

COALITION OF FAMILIES OF KOREAN & COLD WAR POW/MIAs



SPRING “We will find our own missing loved one by searching for them all, together.” 2022

Tools of the Trade

People often ask, “How does an organization like the Coalition do what it does?” They wonder how it connects with Congressional offices, the State Department, and the White House.

Alright, no one actually asks or wonders about these things, not aloud anyway. We thought we’d share some aspects of how we do things, anyway; a behind the scenes glimpse into the tools of our trade and how we use them to further the mission to learn what happened to the missing men.

The *Coalition* is in the business of communication; idea exchanges, persuasion, a bit of pleading when it is called for. Our tools are pen and paper (computers). We rely on words – spoken and written. We pull these elements together to pursue a mission that has been around far longer than the people reading or listening to these words. The challenge is to find and convince people who can accomplish things that this mission is relevant, important, and warrants a multitude of actions. We share what needs to be done then do our best to convince them to assist us in doing it.

Mostly, there is writing. Before the writing, how-

ever, is research. We learn the background of an issue, why it is an issue and what needs to be done; the names of people who can help accomplish that (the right congressional staffer or newest Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the relevant DoD or State Dept. offices) and how best to reach them.



Then the writing takes place. What is best to be said and how to say it. If all goes well, and it often does, the people will respond, relationships will develop, and action will follow. There are times, of course, when there is only silence; when the letter appears to have vanished into a great void. This happens often in

the State Dept., where the officials are appointed, not elected. The hope is that they read the letters, even if they don’t respond. The words tunnel into a cozy corner of their minds then appear at an opportune meeting. The person may not even recall where the info came from. It was us. We are hard to ignore.

What follows are samples of tools that have led to actions like declassification legislation, additional funding for the DNA lab, talks with North Korea, and more. It is an inside look at how things are done.

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President's Corner

A Letter That Didn't Work? / One that Did? *Rick Downes, President (Lt. Hal Downes, father - MIA 1952)*



K55 Return Ceremony

Not all letters accomplish what we hope. Others do, but we can't be certain. In 2016, I was part of a team that met with the DPRK's vice foreign minister in Pyongyang. In our meeting, we requested that North Korea return more U.S. remains. They were okay with that but wanted something in return: a letter from the then President of the U.S. acknowledging that returning remains was a humanitarian gesture. Unfortunately, the then President declined, citing the DPRK's lack of cooperation in other areas. North Korea was willing to do what my President would not do. It was heartbreaking.

A new U.S. President was elected the following year. I wrote the letter once again. This time there was no response but the following year an agreement was reached with North Korea. Fifty-five boxes of remains were returned. We are left to wonder if either, neither or both letters play a role.

Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs

June 12, 2017

Mr. President,

Last September, I traveled to North Korea with a delegation from the *Center for Global Engagement*. We met with the DPRK's vice minister of foreign affairs about a reported 120 sets of collected American servicemen's remains from the Korean War. These remains have been unearthed across former battlefields in North Korea due to years of flooding, agricultural production, and construction projects. The DPRK has offered several times to return them. The last two presidential administrations turned the offers down, linking this humanitarian gesture to political discord between the two nations.

In September's meeting, the vice foreign minister once again shared the DPRK's interest in returning the men's remains if the U.S. acknowledged the humanitarian nature of the gesture. It was added that they would like the acknowledgement in writing. The statement does not need to be directed to the North Koreans. It can be addressed to the *Center for Global Engagement*, who will in turn share it with them.

Returning these long-missing American soldiers home will be a onetime event. There needn't be any direct interaction between the U.S. and the DPRK. The acknowledgement given to the *Center for Global Engagement* noting that it will be a humanitarian gesture will do.

The families of America's missing servicemen put trust in our government's pledge to *leave no man behind*. Mr. President, you hold the key to validating that faith. We, the families, along with supportive groups throughout the nation, ask that you keep the nation's promise to its military personnel and, in this instance, to the families of 120 missing men, who have spent a lifetime waiting for answers to their loved one's fate.

Thank you.

