

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



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

## *The Heart of the Matter*

The Korean War POW/MIA recovery mission is nearing 70 years of its search for answers to the missing men’s fate. We know the issues that need to be resolved. We know how to resolve them.

The puzzling tragedy is that the mission is taking so long. While there are a lot of *white hats* in support, there are *black hats* out there senselessly drawing out mission. This is the underlaying theme to this edition of the newsletter. Who are the *white hats*? Where are the *black hats*? What do we do to change things?



The people and organizations supporting this mission are readily found. The support is wonderful. It’s tricky tracking down those entities that hold things up. Like watching a master magician at work, we have often followed the wrong hand. For a long while, DPMO/DPAA drew our focus. North Korea has been an easy diversion. Yet, DPAA only carries out policy that other agencies establish. When approached properly, North Korea has allowed joint recovery operations and returned remains unilaterally. Offers to do more have been declined.

Who declines North Korea’s offers? Who estab-

lishes the policies that DPAA is tied to? The largest black hat has been worn by the one office where the mission’s champion is supposed to be. The White House. It is not just the current Administration. With a couple of exceptions, U.S. presidential administrations dating back to the war are responsible for keeping this mission from being completed. Eisenhower through Biden. Political party makes no difference.

Single minded mistrust and hostility to all things North Korea seems to be a ticket to entering the White House.



Yet, regarding the recovery mission, North Korea has been remarkably open and trustworthy.

The *Coalition* has embarked on a campaign to persuade the current Administration to buck this trend; broaden its policy perspective of North Korea.

*“If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.” Nelson Mandela*

This is our approach. We have a plan. We have allies. Read on to get a feel for it. Look for who wears which hat. Join in as you can. The more folks involved, the louder our voice will become.

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## President's Corner

### *Moments That Should Never Lose Meaning*

*"Hi. My name's Rick. My father is M.I.A."*

I said those words a lot this past POW/MIA Recognition Day. A special event was held at the nearby National Guard base to honor former P.O.W.s and the men who are still missing in action. I was the only one there with someone M.I.A. I wanted to personally thank folks for attending.



**K55 Return**  
*M.I.A."*

I said the words to each person; to the point that they began losing some of their meaning. Not to others maybe but to me. Saying it so often. Which made me uneasy. Those words mean so much; stand for so much.

My father and all those who went missing experienced epic moments that no one ever wants to go through, ever wants a loved one to go through. Moments of great fear, indecision, tremendous courage. These are desperate moments for all casualties of war but become more significant when the outcome is unknown. Moments of this magnitude should never lose the depth of their meaning.

Then there are the families who have not been able to move on from the uncertainty surrounding those moments. What was likely an ending for each of the missing became the beginning of a lifetime of hard-

*"Hi. I'm Rick. My father is M.I.A."*

I sensed it was meaningful for others to connect with someone directly related to a M.I.A. They were curious. They cared.

*"Hi. My name's Rick. My father is*

ship for their families.

*"My father ... brother ... uncle ... grandfather ... great uncle is M.I.A."*

These words should always carry the depth of the meaning for what happened to these men, what happened to their families. Whether saying the words once or hundreds of times. It is important, not just that others understand but that we feel it each time, even if just a piece of it.

This is difficult to do, of course. If we cut our hand, we don't spend all day sticking a finger into it. It is unnecessarily painful, as it is to be that emotional that often. There aren't that many tears.

So, we pursue the answers to all the questions that will help put the men to rest, help the families find peace. That puts meaning into the words. This has proven to be difficult to do, of course. The missing men are fighting the war from their graves. It is a political war that is as formidable as the physical war.

How long should we do this though? When does an obligation for a son to find his father end?

This last thought comes to mind every so often. It came to mind last POW/MIA Recognition Day. Then I remembered that it was my father's birthday, as well; a not so subtle call that he is still waiting; they are all still waiting.

What is a fella to do?

