

# COALITION OF FAMILIES OF KOREAN & COLD WAR POW/MIAS



SUMMER

2014

**R**eports of American POWs seen alive in North Korea have circulated since the Korean War ended.

“...three POWs (one American) ...”, “... U.S. pilots who had been captured in Vietnam ...”, “... ten persons, including black men ...”.

No names are attached. They could be anyone's missing father, son, brother, uncle ... or no one at all. The U.S. government writes them off as, *lacking credibility, mistaken for one of known deserters, got the same reports all the time in Vietnam*. It's more of a, *we can't do anything about them, so we'll say they aren't real* approach. Os-triches around the world surely nod their heads knowingly.

There are too many sightings, under too many varied circumstances, to ignore. A year 2000 report is a singular mystery. It was mentioned briefly in the last newsletter. A subsequent investigation has developed all the feel and intrigue of a Cold War spy novel.

The report is an *action request* from the American Embassy in Seoul. In the report, a South Korean human rights group was informed by a Chinese source that a North Korean citizen brought the remains of a U.S. soldier from North Korea, and was seeking asylum in return for ten more sets of U.S. remains and three POWs alive in the DPRK, one American. (You may want to reread that.) The Chinese source was in Seoul at the time. A meeting was set with the U.S. embassy's political officer (*PolOff*).

That's it. Everything ends there. The report was declassified in 2009. There was no mention of the meeting between *PolOff* and the source of the report. Nothing was

## Quiet Mysteries: Live Sightings of American POWs

said about the remains. The North Korean claiming contact with an American POW? No one at DPMO, the

agency created to follow up on live sighting reports, apparently followed up on this one. The question was asked, the response was, "... doubting there is any follow-up as there is little to go on ...". They had no information regarding the set of remains. No knowledge of a follow-up report filed by *PolOff*. There was no follow-up on the report of other remains and the live POWs.

Needless to say, this was disturbing. The Chinese source either showed up for the meeting, or did not show up for the meeting. One would think someone would have at least checked on that.

The *Coalition* has taken on the task. We contacted the human rights group in South Korea, *No one internally remembers that there was follow-up on this issue*. No one at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul knew of any follow-up.

So, it is true. Apparently, no one at DPMO, the agency charged with bringing home missing soldiers, followed-up on an opportunity to bring home missing soldiers.

That's where it stands to date. We are about to pursue the one person who knows most about the incident: *PolOff*. The man with a title right out of a James Bond movie. The man who has answers to questions that should have been asked a decade ago.

Next: Tracking down "*PolOff*".

(See the full action request at:

[www.coalitionoffamilies.org/livesightings.html](http://www.coalitionoffamilies.org/livesightings.html))

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**United States**

***Out With the Old, In With the New!***

Dramatic changes are coming to the Defense Department's POW/MIA accounting mission. The entire effort will be reorganized. Good-bye DPMO, hello *New Agency*. That is, in fact, the working title. (The final name will be coming.)

The changes run so deep that it will take awhile to reduce, reuse, and develop the elements. The current configuration of agencies was put together like one might build a tinker-toy space station over time. Agencies were joined to other agencies in a way that became difficult to manage. The mandate is to design a new agency that will meld all elements, old and new, into one coordinated entity. The target date to have the new agency *initially operational* is January 1, 2015 then *fully operational* by January 1, 2016. What *initially* and *fully operational* will look like is still being figured out.

One critical new aspect will be a well defined line of authority. The new agency will be headed by a *Director*, who will have *direct* control over all relevant sub-agencies. Loyalty issues and divided obligations undermined the authority of DPMO leadership. That will not be the case under the new leadership.

The inclusion of JPAC under the same umbrella will

lead the way. The remains recovery and identification agency has always operated under the Navy's Pacific Command, not DPMO. JPACs obligations and loyalties therefore were elsewhere. Similar conflicts existed with other sub-agencies. This will no longer be the case.



Among the most promising new dimensions will be partnerships with nongovernmental organizations. The potential for significantly increased identifications, at significantly less cost, is quite possible. Many outstanding organizations are already doing important work in research, identification, remains discovery, and outreach, including the family organizations. Legislation has to be passed to make these and other changes possible. Congress is holding quarterly hearings to keep an eye on the progress.

Meanwhile, the mission will continue as it has. DPMO, JPAC and the other agencies will do their things. The casualty offices will be the families' point of contact. The hope is that everyone will work together as best they can in the old space station until the new one is finished.

