recovery Team (RT) and the Detachment appreciated the visit and opportunity to interact with the Legion Delegation. And we appreciate the staunch support especially as it pertains to our budget. An extended or full-year Continuing Resolution (CR) will have significant adverse effects on our ability to field investigation and recovery missions.

Disabled American Veterans: *Thanks for everything and the briefings today. Our National Commander visited Hawaii last year and appreciated the support provided. No questions.*

ANSWER: We appreciated her visit.

Korean War Veterans Association (KWVA): *Happy to hear you are engaging China again. There were a few Korean War remains in China that could be ready for recovery. Are you looking at any Korean War sites for future investigation and/or recovery?*

ANSWER: For the recently completed mission, we chose the two World War II sites for as initial steps to reconnect with the People's Liberation Army (PLA). When the Director met with Chinese delegation visiting the Pentagon last month, he requested considerations of cases from all conflicts be worked; the senior PRC official was open to it. In our next engagements with the PLA, we plan to propose both Korean War and Vietnam War cases.

KWVA: *In regard to the remains still to be identified from the Joint Recovery Operations (JROs) and unilateral turnovers, not talking about the Phase 5 disinterments, can we get an estimate of how many remains on hand are identifiable in the Lab?*

ANSWER: We estimate that we have fewer than 100 individuals left in the combined K208 and JRO remains. There will be some we cannot identify in the long run and some we do not have DNA FRS for. The K55 has identified 89 Americans but estimate there were originally a total of 150 Americans, leaving approximately 61 unidentified. We will reach a point of diminishing return within a few years on all these remains.

Special Operations Association/Special Forces Association (SOA/SFA): *On the CR, has it been budgeted how much will go toward the Vietnam War?*

ANSWER: In the current CR that expires on March 8, DPAA funding allocation is based on last year's appropriations, which is significantly less. Within the IP Directorate's share of this, 60% (not the 80% mentioned on the call) is allotted to Vietnam War missions and SEA Detachment expenses.

SOA/SFA: *What is currently in Cambodia and Vietnam for planned operations?*

ANSWER: A full Joint Field Activity (JFA) (with several RTs and Investigation Teams (ITs) within in the JFA) will be in Vietnam in less than a month with two more programmed for the remainder of the FY. There are partner and hybrid missions in Cambodia ongoing now and 4 partner missions planned. We also have two more Lao JFAs planned and ready to execute in the remaining FY.

SOA/SFA: *On the IDs, are we close to any for the Vietnam War?*

ANSWER: We have several on our Cases for ID List which are working through final testing now. The results of the testing will determine if there will be an ID.

SOA/SFA: *On the Family Member Updates (FMUs), glad we are involved and invited. Cliff Newman will be attending Phoenix. Thank you for the invitation.*

Coalition of Families of Korea/Cold War POW/MIAs (Coalition): *Thanks for all the continued work on the accounting effort. It means a lot to the families. What are you doing about the 2008 MOA with China where they agreed to look into Korean War archival information in DPRK?*

ANSWER: Uncertain as to how long the window of cooperation with the PLA will remain open, we will be proposing three actions this year: updating the MOUs, seeking an Archival Exchange (in which we plan to ask about DPRK archival information), and field recoveries.

Coalition: *Regarding reentry into DPRK, are there any initiatives going on behind the scenes or do you just have to sit and wait?*

ANSWER: The DPRK has not responded to at least 24 communications overtures from the Administration at different levels. The State Department's Ambassador Julie Turner is in charge of humanitarian and NGO opportunities with the DPRK; we will engage her to see whether our mission would align with her humanitarian discussions. The DPRK's provocations seems to be following their pattern of posturing in a US election year.

Coalition: *Since Kim has been working with Putin more and more, is there any opportunity for USRJC to ask?*

ANSWER: Not likely given the recent suspension of our researchers' access to Russian Military Archive. Right now, we have no USRJC working group or plenary activities in the USRJC. We are limited to Chairman-to-Chairman calls that lack action as evidenced by the agreed upon exchange of "White Papers" requesting case information that the Russian Side has not responded to since receiving ours June 1, 2023.

Coalition: *If something should change regarding the White Paper and issues raised, would it be conceivable to ask for their assistance in resuming JRO's in DPRK?*

ANSWER: It is conceivable and something we have discussed internally. Should the DPRK show interest in resuming cooperation, we are working on a contingency plan for such operations.