*"Hi. My name is Rick. My father is M.I.A."*

*Rick Downes, President*

*(Lt. Hal Downes, father - MIA 1952)*



### *The Coalition's Board of Directors*

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**Congress**



Congress has long been an ally of the accounting mission. Families are finding closure because of this dedication. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency exists and is annually funded by Congress. Congressional offices are among the most accessible and consistent allies of the POW/MIA recovery mission. The POW/MIA recovery mission is truly bipartisan. Members from both parties have led the way. Families are finding closure because of this dedication.



**Current Legislative Actions**

~ **DNA Identification Laboratory Funding (AFDIL)** - In 2021, Rep. Chris Pappas' office worked with the Coalition to add \$4M to the National Defense Authorization Act that helped keep AFDIL on pace with bone submissions by DPAA for Next Generation Sequencing (NGS). \$4M has been added again this coming year and is only waiting for the FY 2023 NDAA to be passed. The added \$4M will allow AFDIL to replace 2-3 aging NGS instruments, purchase reagents to run them, help equip a new NGS lab (4 workstations), and cover training new analysts. (Note: AFDIL operates on a budget separate from DPAA.)



~ **Bring Our Heroes Home Act** - Like much of the recovery mission, this declassification legislation has life but is currently on hold. Complex issues plus staff changes in Member offices and in committees have slowed the process down. The positive note is that Senator Shaheen's office is still supporting the bill.

~ **H. R. 3446 Peace On the Korean Peninsula** – calls for a review of current restrictions on U.S. travel to North Korea, a formal end to the Korean War (among other purposes), and has drawn cosponsor support from more than 30 other House office. The legislation has been referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

**Behind the Scenes**

~ **Congressional Oversight**

While Congress has mandated the creation of and generously funded the POW/MIA recovery mission for decades, Presidential Administration after Administration has yet to assign the mission similar priority. This is especially so regarding the 5300 Korean War servicemen missing inside North Korea.

The *Coalition* will be asking Congress to broaden its oversight of the Korean War accounting mission to include holding the Administration to the same high commitment. This oversight can involve any of the following: 1) individual offices connecting with State Department legislative affairs officials, 2) sending individual/combined member signed letters, and/or 3) calling leading Administration policymakers to appear at committee hearings. The goal will be for the Administration to establish their policy for resolving the 70-year mission to account for U.S. servicemen still missing due to the Korean War.

~ **DoD/DPAA/Disinterments of Unknowns**

Congress and organizations like the *Coalition* can effect action without the need for legislation. Congress originally mandated that DoD create a POW/MIA agency (now DPAA) to be the *single authority* determining policy on all POW/MIA matters. DoD later assigned authority over group disinterments of Unknowns (all wars) to another agency within the Department. That agency established policies that limited DPAA's ability to do its job. The Punch Bowl Phased Plan was an instance of these issues holding up implementation of a plan.

DPAA began an in-house campaign to gain sole authority of these disinterments. Meanwhile, the *Coalition* brought the issue to Congress. Sen. Angus King's office took action, contacting the DoD legislative office, which suggested the possibility of Congressional inquiry. Following this action, DPAA's in-house campaign began making progress. Currently, new policy is being written that will redirect authority over group disinterments to DPAA.



This is an example of Congress, a nongovernmental organization (*Coalition*), and DoD working behind the scenes to bring about positive change.

### *The White House*

(This space normally includes news of the Administration's efforts to negotiate on behalf of the mission. Since there has been no news of such activity, the *Coalition* offers commentary on the subject.)



#### *Lofty Words / Empty Promises*

Congress established *National P.O.W./M.I.A. Recognition Day* in 1979. Each year, the sitting President issues a proclamation declaring the actual day & date (3<sup>rd</sup> Friday in September). These declarations are well written, patriotic, and often show understanding of the trauma experienced by the missing men and the impact on their families.



Unfortunately, nothing else is said or done about the Korean/Cold War recovery missions during the ensuing year.

