Dear Representative Hice,

Thank you for your June 28, 2019, letter requesting information about the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency’s (DPAA) efforts to account for Department of Defense personnel missing from past conflicts. While your letter did not reach DPAA until late July, we appreciated the opportunity to meet with Committee staff on August 8th.

I am pleased to report DPAA has identified 32 service members from the July 27, 2018, repatriation of 55 boxes containing purported remains of U.S. service members from North Korea. With DNA analysis recently completed for all of the repatriated remains, we expect to make more identifications over the coming months, after which the respective service casualty offices will notify the families. This analysis revealed the remains to be associated with 250 individuals, of whom 170 are of non-Asian ancestry. Furthermore, of this 170, only 20 had been previously accounted for, leaving the potential for many more Korean War Gold Star families to receive long-sought answers.

I have enclosed responses to the specific questions raised in your letter. Thank you for your support of DPAA’s noble humanitarian efforts, and we look forward to working with you and the Committee.

Very respectfully,

[Signature]
Kefly McKeague
Director

Enclosures:
As stated

cc:
The Honorable Stephen Lynch
Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security

Approved for Public Release: Distribution is Unlimited
1. A detailed accounting of U.S. service member remains that are recoverable from each conflict.

DPAA has a methodical, continuous case categorization process for determining how to manage the large number of losses from designated past conflicts. All cases fall into one of four categories.

- Active Pursuit: Cases with sufficient information to justify research, investigation, or recovery operations. These are the focus of DPAA’s Strategic Plan, the priority of annual operation plans, and allocation of resources.

- Deferred: Cases that have no new and/or viable leads, or have restrictions to site access which make field operations impractical.

- Non-recoverable: Cases that have negligible potential for accounting, such as where remains were lost deep at sea, cremated, and/or systematically destroyed. This assessment is based on historical research, scientific analysis, and the limits of current technology. Categorizing a case as non-recoverable does not account for the individual.

- Under Review: Cases that have not yet been placed in one of the above categories.

This process is dynamic and cases in the Active Pursuit, Deferred and Non-recoverable categories may move to another category, if additional information about the case is found. As of September 3, 2019, there are 82,018 DoD personnel unaccounted for from World War II through Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. DPAA assesses the remains of 39,009 are possibly recoverable. A chart listing the number of possibly recoverable remains and the number of unaccounted-for personnel in each case category, by conflict and military service, is attached.

2. An explanation of the process by which DoD and DPAA collaborate with foreign countries in identifying and recovering U.S. service member remains, including but not limited to Vietnam, Japan, and North Korea.

- Strong host nation support is essential in the 46 foreign countries in which DPAA typically operates. These countries recognize the humanitarian nature of DPAA’s efforts, which also serve as a tool of diplomacy and engagement for the respective U.S. Ambassador.

- DPAA has a full-time detachment based in Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam that works very closely with its counterpart, the Vietnamese Office for Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP), which is comprised of officials from the Ministries of National Defense, Foreign Affairs, and Public Security. They assist DPAA in locating and interviewing Vietnamese witnesses to U.S. loss incidents, accompany DPAA investigators on missions, arrange for local labor to assist in excavation and recovery operations, and conduct unilateral recovery operations. The U.S. and Vietnam recently commemorated the 30th anniversary of sustained cooperation on this issue. DPAA has similar relationships in the Lao People’s
Democratic Republic’s with the Lao POW/MIA Team and in Kingdom of Cambodia with the Kingdom of Cambodia POW/MIA Committee.

– The Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare (MHLW) is the Government of Japan’s lead for research, recovery, repatriation, and identification of Japan’s war dead. DPAA exchanges information, maintains dialogue, and develops synchronization with the Embassy of Japan in Washington, MHLW officials, and select Japanese non-governmental organizations regarding U.S. and Japanese World War II personnel accounting efforts. If necessary, DPAA works with MHLW to request permission to investigate, locate, and recover remains of missing American servicemen located in Japan or on Japanese territory.

