

COALITION OF FAMILIES OF KOREAN & COLD WAR POW/MIAS



WINTER “We will find our own missing loved one by searching for them all - together.” 2025

‘Bringing Them Home’ Overview / 2025

This mission we share has been quite a journey. Curiously long. There are many answers to be found to questions that cannot be left unanswered. There is little choice for the families, the nation, but to press on. It is the right thing to do. For many, it is the only thing to do. The missing men are not only soldiers, airmen, sailors, marines they are family.

If this were Roman times, we would be off on epic journeys to learn what happened to our lost warrior. Our modern trek is less physically arduous but more politically demanding.

The Coalition leads off the New Year with a look at where the journey stands and may be heading. The issues are varied and many. Much of the effort to resolve these issues takes place behind the scenes – interacting with Congressional offices, meeting with DoD/State Department/White House officials, collaborating with other nongovernmental organizations.

As in any mission, whether it be military, environmental, economic, etc., each issue in the POW/MIA recovery mission is its own campaign. The priority issues are familiar to many of you:

~ *Accessing remains inside North Korea*

~ *Declassification Legislation/ The Bring Our Heroes Home Act (BOHHA)*

~ *Accessing China / Russian Archives*

~ *Cold War families – Wall of Remembrance*

~ *Disinterment of Punch Bowl Unknowns*

There are other issues waiting in the wings, including who may be in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Add to all of this a new Congress and new Administration, and the to-do list presents plenty of twists and turns.

The Mission in a Nutshell article (page 3) covers the campaign for each of the Coalition's priority issue; its background, current circumstance, and where it may be headed. Fortunately, our mission is well known and respected. In some instances, the adjustments will come easily; situations that had become static may even have new beginnings.

One would think this sort of foundational effort would not be needed for a mission that is taking place seven decades after-the-fact. This is the reality, however. More issues wait their turn to be addressed. Working together, the families have a voice strong enough to be heard; one that is listened to. We look forward to working with everyone to make the impossible possible.

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President's Corner

International Issues: The Broader Challenges

We begin another year with a new Congress, new Administration, and volatile international relations. While good work will be done by Congress and DPAA, much of this work will be driven by the families; regular folks learning the ins-and-outs of issues and how to move them forward. Folks who began the mission without advocacy experience but learned how to do so as went along.



K55 Return Ceremony

This is how the Coalition came about. We are family members of the missing men first but look for issues that aren't being addressed, figure out what needs to be done then learn how

to do so. Remarkably, we accomplish a great deal.

Much of our advocacy's focus has been on issues right here at home – disinterments of Punch Bowl Unknowns, declassification of U.S. documents, added funding for the DoD DNA lab. The foreign based issues are even more daunting - locating the remains of 5300 men still missing inside North Korea, accessing foreign archives, and more.

Complex global issues directly impact the recovery mission; large scale questions like nuclear arms development, multinational military exercises, human rights, the war in Ukraine. It is more apparent than ever that these larger-than-life issues need to be considered by the families of the missing men if we are to effectively do our part in moving the recovery mission forward.

DPAA, the U.S. government organization charged with the recovery mission, is not able to dip into these international waters. As a DoD agency, it is prohibit-

ed from speaking out on foreign policy issues. This is where the families come in. We are free to speak up for the recovery mission amid international tensions.

The Coalition has had success in this arena. We have met with North Korean policy makers in Pyongyang to discuss the return of remains. We currently have a proposal submitted to North Korea relating to the search for U.S. air losses. It is fascinating ... and a bit crazy ... to think that regular folks can have this kind of interaction at the international level. Having done so provides confidence that more is possible.

Fortunately, the recovery mission itself is respected, or at least tolerated, by governments globally. Left on its own, the mission would simply be a matter of negotiating logistics. The answers are tantalizingly accessible. However, these actions are subject to disruption according to how things are going in unrelated international matters. Our challenge is to look for ways the recovery mission might slip through this maze of volatile interactions to find its place in the sun.

We remain involved on the domestic side, of course. The recovery mission will never be a single focused, one-step-solves-all effort. There will always be ebbs and flow to the political winds that blow above the mission. We have learned to create opportunities when the winds are favorable to get what we can then pursue the next opportunity to come along. We will be broadening this pursuit internationally.

Hold on to your hats!

*Rick Downes, President
(Lt. Hal Downes, father, MIA)*

The Coalition's Board of Directors

***Rick Downes, President/Executive Director
Joan Morris, Treasurer***

***Donna D. Knox, Vice President / Leg. Liaison
Paul Fees, Secretary / Cold War***

Jean Waite, Membership

The Mission in a Nutshell

The Korean and Cold War accounting missions are best characterized as being comprised of multiple issues. Each of these issues is pursued independently, while keeping a sharp eye on the overall picture. The Coalition leads off the New Year with a look at where these issues stand and what the Coalition is doing to move them forward.