Last year was Pres. Biden's first opportunity to issue this proclamation. His was an eloquent message that showed great understanding, empathy, and promise.

*"Loss and grief are hard enough without the added and too often prolonged pain of uncertainty."*

*"My Administration is committed to recovering and identifying Americans missing from prior conflicts."*

Nothing was said or done about the Korean/Cold War recovery missions thereafter.

This September, Pres. Biden once again issued a *P.O.W./M.I.A. Recognition Day* proclamation.

*"There is no act more sacred or more American than keeping the faith with those who have sacrificed so much for our Nation."*

*"We also continue the righteous work of bringing home our heroes who remain unaccounted for."*

It has become common practice to listen to government officials with sad understanding that they mean little of what they say. It is too bad. In his proclamation, Pres. Biden refers to the Armed Forces as *champions*. The families of the Korean War's missing men have waited a long time for a champion in the White House. The President has the coming year to become one.

#### *State Department*

DoD's POW/MIA accounting agency (DPAA) is ready and able to carry out its recovery mission with North Korea but needs policy established by the White House that will allow the agency to do its work. Currently, the lack of flexibility and creativity in existing U.S. policy ties the hands of DPAA, thwarting Congress' mandate to account for the missing Americans and bring closure to their families.

As the foreign policy arm of the Administration, the State Department is charged with engaging North Korea in discussion of policy items set forth in the 2018 Singapore agreement. Those terms include:

*the United States and DPRK will commit to the recovery and repatriation of the remains of American prisoners of war and soldiers missing in action in North Korea.*

The question is: Where in U.S. policy towards North Korea is there any mention of the Korean War recovery mission?

This Administration maintains that multiple efforts have been made to open a dialogue with North Korea 'without preconditions'. To date, North Korea has been unresponsive. No changes in the U.S. approach appear to have been put in place that might elicit a more favorable response.



Is the same message offered over and over again, some how expecting a different response?

A television dialogue exchange captures the current U.S. effort toward North Korea well. One character explains that they have been reaching out to another party for quite some time but were getting no response. Another character counters,

*"Yes, but are we saying anything that interests them?"*

Our request to State Department officials is this - *find something to say that interests North Korea ... please.*

***Department of Defense***

~ DPAA resumed the in-person annual family update in July this year. 406 family members attended the meetings. The briefing was scheduled a week early to coincide with the Korean War Memorial's Wall of Remembrance dedication.



It was announced that Johnie Webb, long a part of both DPMO and DPAA, has retired. Johnie was the U.S. military commander of the first Vietnam field mission in 1985. He worked to identify missing and unidentified U.S. servicemen for more than 40 years.

**~ Korean War Identification Project / Disinterment of Unknowns / Punchbowl Cemetery, Hawaii**

Phases 1-3 of the plan are complete. As of September 1st, there have been 12 ids from Phase One and 13 identifications from Phase Two. **26 families have found closure.**

More ids may be coming there soon. No identifications have been reported for

Phase Three. Analysis continues on remains that have not yet been identified. *(Note: The Coalition is looking into what issues might be holding up further identifications from these disinterments.)*

Part one of Phase 4 (Chosin Reservoir/36 disinterments) is complete. Part two of Phase 4 will begin in October (Taegu area of the Pusan Perimeter). Phase 5 (Seoul area) will be delayed until October 2023. *(Note: This is an unusually long period between phases. Explanations have varied. The Coalition is pursuing further information.)*

The following link will take you to DPAA's information page on the full program:  
[https://www.dpaa.mil/Portals/85/Korean%20War%20Disinterment%20Project%20Phases\\_1.pdf](https://www.dpaa.mil/Portals/85/Korean%20War%20Disinterment%20Project%20Phases_1.pdf)

~ **U.S.–Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs (USRJC)** - Research in records of Russia's 64th Fighter Aviation Group continues by DPAA-affiliated (Russian) researchers based in Moscow. *(Note: This research has continued despite high level political contention between Russia and the U.S. This is a model that will hopefully be applied to North Korea/U.S. relations.)*



***North Korea***

~ The last U.S. communication with the North Korean Army was March 2019.  
 ~ North Korea's 2018 unilateral remains return (55 boxes) included an estimated 250 individuals. Up to 160 are believed to be U.S. service members. 82 U.S. soldiers have been identified. **82 families have found closure.** Remains of 81 individuals are still being analyzed for identification.