Richard Downes

Richard Downes, President
Lt. Hal Downes MIA, Korea

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PO Box 4194, Portsmouth, NH 03802



State Department

While DPAA does conduct the recovery mission, the Administration sets policy that determines whether or not DPAA can do its job. North Korea and China know that DPAA does not set policy. Russia knows that the USRJC does not set policy. They all look toward the President and State Dept. to determine how important the mission is to the U.S. When nothing is said by the policymakers, other countries assume the mission is not a priority. Then DPAA can only twiddle its thumbs. It is currently doing a lot of thumb-twiddling.

The challenge is to motivate the U.S. Administration to give Korean/Cold War issues their place in the sun. They need to be talked about in order to be solved. We are hoping this administration will alter the paradigm and set policy that will let other countries know that the mission truly means something.

Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs

The Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs
U.S. State Department

To Whom It May Concern;

I write hoping that you will share insights on administration policies that support the mission to account for U.S. servicemen still MIA during the Korean and Cold Wars. The families of the missing men are anxious to hear of efforts directed to account for their loved ones. The *Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs* is a national organization of families who are missing loved ones during the Korean and Cold Wars.

We know that U.S. relations with the DPRK, Russia, and China run hot and cold. Yet, POW/MIA agreements continue between all the parties. (The Singapore Summit agreement with North Korea, work done through the USRJC with Russia, and the Memorandum of Arrangement / Archival with China.) These pathways to interaction exist. Unfortunately, they are not leading anywhere. Contentious policies involving unrelated aspects of U.S. relations with each of these governments stall the accounting mission. We are looking for statements from our nation's leadership that indicate the mission is on your minds; that this is one issue you are willing to talk about, even when other issues bog down.

We are hoping policymakers in this administration will see what can be done about all this. Yes, the hot-button phrases 'leave no man behind', 'highest priority', 'until they are home' are used on the appropriate holidays. We have heard them become hollow platitudes because little is done once the speaker steps away from the podium.

It would mean a great deal to hear our President, the Sec. of State, and other high-level policymakers mention the mission from time-to-time. The leaders in North Korea, Russia, and China are listening, as well. Once they hear that the fate of America's missing men is important to its own nation's leadership, maybe they will see the importance, as well.

Sincerely,

Richard Downes

Richard Downes, President
Coalition of Families of Korean & Cold War POW/MIAs
(Lt. Hal Downes, U.S. Air Force / M.I.A 1952, North Korea)

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Congress

Congressional offices are among the most accessible and consistent allies of the POW/MIA recovery mission. When things happen, it is because senators and/or representatives partnered with colleagues from the other party and pushed a bill, amendment, or budgetary need through the system. The POW/MIA recovery mission is truly bipartisan. Members from both parties have led the way.

The Members staffers are the pathway. When they know that their bosses are interested in an issue, they will take it all the way. They rely on the *Coalition* as the experts to give them background and relevant points. Then they use those points to do what they do. Here is the content of a letter the *Coalition* uses to introduce the *Bring Our Heroes Home Act* to Congressional offices.

Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs

Senator/Representative
U.S. Congress

Dear Senator/Representative:

We write to congratulate and applaud your efforts in supporting POW/MIA issues. For decades, families of American POW/MIAs have waited to learn the fate of their missing loved ones. All too often, efforts to get answers have been thwarted by an inability to gain access to important information. Documents such as prisoner debriefings, live sightings and other pertinent intelligence reports have remained classified. Freedom of Information Act requests can go unanswered for years. Many significant documents exist unbeknownst to families and other researchers.

For these reasons, the *Bring Our Heroes Home Act* is long overdue. This legislation will be a valuable tool in the hands of families and others who seek the fullest possible accounting for missing American service personnel. Declassification of documents pertaining to POW/MIAs has never before been taken as a whole and scrutinized for compliance. We believe the *BOHHA* will change the course of the POW/MIA accounting effort in remarkable ways.

With this in mind, the *Coalition of Families of Korean & Cold War POW/MIAs* urges the Senator/Representative to support and co-sponsor the bill as a demonstration of commitment to the men and women who serve in the United States Armed Forces. Let us truly work to leave no one behind.