North Korea - Accessing Answers

Fifty-three hundred U.S. servicemen are unaccounted for inside North Korea. The answers to their fate will be found in old battlefields, P.O.W. camp cemeteries, and air loss sites spread throughout the country. Accessing these locations is a primary goal for the recovery mission. A second priority is the return of remains North Korea has accumulated over the years through farming, hydroelectric activities, etc.



North Korea unilaterally returned some of these remains between 1991-1994, in 2007, and again in 2018. The U.S. and North Korea successfully conducted joint recovery operations (JROs) from 1996-2005. The U.S. ended this arrangement. A 2011 agreement between the two nations to resume JROs was also cancelled by the U.S. The [2018 Singapore agreement](#) between the U.S. and North Korea lists the return of U.S. remains among its four tenets. North Korea followed up this agreement by returning 55 boxes of remains. [Nearly 100 Americans have been identified from this return.](#)

U.S. and North Korean officials last met in 2019. North Korea closed down completely during the Covid pandemic, including the departure of all foreign diplomats. U.S. offers to reengage, including pandemic related aid, have gone unanswered.

The Coalition, in collaboration with the Androlces Project, has submitted a proposal to North Korea outlining a plan to locate U.S. air losses. The U.S. Treasury/OFAC has granted its approval. North Korea has declined the project, stating that the time isn't right.

~ Current Circumstances

North Korea has begun reengaging with other nations but has shown no interest in talks with the U.S. The new Trump administration will conduct a policy review to determine its initial position regarding North Korea. It would be nice to see the Singapore agreement re-energized. The Coalition will be submitting position papers supporting inclusion of the recovery mission. Hopefully the accounting effort will be treated as a humanitarian issue going forward, regardless of unrelated political differences.

The Coalition's air loss proposal will periodically be resubmitted to North Korea in hopes of encountering a window of opportunity.

The Bring Our Heroes Home Act (BOHHA) / Declassification Legislation

Countless documents relating to missing U.S. servicemen, dating from WWII forward, remain needlessly classified by U.S. agencies. The BOHHA would mandate their declassification and make them available to the public through a collection housed at the National Archives. A review board would be established to determine if documents challenged by agencies should remain classified.



The legislation was cowritten by the Coalition and is sponsored by Senators Crapo (R-ID) and Shaheen (D-NH), along with Representatives Pappas (D-NH) and Fulcher (R-ID). The bill is assigned to the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs (HSGAC) and House Oversight committees. Thirteen Senate and three House offices signed on as cosponsors. The BOHHA has National Archives endorsement. Funding has been approved to establish the document collection.

The legislation was cleared for a vote by the whole Senate at the end of the recent Congress. Unfortunately, broader legislation took precedence and the bill was not addressed.

~ Current Circumstances

The BOHHA will be reintroduced to the new Congress (119th). HSGAC will again need to clear the bill, this time with a new party in majority. Since the legislation was cleared by committee during the last Congress, it may move through the committee processes quickly. It may also encounter changes with the new majority. All cosponsors will need to re-sign.

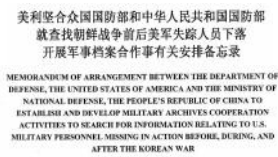
The legislation is in good hands. The staff in all offices are strong, knowledgeable supporters. Representatives Pappas and Fulcher will use the Senate approved language to begin moving the legislation through the House.

(Continued on page 4)

There are multiple pathways possible for the bill, including a floor vote or inclusion in the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act. The Coalition will support getting cosponsors to re-sign and broadening awareness within other Committees that may have a voice.

China Archives

China's archives contain extensive records on missing U.S. servicemen, especially those held in P.O.W. camps and lost during air missions inside North Korea. In 2008, the U.S. and China agreed to a [Memorandum of Arrangement](#) that cleared Chinese



archivists to research their records on U.S. loss incidents inside China's borders. Historically, China has stated that accessing records relating to actions inside North Korea during the war are subject to North Korea's approval. It is not known if China has sought North Korea's approval to make these records available.

~ *Current Circumstances*

The U.S. and China recently agreed to a new Memorandum of Understanding that allows for continued cooperation between DPAA and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) archivists concerning WWII and Korean War losses inside China. DPAA and the Coalition continue to push for expansion of the agreement to include archives involving losses inside North Korea. U.S. researchers and China archivists were scheduled to meet in November 2024.