***President's Corner***



***They Say Goodbye, We Say Hello ... Hello, Hello ...***

So, what might come from having a new POW/MIA agency replace an old POW/MIA agency? Will more remains be found and identified? Sooner rather than later? Will more live sighting reports be resolved? More documents declassified? The people organizing this reorganization appear energized and dedicated to redefining the culture of the mission. To put the difference into a single phrase: Finding ways to do things, rather than not to do things. This in itself should be noteworthy.

There will be a central case management system, meaning information should flow readily from one facet of the mission to another. JPAC workers in the field will have access to research held in DC. This may help site exploration, enhancing the chance more remains will be found. Private organizations are already locating remains from

WWII. Expanding their capabilities will broaden their work, perhaps into other conflicts. Private laboratories are identifying large numbers of victims buried in mass grave-sites in Bosnia. Applying their experience and technologies should speed up identifications. A letter has been sent to the Director of Intelligence asking that all documents regarding POW/MIAs, from WWII onward be released. So many answers will come from success there.

It is beginning at the basics, however, the DNA of the mission, if you will. It will take time. We need to make sure it's not too much time. Target dates are far off. Hopefully, the agency will be more *fully operational* in 2015 than *initially operational*.

Maybe they'll come up with a name for the new agency soon. Branding. They want to get it right. Any suggestions?

*Rick Downes  
(Lt. Hal Downes - MIA 1952)*

## *Inside a Gulag* *May He Never Have Been There*

From the time I could walk, talk and think for myself, the question of what happened to my father was laid upon my life. I was born into the first days of his MIA status, a daughter he never met, and from that day on he was always present, as my mother tried to keep him alive for me. Two years later, with the presumptive finding of death, she tried to keep his memory alive for me. She did an excellent job of both.

So, I grew up with my father missing. Where was he, other than in his picture on my nightstand, in the cardboard box through his letters, or in the back of my closet with his hockey skates, his jersey and his goalie glove? I didn't know. And that's what kept the healing at bay.

In 1991, I got a glimpse of another possibility, one that didn't include the assumption that he'd gone down with the plane. This possibility was that he had been taken by the Soviets. Come to find out there was evidence, but no 'proof,' that Americans had been transferred out of Korea into the Soviet Union. It seems they had just the place for men like my father, with technological know-how—the Sharashkas.

They were a kind of gulag, the kind where the Soviets put people to exploit knowledge and skill.

Through the 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium, I searched for information. Hounded the government. Spoke to the press and travelled to countries far and wide, looking, always looking, for information

that might tell me what had happened to my father. This year, I did something else. I visited Perm 36, the last standing gulag, now a museum. I chose not to go in summer, when the experience might have been more comfortable. I went in the dead of winter, when it would have been the worst.

My son went with me. A daughter who never met her father. A grandson who never met his grandfather.

We were in the middle of nowhere, after having driven through forests that, according to our guide, harbored wolves and bears and "big cats." We pulled up before a massive green gate that must have been fifteen feet tall and equally wide. It was 35 degrees below zero. A ten foot solid wood fence stretched to either side as far as I could see from where I stood. Strands of barbed wire, leaning inward, topped the fence. Wood guard towers loomed in various spots deeper inside the encircled area. Our hands froze. So did our phones when we tried to use them to take pictures. I had five thermal layers on and could barely breathe I was so numb from the cold. Prisoners got a pair of padded cotton

trousers and a similar jacket (ratty and torn as the hand-me-downs that they were).

Once inside, a more serious perimeter stood its ground, as though to taunt any man who had failed to shed every notion of freedom he might have had. Imagine your world confined by a sign that read: "Halt. Shoot Without Warning" in both English and Russian. Beyond that, a barbed wire fence and beyond that a zone patrolled by fierce attack dogs. After the dogs came more barbed wire—this layer electrified and rigged with sensors that detected movement. More zones after that one. The final zone was patrolled by guards, and then there was an eight foot wood fence, which constituted the outside wall of the prison. Perm 36 boasted a record of zero escapes. Is it any wonder?

Our guide provided more heart-wrenching details of the prison experience than I was prepared to hear. Thirty unarmed guards worked inside the prison, drunkards and bullies they were, according to some reports.