***South Korea***

~ In May, an investigation was completed involving three loss incidents in South Korea. *(Note: Results of these actions have not been reported.)*  
 ~ MAKRI (SK's DPAA) continues demining and expanding its DMZ operations, including White Horse Hill. DPAA will be involved in these operations.

***China***

~ In a 2008 agreement, Chinese archivists were to research their Korean War records for information that included U.S. P.O.W.s and air losses inside North Korea. To date, China has not shared information in these critical areas. The President has reportedly tasked the newly appointed U.S. Ambassador to China, Robert Nicholas Burns, with moving research forward.



**Cold War Session**

Megan Marx

Amongst the families who have lost a loved one in the Cold War, there is a poignancy that is palpable. At the Cold War Families breakout session, family members spoke about their efforts to research what happened to their loved ones. They described receiving pages and pages of heavily redacted reports, blank pages essentially, that provided them with no answers.

Officials moderating the session acknowledged the enduring frustration these families have experienced from

one generation to the next. They spoke in generalities of their efforts to engage with officials in countries that we still don't officially have communications with, in an effort to locate these missing Americans. They gave away no indication that they were any closer to finding any of them. And the meeting ended with no resolution, no further consolation for these families.

*Ensign Dwight Angell went missing on January 18, 1953. His P2V-5 Neptune, with thirteen crew members, was hit by anti-aircraft fire while on a surveillance mission flying along the coast of China.*

### *The Cold War*

One hundred forty-seven Americans went missing while flying intelligence missions during the Cold War. They were lost during thirty-nine U.S. military and civilian air losses along the periphery of the former Soviet Union and China. Over the years, there have been 21 identifications. 126 men remain missing.

The U.S./Russia Joint Commission (USRJC), led by DPAA's Joint Commission Support Division (JCSD), investigates air losses between 1950 and 1965. Since 1992, U.S. analysts have worked with Soviet-era veterans, Russian government officials, and archival researchers to gather data on fourteen separate incidents. The USRJC is still planning for a previously postponed recovery mission at a cemetery near Vladivostok, Russia. The site may correlate to a 1951 U.S. Navy aircraft Cold War loss. A 1950 Navy air loss over the Baltic Sea is being investigated with a Swedish partner team. China investigated a Cold War case and shared their findings with DPAA in January. These findings were shared with the families during the July briefing.



Neptune P2V

Most Cold War losses occurred over water. While answers to the missing men's fate may be difficult to determine, family members would like their loved one's sacrifice to be officially acknowledged with the Purple Heart medal. If your loved one is among these Cold War missing, and you would like to join in the effort, please contact the *Coalition*. We would like to work with you. (coalitionoffamilies@gmail.com)

### *Project Recover Meeting*

Teri Mumley, Megan Marx



We had the privilege of meeting Derek Abbey from *Project Recover* in August, thanks to Rick Downes from the *Coalition of Families of Korean & Cold War POW/MIAs*. *Project Recover* is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to bringing American MIAs home.

Our loved ones were on the crew of a Navy Neptune P2V that was shot down over the straits of Formosa on January 18, 1953. In the 70 years since, there has been no return home of the men missing from this incident or their remains.



Derek listened to our story intently, with the patience and understanding of someone who has heard and appreciates the stories of family members of the missing many times before. He described the services *Project Recover* offers, the process they use to determine if a case has any likelihood of resulting in identifying remains, and the documentation they use to initiate cases.