Korea/Cold War families – Wall of Remembrance

U.S. servicemen who served in the Korean War theater but were lost on overlapping surveillance missions along the China/Soviet Union coastlines and other 'out of theater' actions are designated Cold War losses. As such, their names are not engraved on the Korean War Memorial's [Wall of Remembrance](#). The families of these missing Americans would like their loved ones



honored along with their Korean War brethren.

The initial 2016 legislation approving the Wall ([H.R.1475; Public Law No: 114-230](#)) will need to be amended in order to broaden the theater of operations to include these losses. The Coalition is working with family members to advocate for these changes.

~ *Current Circumstances*

Several Congressional offices have shown interest in taking the lead. Language to the amendment will need to be written and support sought from government agencies overseeing the Memorial.

Disinterments of Unknowns from Past Conflicts

In 2015, Congress mandated that DoD merge its loosely affiliated P.O.W./M.I.A offices (DPMO and others) into a new agency with *singular authority* over the nation's accounting mission. This agency became DPAA. Countermanding the singular authority mandate however, DoD directed control over disinterments of unknowns buried in U.S. cemeteries to another DoD agency, Personnel and Readiness (P&R).



This agency's adverse, unreasonable requirements for DPAA projects have created unwarranted delays, diverted DPAA resources, and undermined personnel morale. The spring 2024 delays in the program to disinter Korean War Unknowns from the Punch Bowl cemetery is the most recent occurrence.

DPAA has been working within DoD for a resolution of the issue. In a parallel campaign, the Coalition has enlisted Senator King's office to pursue the issue for Congressional determination. In October 2024, the Coalition took part in a DoD meeting and shared the families' perspective on the unnecessary delays and diversion of DPAA resources. Congressional inquiries submitted to DoD have produced no new information. A Congressional Records Service (CRS) report noting Congress' position has been completed. The report has yet to be released.

~ *Current Circumstances*

The conflicting DoD agencies involved are expected to submit a request for determination to the Deputy Secretary of Defense. DPAA's Phase 6 of the Punch Bowl disinterments Unknowns is scheduled for this spring. Senator King's office will monitor these efforts as the new Congress gets underway. A Senate Armed Services Committee request to be briefed on the issue may need to be submitted to DoD.

And More

Other issues wait in the wings - supplemental Congressional funding for DoD's DNA laboratory, the question of who lies in the Korean War Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and more. The families' voice in the nation's promise to achieve *the fullest possible accounting* will be heard in them all.

‘Majority of Americans Support Working with North Korea to Repatriate Remains of U.S. Korean War Missing’

A 2024 [public opinion poll](#) commissioned by the [American Friends Service Committee \(AFSC\)](#) and conducted by [The Harris Poll](#) examined U.S. public attitudes toward peace and humanitarian issues with the Democratic People’s Republic of North Korea (DPRK) and China.

Seventy-three percent believe the U.S. government should work with North Korea to repatriate remains of U.S. service members left in North Korea after the Korean War.



Findings involving related issues include:

- * Americans continue to be willing to work with North Korea on various matters
- * A majority of adults living in the U.S. continue to believe the U.S. government should work with other countries to strengthen relationships and reduce tensions.

(Click images for full view)

	2024	2023	2022
The U.S. government should work with North Korea to repatriate the remains of U.S. service members that were left in North Korea after the Korean War	73%	75%	75%
Strongly/Somehow Agree (NET)	73%	75%	75%
Strongly agree	46%	47%	46%
Somehow agree	26%	28%	29%
Strongly/Somehow Disagree (NET)	27%	25%	25%
Strongly/Somehow Disagree	7%	7%	8%
Strongly disagree	8%	8%	8%
Don't know	16%	12%	17%

	2024	2023	2022
The U.S. government should work with other countries to strengthen relationships and reduce tensions	70%	69%	70%
Strongly/Somehow Agree (NET)	70%	69%	70%
Strongly agree	38%	37%	38%
Somehow agree	32%	32%	32%
Strongly/Somehow Disagree (NET)	30%	31%	30%
Strongly/Somehow Disagree	10%	10%	10%
Strongly disagree	8%	8%	8%
Don't know	16%	16%	16%

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) promotes a world free of violence, inequality, and oppression.

Be The Missing Men’s Voices!

As the voices for the missing men, speaking up on their behalf can go a long way to learning their fate. Yet, it is difficult for some folks to believe any individual can make a difference. It is difficult to work advocacy into our lives; easy to believe that major events happen all at once.

The accounting mission moves forward step-by-step; one building upon the other to reach an accomplishment. These steps include developing a relationship with one’s local Congressional office or newspaper; letting them know your family’s story, about important issues ... giving people who can do something the awareness and reason to take an action. People do care. They simply aren’t aware of the stories, of the issues. It is the families’ responsibility to broaden that awareness.