One hundred and twenty armed guards watched the facility from outside its walls. Machine guns armed henchmen who stood in wooden towers. There were four wood barracks, with two-hundred fifty men to each. At the time, one would have seen sunken eyes looking out from faces of mere skin over bone. Thin, frail men—all of them lacking anything but the kernel of life.

When in use, the barracks smelled of too many men in a closed space. Dirty socks. Unwashed undergarments, hair and breath. Stale smoke hovering in pockets. Iron roll-down shutters covered the windows. A white light bulb hung at either end of the room. The bulbs were never dimmed. Men were hungry. Hopelessness and anger beseeched them all.

I don't know if my father was among them or, if he was, what happened to him. I do know that he could have been, and that's enough to keep me searching for answers; to never give up. When I can't help myself and I picture him sitting in a place like Perm 36—waiting, hoping, praying that someone will rescue him, it's like a knife stabbing into an old wound. By now, I don't expect it to ever heal. I just need to know. This is something only other family members will understand. This is why we should never give up our search for answers.

*Donna Downes Knox*  
*(Lt. Hal Downes, MIA)*



**Korea**

***DPRK (North Korea)***

News from North Korea is always a mixed bag. Saber-rattling heightens during U.S./South Korean military drills early each year. Relations quiet down after that. North Korea did recently test fire a couple of missiles into the ocean. Yet they opened their 27th annual marathon to foreign runners for the first time. Then they protested the use of an unflattering photo of Kim Jong Un in a London barbershop. See, mixed bag.

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Korean families separated by the War reunited earlier this year at a mountain resort in North Korea. Without regular forms of communications between the two Koreas, the family members have gone decades without phone calls, letters or emails -- unable to know whether their loved ones were alive or dead.



This was the first reunion since November, 2010.  
(Excerpted from CNN report)

***Republic of Korea (South Korea)***

(Excerpted from May, 2014, article, - WWW.Army.mil)

Nearly 40 American soldiers participated in an excavation in support of the Republic of Korea Army this past spring. It was the first time the ROKA conducted excavation operations in Hill 487. One of the citizens living near the hill, who engaged in the battle the Nakdong River defense line, witnessed that he buried a lot of dead Soldiers on this hill.

174 unnamed dead bodies and several remains were

found. Near this site, it has been estimated that a U.S. Soldier was found. The U.S. Commander of Materiel Support Center -- Korea, Col. Johnny K. Matthews emphasized the meaning of the participation with ROKA.



"Sixty-four years ago, U.S. Soldiers and the people from this country fought together against North Korea," said Matthews. "They walked up this mountain together as we did today and sacrificed their lives for freedom for this country. I'm much honored to be here side-by-side."

**China**

***Chinese Soldiers Killed in Korean War Head Home***

Relatives of Chinese soldiers awaited the return of 437 sets of remains repatriated by South Korea.

The remains had been kept in a burial ground north of



Seoul for the past six decades.

Estimates of the number of Chinese soldiers killed in the war range from 110,000 to more than 400,000. The remains of 770 North Korean soldiers killed during the war are still at the cemetery.



(Excerpted from NYT, Choe Sang-Hun)

**Live Sighting: American POW - North Korea**

**(1995 Sighting by a North Korean Defector )**

*[The] source spoke with the daughter [Korean] of an American captured during the Korean War in his early 20s. After capture, he was sent to work in the coal mines. The daughter was told by her father that he had some sort of certificate or identification that he could show if he ever returned to the U.S. that would entitle him to a payment of some kind. [She] also said that her father maintained a book, possibly a diary, which he instructed his wife [Korean] to pass along to his American family if possible, after he died. The American POW was present but did not interact. He had yellow, reddish hair, generally hairy body and big hands. Another American POW, captured at the same time, was reportedly living in another region.*

**(Excerpted from a Stony Beach information report declassified in 2004)**

**Our Collective Voice - Coalition News**

**\* X-Files**

We have the X-Files! Over 900 files, on the unknown American soldiers buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punch Bowl) following the Korean War. A FOIA request, ushered through with the tenacious work of U.S. Army HRC has secured their release to the *Coalition*.