Mission: POW-MIA (Mission): *Nice to see everyone at the AFA event. How many cases are reviewed in each of the Case Coordination Meetings? It would be helpful to explain this to the families so families do not think you're reviewing their cases every six months.*

ANSWER: During each Southeast Asia Case Coordination Conference, we review cases where analysts have developed new "next steps" since the last conference, where cases have recently been worked in the field, or where we believe we have the highest likelihood for successful case progression. This ends up encompassing approximately 350 cases per conference, and the discussions are then used to develop the next FY mission plan. In contrast, the conferences for WWII and Korean/Cold War tend to focus on the status of research projects or "clusters" of cases based on geographic location or other shared. While these discussions tend not center on progression of individual, specific cases, they also inform mission planning for the following FY.

Mission: *Pertaining to Vietnam War analysts, how many are holding a file and in charge of a case? When you ask an analyst how many cases they manage they say between 150 and 200 cases. That often becomes the reason why they don't have the answers and boils down to about an hour to hour and half review. Just trying to explain what the families are being told and what they understand. It seems the person sitting across from the family has 200-plus cases and they do not have the ability to focus on their cases.*

ANSWER: There are currently 9 research analysts/historians assigned as the primary analysts for specific Vietnam War cases, and they are the primary interface for family members regarding their cases. However, our Vietnam War research and analysis efforts receive support from 6 other research analysts, 5 historians, 3 casualty resolution specialists, 2 archeologists, 6 GIS analysts, and 2 archivists. This team collaboratively advances Vietnam War cases, so people working any individual case goes far beyond the family's one assigned primary analyst. The primary researchers benefit from these added capabilities, which are crucial for investigating and recovering evidence, thus contributing to the overall success of our efforts.

Mission: *Related to the Vietnam War Identification Project point about the audit, will it include a breakdown of unilateral turnovers?*

ANSWER: We consistently track accession information independent of audits. This enables us to trace and understand the origin of every accession, regardless of whether it resulted from unilateral turnover, joint recovery operations, or other scenarios.

Mission: *As asked in April and then again in August, is there any movement on the list of museum artifacts in Vietnam? Is there any historical data you have? I have some information I'll send your way.*

ANSWER: We have followed up with the Vietnamese, but there is no follow up from them yet. Our Detachment Commander checked again this week and there was no change. We will work with Stony Beach as to anything actionable they may have.

National League of POW/MIA Families (League): *Appreciate this last segment. These are the same type of questions being asked for 25 or more years. It is probably more detailed in the last five minutes than we've ever received. Could alleviate some of the misunderstandings over the years. It is a complex and complicated issue. Regarding China, do you know how it came about? Is it something that could be cultivated?*

ANSWER: The US Ambassador took this up several months ago and received interest from China's Foreign Minister as a viable people-to-people engagement despite the bilateral tensions. While the PLA was less inclined, once China's President raised cooperation at the San Francisco Summit with President, things moved quickly to include a virtual meeting and the WWII site surveys. We plan to continue to leverage this opportunity and propose other archival and field activities with the PLA.

Sons and Daughters in Touch (SDIT): *Frustrating about the USRJC but glad you have a plan. When they go to an FMU, the analyst is not as informed as they should be and often sounds like*

they are passing the buck because they have too many cases. If a family is able to find a line of actions that could be profitable to their case, is there an opportunity for them to go to PI and get funding to pursue it themselves?

ANSWER: We have a formal arrangement with over 100 partners and others that are in various stages of development. These arrangements allow us to align partner expertise and capabilities with Agency requirements across research to field activities. We work closely with these partners asking them to follow standards and to collaborate to optimize efforts. At the same time, we recognize there are individuals or organizations who are not interested in establishing a formal partnership. While families sometimes develop relationships with third-party individuals and groups, it's important that full and open communications be maintained to avoid misunderstandings or inaccurate information being conveyed or pursued. We do actively seek new partners, who can convey their interests and capabilities to us at this contact page: <https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/dpaaContactUs>. Also, individuals interested in volunteering to assist can find out how to do so here: <https://www.dpaa.mil/Volunteer/>

SDIT: *Do you all conduct evaluations of family events? Do your stakeholders say you are doing a good job?*

ANSWER: We make a survey available for attending family members and act upon any relevant feedback. In general, the surveys are favorable, but if we are not seeking the right input, we are open to adjusting the survey. We will share the survey template with you in a separate email for your review and input.

SDIT: *With USAID helping Vietnam in their remains identification effort, we have heard you talk about their missing and would like to hear your perspective on referring to them as such instead of war dead??*

ANSWER: For almost 30 years, cooperation with Vietnam was mostly one-way: Vietnam assisting the US in finding our missing. As Vietnamese citizens provided information to US investigators or worked at excavation sites, what changed is a growing awareness of finding their casualties from the war led to a push for their government to pass laws and establish the capacity to do so. So, while "missing" is what they adopted in their law, we surmise the term itself was used because of familiarity.

SDIT: *Suggest the two large family organizations look at it and give it more consideration. Want to ensure it does not diminish the US accounting effort specifically with LKA.*