Learning our loved one’s fate relies on each of us working on both our own cases and on them all together. We are the difference-makers. Our loved ones did their jobs within the horrors of war. We can do our part by letting others know their stories, our stories, and what issues need attention. We are our loved one’s voices.

The following websites provide contact information for your Senate and House representatives. They can be difference-makers, as well. Let them know your story. When their voice is needed on an issue, they will know why it is important that they act. You will have let them know.

www.senate.gov/senators/contact/

www.house.gov/representatives/find/

(Find the Representative for your district at: http://clerk.house.gov/member_info/mcapdir.aspx)

Our Collective Voice

The Coalition Announces the Retirement of its Vice President, John Zimmerlee

by

Donna Downes Knox

John Zimmerlee has been one of the Coalition’s most active members for twenty-five years. As he now moves on to retirement, we extend our deepest appreciation to him for his dedication to the POW/MIA accounting mission.

In 1998, John became the Coalition’s first new member. For many years, he has regularly attended government briefings and devoted countless hours at the National Archives, and elsewhere, to researching the fates of Korean War POW/MIAs, one of whom is his father.

Along the way, John developed a detailed analytical database that suggests possible, and often likely, connections between unidentified remains and men who have yet to be accounted for. Every year at the annual government briefing in Washington, D.C. he has met with individual family members and provided information that might assist them in their search for answers.

In addition to this invaluable contribution to the accounting effort, John has been a dedicated member of the Coalition’s Board of Directors. Over the years we have tackled various aspects of the accounting ef-

fort—sometimes piece by piece, sometimes with an eye to the effort as a whole. Regardless of the issue, John has been there with, and for, the rest of us, offering opinions, ideas and perspective.

John has lent himself to the mission because he, like other families of missing ser-

vicemen, understands the impact of having lost a family member without answers as to his fate. Was he killed in ac-

tion? Was he taken prisoner? Was he transferred to the Soviet Union and exploited for his knowledge and expertise? These are questions we all face. They bind us together because we share a collective wound.

John’s contributions to the accounting effort over these many years will not be forgotten. He has partnered with us all in the search for answers. And so, we offer our thanks to our dear friend and fellow POW/MIA family member, John Zimmerlee, for all he has done on behalf of our quest for closure.



Coalition Officers

John’s retirement brings changes to the Coalition’s leadership positions.

~ Donna Knox is the new Vice President.

(Donna will also maintain her role as Legislative Liaison.)

~ Paul Fees will step into the Secretary position.

Our remaining board members continue in their roles:

~ Rick Downes, President/Executive Director

~ Joan Morris, Treasurer

~ Jean Waite, Membership



All of the Coalition’s directors are family members of a Korean or Cold War M.I.A.

The Cold War

DCAA’s Cold War Family Update
 August 2024
 (DCAA’s Synopsis for the Cold War family
 break out session.)

As of August 2024, JCSD has found possible references to 15 U.S. POWs, resulting in likely correlations to six known U.S. POWs.

Since April 2024, DCAA’s Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD) contractors have been undertaking a systematic review of the three major Soviet newspapers active during the Korean War period: Pravda, Izvestia, and Krasnaya Zvezda.



The materials that have been reviewed so far have reported U.S. POWs held in POW camps on the Korean peninsula; thus far, they have not reported U.S. POWs held outside the Korean peninsula.

Because some of the Cold War shootdowns occurred during this period, researchers are also noting any articles related to the Cold War incidents. So far, nothing new has been found.

Their task is to search these newspapers for any mentions of U.S. POWs, for the purpose of enhancing DCAA Korean War case files and identifying new leads for further research. The contractors are reviewing issues between 1 January 1950 and 31 December 1954.

DCAA will notify families if any pertinent information is found regarding their cases.

The Korean War Chronology

(U.S. Army Center of Military History)

[27 June-15 September 1950 \(Phase 1\)](#)

North Korea vs South Korea

[16 September-2 November 1950 \(Phase 2\)](#)

United Nations enters conflict;
 UN/ South Korea push to Chinese border

[3 November 1950-24 January 1951 \(Phase 3\)](#)

Chinese forces enter the conflict;
 Chinese/North Korea push to Seoul

[24 January-21 April 1951 \(Phase 4\)](#)

Fighting centers along 38th Parallel

[9 July 1951-27 July 1953 \(Phase 5\)](#)

Armistice talks begin; Fighting continue along 38th parallel; Armistice signed

Membership

The *Coalition* relies on membership 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 operation. When possible, please add to your donation to help support these expenses.



The *Coalition of Families of Korean & Cold War POW/MIA's* 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.

All donations are tax deductible. Memberships/donations can also be made through the *Coalition's* website: www.coalitionoffamilies.org

Thank you!

Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIA's
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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