We were impressed with Derek's compassion, his dedication, and the integrity that he approaches this work with. He made no promises and acknowledged the social and political realities that can interfere with recovery work, in addition to the geographic and technical limitations that they can encounter. The work of Derek Abbey and his team at *Project Recover* gives us some hope that our loved ones may one day be successfully returned home.

*Project Recover* has completed over 60 missions in 20 countries, locating over 60 aircrafts associated with 200+ MIAs. Currently they have over 700 actionable cases in their database and 3,000+ MIAs associated with ongoing investigations. (www.projectrecover.org/)

*AD3 Lloyd Smith, Jr. and Ensign Dwight Angell went missing on January 18, 1953. Their P2V-5 Neptune, with thirteen crew members, was hit by anti-aircraft fire while on a surveillance mission flying along the coast of China. There are accounts of AD3 Smith being a P.O.W.*

**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.

**\* *Advocacy / Congress***

The *Coalition* uses the week of DPAA's annual briefing to also schedule meetings with Congressional offices. This year, the meetings were both virtual and in person. Our primary 'asks' were for Congressional offices to 1) reach out to the State Department about broadening its approach to engaging North Korea, 2) contacting the Defense Department about conflicting in-house authority issues regarding group disinterments of Unknowns, and 3) supporting H.R. 3446 /Peace on the Korean Peninsula legislation.

(See page 3)

We were able to expand the number of meetings by teaming with *Women Cross DMZ* and the *American Friends Service Committee*, organizations seeking peace on the Korean peninsula. Meetings continue online, which opens possibilities for all family members to work on behalf of their loved one right from home. Please contact the *Coalition* for info on what you can do or what you might say. These are wonderful opportunities to multiply the way we all can empower the mission.



[coalitionoffamilies@gmail.com](mailto:coalitionoffamilies@gmail.com)

**\* *Advocacy / Air Loss Campaign***

The *Coalition* has renewed the effort to locate known U.S. air loss sites inside North Korea and learn what happened to the crews. The prospect is being raised with potential third party collaborators.



**\* *Advocacy / State Department***

The *Coalition* sent letters to each office of the State Department's bureau carrying out the Administration's North Korea foreign policy. The letters asked about the Administration's policy involving missing Korean War American servicemen. Five offices were contacted. To date, no one from these offices has replied. We will begin reaching out again, with Congressional support.

**\* *Advocacy/Outreach / Korea Peace Conference***

In May, the *Coalition* joined twenty-five other non-governmental organizations for a three day conference hosted by *Women Cross DMZ* and the *Korea Peace Now Grassroots Network* at the Rockefeller Pocantico Center in NY. The focus was to assess the state of U.S. policy on North Korea and brainstorm ways that non-governmental organizations can help move the peace process along in Korea.



***Colleen's 10K Run for the Missing Men***

An opportunity to support the *Coalition* is being presented by Colleen Moore, who will run in the Veterans Day 10K on November 6 in Washington, DC.

*"I'm raising funds to support accounting and recovery of American service members who remain missing in action from the Korean and Cold Wars because I truly believe in their mission."*



Colleen is the Advocacy Director for *Women Cross DMZ*, an organization working toward peace on the Korean Peninsula.

*"The U.S. working with North Korea to recover and identify remains of service members is one concrete way to*

*transform U.S.-North Korea relations — and conversely, working for peace with North Korea will help this mission to recover remains."*

The *Coalition*, *Women Cross DMZ*, and other non-profit organizations join our complementary missions to form a broader, stronger voice.



*"As someone who lost her father at the young age of 2, I cannot imagine not having closure on losing a parent."*

Support Colleen's effort and the *Coalition* by donating to her Veteran's Day Run through the *Coalition's* website.: <https://www.coalitionoffamilies.org/colleen--10k-dc-run-11622.html>

**Membership**

The *Coalition* relies on membership donations to pursue the 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/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.

Donations are tax deductible.

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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