Thank you for your dedication to bringing this bill forward.

Sincerely,

Richard Downes

Richard Downes, President



State Department

The State Department manages North Korean relations through the *Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs*. The officials who carry out the Administration's policies are appointed by the White House. They come and go with each Presidency.

These offices are supported by civil servants, who are unaffected by changes brought on by elections. This staff manages the Cold War, spy-thriller sounding *Korea Desk*.



Five offices in the *Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs* are relevant to the POW/MIA accounting mission. To date, the *Coalition* has submitted the White House/ State Dept. letter (covered on page four) to officials in two of these five offices. One of these officials was the featured speaker at DPAA's annual family briefing last summer.

While the *Korea Desk* has acknowledged that the letters were received and passed along to the appropriate office, neither official has responded.

We are working our way up the 'ladder'. Two offices down, three to go.

Department of Defense

DPAA Family/VSO Quarterly Conference Call

The government's POW/MIA agency, *DPAA*, holds quarterly conference phone calls to brief family and veteran service organizations on how the accounting mission (from WWII forward) is doing. The most recent call came at the end of February 2022.

DPAA sends after-call notes for the organizations to share with their members. The *Coalition* has edited these notes to focus on information related to the Korean and Cold Wars. Full notes relating to all conflicts can be found at *DPAA's* website: <https://www.dpaa.mil/Resources/Family-VSO-Update-Notes/>



Participants: the Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs, Disabled American Veterans, Korea-Cold War Families of the Missing, Kore-

an War Veterans Association, Korean War POW/MIA Network, National League of POW/MIA Families, Special Operations Assn /Special Forces Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of Americas

USS *Oklahoma* Project Complete/WWII - At a December 7 ceremony at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Hawaii), the Navy interred the remaining 33 unidentified remains from the USS *Oklahoma*. The ceremony culminated DPAA's six year project which identified 361

of the 394 Unknowns who were highly commingled in 61 caskets.

Korea War Disinterment Project/Punch Bowl Unknowns - The current proposal is to start half of Phase 4 in April and conclude the phase in FY23.

Republic of Korea (South Korea) - The ROK completed their operations on Arrowhead Ridge south of the DMZ in June 2021. Planned unilateral recovery operations on White Horse Hill will progress in April. DPAA's efforts with UN Command and the ROK are currently focused on Hill 111 in the DMZ.

U.S.–Russia Joint Commission (USRJC) - DPAA recently received permission from the Russian Ministry of Defense to resume research in the Moscow Archives.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) -

There have been multiple overtures from the U.S. government toward the DPRK through their Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UN Mission since March 2019. There has been no response. These communications have been general in nature. None have directly mentioned the POW/MIA accounting mission.

Fiscal Year 2021 Identifications (all conflicts) - Total IDs = 142; WWII 127, Korean War 14, Vietnam War 1.

The Coalition's Board of Directors

Rick Downes, President/Executive Director
Donna D. Knox, Legislative Liaison/Secretary
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John Zimmerlee, Vice President
Joan Morris, Treasurer
Amy Goyne, Director

Jean Waite, Membership Director

Our Collective Voice

The Coalition's News

The Coalition's role in the accounting mission involves work in advocacy, outreach and research. Together and separately, these efforts are pathways to answers we look forward to finding. Each day offers new hope that the search for our missing loved ones will find these answers. We look forward to working with you to turn this hope into reality.

* *Korea Peace Conference*

In May, the *Coalition* will join twenty-five other non-governmental organizations in an ambitious conference put together by Women Cross DMZ and the Korea Peace Now Grassroots Network. The purpose will be to assess the state of U.S. policy on North Korea and brainstorm ways that NGOs can help move the peace process along in Korea, including an official end to the Korean War. A treaty will bring meaning to the sacrifice of so many, and may be the only true pathway to learning what happened to the missing men.