We are sorting relevant info from the files into an interactive spreadsheet. The spreadsheet will then be available on the internet. Families will be able to see information that should have been available decades ago. We are just beginning. Methuselah may still be a young man before we finish. We will finish, however. The uploaded record will look something like this:



<u>X-FILE</u>	<u>HEIGHT</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>RACE</u>	<u>ARTI-FACTS</u>	<u>REMAINS</u>	<u>DENTAL</u>	<u>CLOTHING</u>	<u>X-RAYS</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>UNITS</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
	5'6"-			metal				1 - 3	San Lai	7th	
X-284	5'7"	22-26	White	chain;	skull	Yes	T-Shirt	Ribs	Myon	Cav	Laundry mark

**\* Social Media (Outreach)**

For many family members, entering the world of social media is like taking that long leap off a short pier. Well please grab your nose and jump in! The water's fine and it is today's way to make a difference. Join us on Facebook for updated news: [www.facebook.com/groups/2307893609/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/2307893609/) ( become a *Friend*), and Twitter ([www.twitter.com/KoreanWarMIAs](http://www.twitter.com/KoreanWarMIAs) (become a *Follower*) Add your voice to the mission to make a difference!

**\*Membership**

We accomplish so much by working together! Your membership supports the *Coalition's* outreach, advocacy and research efforts. Membership donations are tax deductible. New members are welcome. Renewing members, even moroso. Numbers make a difference! Stand with us. (*Member/renewal application is on page seven.*)

*DPMO's Generic File of Korean War Live Sightings*

This is an unclassified listing of documents contained in DPMO's Generic Classified Information File. Documents being withheld are undergoing a declassification review which started in June 2008.

**Case File for the Korean War**

<u>Index Number</u>	<u>Date of Report</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Classification Info</u>
020402	220601ZAPR02	U.S. Servicemember in North Korea	Ongoing
020804	070655ZAUG02	U.S. Defectors in North Korea	Foreign Govt Info
021005	040531ZOCOT02	U.S. POWs in North Korea	Foreign Govt Info
031101	180136ZNOV03	American POW in North Korea	Foreign Govt Info
040601	220023ZJUN04	American POW in North Korea	Foreign Govt Info
040901	130017ZSEP04	UN POW in North Korea	Foreign Govt Info
041201	192230ZDEC04	American POWs in North Korea	Foreign Govt Info
061001	130613ZOCOT06	American defectors in North Korea	Foreign Govt Info

**Declassified Reports**

Last Updated: 7/2/2013

<u>Index Number</u>	<u>Date of Report</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Location of Report</u>
040401	271714ZAPR04	POWs in North Korea	Federal Bureau of Investigation, Records Management Division, Washington, DC 20535
040501	201550ZMAY04	Caucasian Prisoner sighted	Federal Bureau of Investigation, Records Management Division, Washington, DC 20535
000602	080947ZJUN00	Possible American POW in NK	Office of Information Programs and Services A/GIS/IPS/RL Department of State, Wash DC 20522

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## **Dysfunctional Government**

*John Zimmerlee*

Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, is attempting to fix the 'Recovery & Identification of Missing Servicemen' . . . but that doesn't even come close to the real problem.

When the Korean War ended and our POWs were supposedly returned, we realized that many of the known POWs had NOT come home, so our government created a list of 944 men, known to be POWs, and submitted it to North Korea demanding their return. Meanwhile, of those 944 known POWs, our government was telling the families of 420 of them that their loved-ones died on the battlefield or were still missing in action. Our government was demanding the return of 420 known POWs from North Korea, while at the same time telling the families that those same men were killed-in-action or still missing . . . and is still conveying that lie on their website today.

According to compelling evidence from my 20 years of research, more than 1,119 of the supposed KIAs and MIAs were actually known by our government to be POWs and the families were never told!

In 1954 we received 1868 remains from North Korea in Operation Glory. Most were readily identified. Approximately 848 were not, yet 260 of those were marked with the names and service numbers of men still missing. Some of those were later identified as someone else, yet the families were never told.

More recently, I have been reviewing what was known about the 867 unidentified remains buried in the National Cemetery in Hawaii.

In an attempt to identify remains, scientists estimated the date of death, noted the location of death, researched the units who were in that area at the estimated date of death, noted laundry marking in clothing, inventoried dog tags and personal possessions, and compared teeth to previous dental records. Though all of it was considered worthy, it was most always "dental" that confirmed the identity. Those without teeth or dental history were close but 'not confirmed' and buried as 'unknowns'. So far, I have found 376 'tentatively identified' who were buried as 'unidentified' and the families were never told.