* *Amazon Smile*

Thank you to those who make the *Coalition* your non-profit of choice on *Amazon Smile*. Each purchase helps support our efforts to learn what happened to the missing

men. This option is available to all who shop on Amazon. Please consider making the *Coalition* your organization of choice.

* *Memberships*

For those of you interested in membership or whose renewals are coming up, a form can be found in this newsletter. Payments can also be made on the *Coalition's* website using the 'Support Us' button.

www.coalitionoffamilies.org/ .

(Feel free to add to your donation. We won't mind.)

* *Email*

Please let us know when changing your email address. Otherwise, messages will bounce back and we lose contact. Keep us in mind. We would like to stay in touch.

In Memory of Irene

By Donna Knox

The POW/MIA accounting community has lost one of its greatest champions with the recent passing of Irene Mandra. I met Irene in the first half of the 1990's when families of men missing from the Korean & Cold Wars were just getting organized in our search for answers. Irene was already an active member of a family organization at the time. She was, even back then, a vibrant and determined advocate on behalf of her missing brother, Philip Mandra, as well as all of our missing men.

In 1998, Irene and I joined forces with another family member, Gerri Prescott, and formed the *Coalition of Families of Korean & Cold War POW/MIAs*. Together we built an organization around two fundamental premises: we would partner with the government as much as possible on our joint mission to achieve the fullest possible accounting; but we would not hesitate to stand up and speak over the noise or through the silence if that's what we had to do on behalf of our missing loved ones. Irene brought ideas, energy, and

determination to our efforts. She did not waiver in her commitment to her brother or the thousands of others who remained missing without an accounting.

Over the years, Irene's work took her from her home in New York to meetings in D.C., where she asked probing questions of government officials, worked to inform family members who were new to the accounting effort, and—always the enthusiast—where she energized the collective accounting community.

Eventually, Irene left the *Coalition* and became the National Chair for yet another family organization: *Korea/Cold War Families of the Missing*. She was a voice on the front for more than thirty years.

The void Irene has left will not be an easy one to fill. But, in the spirit of her dedication to the mission, let us try our best to continue from here, even though we have lost one of our finest advocates on behalf of the Cause. Together we will continue our search for the fullest possible accounting of our nation's POW/MIAs.

We will miss you, Irene.



Irene, with DPAA Dir. Kelly McKeague

Coalition

When reaching out to Congressional offices for the first time, we want them to know who we are and what we do. A little of that information goes into the email body. A broader overview page of the accounting mission and the organization is attached.

Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs

Introduction & Mission Overview

Background on the Coalition

The *Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs* pursues the fate of missing U.S. servicemen from the Korean and Cold Wars. We are the families of the missing men. In this effort, we have coauthored legislation in Congress, negotiated with North Korea's leadership for the return of U.S. remains then traveled with the then Vice President to honor the eventual return of those remains. We search for the answers ... wherever they lay ... and do whatever is necessary to get there. The *Coalition* is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, formed in 1998.

Background on the Mission

There are 7500 American servicemen still missing from the Korean War. The fate of 5300 of these men lays inside North Korea. Nearly a thousand Unknown losses are in South Korea. Hundreds of Unknowns await disinterment from the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Hawaii). There are 126 Americans still missing from the Cold War. Most of these losses were over-water surveillance flights along the former Soviet Union/Russian coastline.

North Korea has unilaterally returned hundreds of U.S. remains between 1990-1994, in 2007, and again in 2018. The U.S. and North Korea conducted joint recovery operations from 1996-2005. Offers to discuss further returns in 2010 and 2016 were declined by the U.S. An agreement to resume JROs in 2011 was ultimately cancelled due to unrelated friction between the two governments.

Key Issues

The Korean and Cold War accounting missions are best characterized by their diverse issues. Each of these concerns is being pursued independently, while keeping a sharp eye on the overall picture.

* *U.S. Servicemen's Remains Recovery and Identification* * *Air Losses Over North Korea*

* *Last Seen Alive / P.O.W. Transfers* * *Cold War losses / Purple Hearts* * *Declassification*

* *Policy* – The U.S. and DPRK's focus on denuclearization at the exclusion of common humanitarian issues has completely stalled the recovery mission. In 2018, the two governments came together to sign the Singapore Summit. The fourth point of the agreement states: 'The United States and the DPRK commit to recovering POW/MIA remains, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified'. That year, the DPRK returned more than two hundred sets of remains. There has been little interaction between the two governments since.

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Korean War Veterans Memorial / Wall of Remembrance Dedication Ceremony

On July 27, 2022, the Wall of Remembrance will become the permanent home to the names of over 36,000 American servicemen and 7,100 Korean Augmentation to the United States Army (KATUSA) who gave their lives defending the people of South Korea.



If you would like to attend the Dedication Ceremony on July 27th, fill out the interest form at the Korean War veterans Memorial Foundation website:

<https://koreanwarvetsmemorial.org/our-progress/>

Priority seating will be reserved for Korean War Veterans and Gold Star Families.

Schedule of Events

(Tuesday, July 26) Families Visit 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM ; Dedication Banquet 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM
 (Wednesday, July 27) Dedication Ceremony 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Coalition: Current Agenda

The Korean and Cold War accounting missions are best characterized by their diverse issues. Each of these concerns is being pursued independently, while keeping a sharp eye on the overall picture. Key issues include:

- * U.S. Servicemen’s Remains Recovery and Identification*
- * Air Losses Over North Korea*
- * Last Seen Alive Reports / P.O.W. Transfers*
- * Cold War losses / Purple Hearts*
- * Declassification*

We call upon all governments involved to pursue these issues until the missing men are accounted for; in the present frame of time, not a point to come in the unending future.

The Cold War

Some things stay the same: The Cold War remains cold. While answers to the fate of the Cold War missing are difficult to come by, there are ways that the government can bring more meaning to the families’ loss experience. Acknowledgement is one. What was secret then doesn’t need to be secret now. Give these men who served their country in unorthodox ways full acknowledgement for their service. Let their families have that meaning to help fill the void left by the uncertainty of his loss.



Flexibility is another means of supporting the families. If airmen flew combat/intelligence missions in the Korean War theater one day then were lost while on intelligence/Cold War missions along the China/Soviet Union coasts the next day, acknowledge their service for the missions in the Korean theater. Create a place for these men on the new Wall of Remembrance: ‘American servicemen lost while serving in two wars at the same time’. There are few headstones for the missing. Allow the Korean War memorial to be a place families can honor their Korean/Cold War missing loved one’s memory.

There is a uniqueness to each Cold War loss that challenges a unified campaign. It will help to learn what will bring meaning to each family’s story. Is it a medal that hasn’t been approved for a particular loss? Is it official conflict designation? Please share these unique aspects with us. We are good at pulling threads together in order to move issues forward. Send your stories to us at: coalitionoffamilies@gmail.com.

Membership

The *Coalition* relies on memberships and added donations to pursue issues that need to be resolved in order to learn what happened to the missing men.

Much of this work is done in Washington, DC. Multiple visits each year incur expenses beyond the *Coalition's* regular operations. When possible, please add to your \$25 membership donation in order to help support these expenses. The more we are able to travel to the nation's capital, the better we can advocate on the missing men's behalf.



The *Coalition of Families of Korean & Cold War POW/MIAs* is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, dedicated to accounting for the thousands of American servicemen who are still missing from the Korean and Cold Wars. Their stories should be told and closure found for their families.

Thank you.

Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs
National Membership Application

New

Renewal

Name: _____ Date: _____
 Address: _____
 City, State, Zip Code _____
 Email: _____ Phone: _____
 (Associate Membership / Nonfamily member – please check here: _____)
 Relationship to missing service member: _____
 Service member's full name: _____ Service # _____
 Branch of Service/Unit or Group: _____
 Date & Area of Loss: _____
 Annual Membership Donation - \$25 Washington, DC Travel Donation - \$ _____.

Make checks payable to: **Coalition of Families**

Mail to:

Coalition of Families (Attn: Treasurer) P.O. Box 4194, Portsmouth, NH 03802

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