When the Korean War ended, our government was anxious to make this war "Forgotten", so they made a decision in 1954 to stop trying to identify remains and just bury them. Within the monthly lists of those 'identified but not yet approved by the Board', I found the names of eleven men . . . who are still among those 'unaccounted-for', yet were on these lists of 'identified, awaiting approval' . . . and the families were never told. Their names were Charles Barton, George Damico, Virgle Evans, William Giovaniello, Gerald Kappler, Darden Miller, Roy Moore, Juan Quintana, Charles Rushing, John Senay, & Clarence Tish.

Though most of these records are still classified, I have found hints that some of these and other identifications were questionable, especially one. A body was found and temporarily buried in grave M-1-1294 in Tanggok Cemetery as X-5009 and later 'positively identified' on 25 February 1953 as Sgt Cecil Gebin #ER6737395 who went missing 13 February 1951. Only one person had a problem with this identification. He was a POW and returned alive in Big Switch on 31 August 1953 . . . and his name was Sgt Cecil Gebin! Another body was retrieved and positively identified in 1952 as Felix Pucciarelli RA12345876 who went missing 23 April 1951. Yet Felix, too, came home alive in Big Switch on 19 August 1953.



Mistakes are embarrassing. Our tendency is to try to bury them. If I can find these two mistakes in a few hours of research, imagine how many other mistakes are buried in the National Cemetery known as the Punchbowl. No wonder that our government does not want to exhume and identify the 800 remains there.

While Hagel is attempting to consolidate departments in order to accomplish the mandate of identifying 200 remains a year, the mission is flawed. The better primary mission would be to open all documents to the public and let us find out what really happened to our missing loved-ones.

Let's get congress to require immediate declassification of all classified and restricted information more than 25 years old in their possession or accessioned into archives, libraries, or other repositories pertaining to POW/MIAs.

All Department heads should immediately forward all documents concerning POW/MIAs to easily accessible archives, libraries, or other repositories and shall permit full disclosure of and access to all information declassified.

All archives, libraries, military bases, and other repositories should immediately allow public access to all documents concerning POW/MIAs without further need for declassification or review by originating or equity governing agencies.

That's it . . . just 3 short paragraphs in a congressional 'bill'. It would cost absolutely nothing. It would save hundreds of millions of dollars in MDR and FOIA requests . . . and it would save hundreds of years in research.

Together, we can . . . and will get answers!

*John Zimmerlee (Capt. John Zimmerlee, Jr. - MIA)*  
*Korean War POW/MIA Network*

[john.zimmerlee@gmail.com](mailto:john.zimmerlee@gmail.com)

**TO-DO LIST**

***Annual Korean/Cold War Briefing***

You will have received DPMO's invitation to this year's annual family briefing (DC, Aug 14-15). Mr. Michael Lumpkin, heading the DoD's POW/MIA reorganization, is scheduled to present the goals and share progress toward them. Hopefully, your *To-Do List* includes hotel reservations, flights, etc. Attending this briefing will be an opportunity let DoD know that the Korean and Cold War accounting effort is well represented!

***The Coalition will be gathering Thursday evening in the Hyatt Regency lounge 7:00-9:00 PM. Please join us!***



***Forgotten Men from the Forgotten War***

The *Coalition* is developing a public access television production that will share stories of missing men from the Korean and Cold Wars. A primary focus will be placed on the families. This will be an opportunity to broaden public awareness through nationwide public access networking

and online streaming.

Please join us by submitting your missing loved one's story and how it has impacted your family.

Contact Rick Downes at:

*coalitionoffamilies@gmail.com.*

*Special thanks to Roadwork Pictures and Hanover Park Entertainment!*

***Finnigan's War***



*Proceeds from their moving films are donated to the Coalition. Please visit the websites and purchase these powerful films!*

***Keeping the Promise Alive***



[www.createspace.com/379520](http://www.createspace.com/379520)

[www.keepingthepromisealive.com/](http://www.keepingthepromisealive.com/)

Visit [coalitionoffamilies.org](http://coalitionoffamilies.org) for other important works: *American Trophies* and *Missing, Presumed Dead*.

*Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs*

**National Membership Application**

New

Renewal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to missing service member:

Service member's full name: \_\_\_\_\_ Service # \_\_\_\_\_

Branch of Service/Unit or Group:

Date & Area of Loss:

**Annual Membership Donation - \$20.00 \* Please make checks payable to: Coalition of Families.**

**Send to:**

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