– DPAA works very closely with the Republic of Korea’s (RoK) Ministry of National Defense Agency for Killed-In-Action Recovery and Identification (MAKRI). This agency was established in 2000 as a temporary team and in 2007, became a permanent Ministry of National Defense agency. One of DPAA’s predecessor organization was instrumental in helping to develop MAKRI and DPAA routinely works with them on unilateral and joint recovery operations in the RoK, particularly in areas where U.S. and RoK losses are co-located. MAKRI has also turned over to DPAA remains of DoD personnel they recovered during their operations. Similarly, DPAA has turned over to MAKRI RoK remains recovered during U.S. operations.

– DPAA does not currently conduct operations in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). The joint statement by President Trump and Chairman Kim issued at the June 12, 2018, Summit in Singapore included the commitment to repatriate and recover Korean War remains from the DPRK. The repatriation of 55 boxes containing purported remains of U.S. service members on July 27, 2018, is hopefully just the first step in fulfilling that commitment. DPAA scientists immediately began forensic testing of these remains, including DNA analysis, and have identified 32 service members to date. DPAA recently completed DNA analyses on the remains and have determined the boxes contained the remains of 250 individuals, of which 170 are Western and 80 Asian. With DNA analyses completed, DPAA expects to complete many more identifications over the coming months. As identifications are made, DPAA informs the respective service casualty offices, who notify the respective families. Since the 2018 Summit, DPAA has communicated with the Korean People’s Army (KPA) on several occasions to try to arrange an agreement for the resumption of field operations. Although the KPA was not willing to meet to complete the arrangement for field operations in 2019, DPAA has the 2020 proposal ready and remains open to meeting with KPA officials to arrange joint investigations and recoveries in 2020.

– Additionally, DPAA has been actively conducting forensic analysis and making identifications of remains contained in 208 boxes previously turned over by the DPRK in the early 1990s and those recovered from the DPRK during DoD field operations conducted from 1996 to 2005. Through this ongoing effort, DPAA has identified 153 service members from the 208 boxes and 156 service members from the remains recovered during the 10 years of joint recovery operations. Interestingly, 38 service members were identified both from remains contained in the 208 boxes and recovered during field in the DPRK.
DPAA is disinterring and identifying remains of Korean War Unknowns (representing about 10 percent of the Korean War unaccounted-for) from the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP) in Hawaii. Since 1999, DPAA and its predecessors have disinterred 306 caskets and identified the remains of 132 service members. In an effort to streamline the disinterment process, last year DPAA devised a methodical, sequenced, and phased plan to disinter all remains of the Korean War Unknowns in the NMCP. The plan was approved and briefed to Korean War family members in August 2018, and disinterments of the remaining 652 Unknowns began in the fall of 2018.

DPAA’s Korean War Disinterment Plan has seven phases and is expected to take five to seven years to complete, based on the schedule agreed to with the NMCP and capacity of DoD laboratories. Phases are grouped by Korean geographic region based on individual loss and/or remains recovery circumstances (including loss location, timing of loss, and/or circumstances of remains return). The phasing and order of disinterment were carefully considered to ensure efficient use of Agency resources and to expeditiously provide answers to the greatest number of families. DPAA completed the first phase of this plan in March and began the second phase in mid-June.

3. An explanation of the process by which DoD and DPAA collaborate in identifying and recovering U.S. service member remains with the following entities:

a. The Armed Forces Medical Examiner System and Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory:

The Armed Forces Medical Examiner System – Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFMES-AFDIL) provides all DNA testing and reporting services and is the sole DoD DNA laboratory tasked with current and past conflicts human identification efforts. Certified by the ANSI National Accreditation Board, they work very closely with the Service Casualty Offices to collect DNA reference samples from suitable family members and with DPAA’s identification laboratory to analyze DNA samples extracted from remains. With DNA serving as a major line of evidence, AFMES-AFDIL analysis is crucial to a large number of DPAA’s identifications.

b. U.S. Indo-Pacific Command; and c. U.S. European Command:

DPAA works closely with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. European Command while operating in their areas of responsibility. Additionally, each command provides a significant number of active duty personnel to augment DPAA’s personnel on investigation and recovery missions. These short-term augmentees from critical skillsets, such as explosive ordnance disposal technicians, medics, and linguists, for which DPAA lacks sufficient organic capacity.

d. Defense Intelligence Agency:

The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) support DPAA by responding to formal information requirements submitted through established IC processes. DIA directly supports DPAA efforts in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia through its longstanding Stony Beach program which provides strategic debriefing capabilities. Stony Beach analysts directly
support DPAA field missions by assisting and conducting case investigations and analysis for unaccounted-for DoD personnel in those countries.

e. Military Service Organizations:

DPAA works very closely with the casualty and mortuary affairs offices of each of the Military Departments. These offices are DoD’s official conduit for information flowing to and from families of the missing. The casualty and mortuary offices are crucial in DPAA’s efforts to locate suitable family members to collect DNA reference samples for comparison with DNA extracted from recovered remains. The Service Casualty Offices also are responsible for notifying family members when a service member’s remains have been identified. Additionally, these offices are responsible for making funeral/memorial arrangements and handling benefit and entitlement issues for the family.

Though not part of the DoD, DPAA works very closely with organizations representing families of those lost in past conflicts and Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs). DPAA maintains close contact with leaders from the major family organizations -- National League of Families of POW/MIA, Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs, and the Korea-Cold War Families of the Missing so they may keep their membership apprised of agency efforts. The family leaders also provide DPAA key insights and guidance on many outreach and policy efforts. DPAA leaders also regularly meet with the national leadership of major VSOs such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Korean War Veterans Association. Also, the VSOs routinely invite DPAA leaders to brief their membership at their national conventions. Lastly, each quarter, DPAA hosts a telephone conference call with representatives from VSOs and family organizations. During these conference calls, DPAA provides information about recently completed and upcoming agency activities, operations, and events.

4. An update on DPAA’s effort, pursuant to its Memorandum of Arrangement with the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, to identify and recover American servicemembers missing on World War II Indo-Pacific battlefields.

The Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare (MHLW) is the Government of Japan’s lead organization for the research, recovery, repatriation, and identification of Japan’s war dead with the Ministry of Defense (MOD) supporting logistically. At the end of WWII, the Japanese had 2.4 million missing war dead on Indo-Pacific battlefields. MHLW currently assesses Japan has approximately 1.12 million still missing, of which 600,000 are assessed to be recoverable. Outside of China, their greatest concentration of missing ground losses are: the Philippines (369,000); Papua New Guinea (77,000); and the Solomon Islands (60,000).

Currently, DPAA and MHLW are sharing annual operations/activity schedules which enable both sides to ensure sufficient coordination in those countries where DPAA assesses American remains are potentially collocated or commingled with Japanese war dead. Both scientific staffs also conduct a Joint Forensic Review (JFR), prior to remains repatriation, to ensure no U.S. remains are inadvertently cremated by the Japanese. DPAA and MHLW have conducted JFRs in
Palau, the Solomon Islands, Kiribati (Tarawa), and will soon be implementing them in Papua New Guinea.

Additionally, DPAA’s scientific staff is providing advice to MHLW on establishing field forensic processes and DNA and stable isotope testing that will help Japan distinguish human remains of Asian or Japanese ancestry from those of European ancestry.

Although DPAA does not believe there are large numbers of missing Americans among Japanese war dead, JFRs and scientific exchanges will improve the Japanese finding U.S. remains as they have in the past and certainly lead to improved site and remains preservation.
## Possibly Recoverable Remains of Unaccounted-For U.S. Personnel from WW II through OIF

Information Current as of September 3, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Air Force</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Army Air Forces</th>
<th>Coast Guard</th>
<th>Marine Corps</th>
<th>Merchant Marine</th>
<th>Navy</th>
<th>Civilian</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>1,181</td>
<td>17,515</td>
<td>8,992</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>2,828</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>7,642</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>39,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II</td>
<td>11,342</td>
<td>8,992</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>2043</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>7379</td>
<td>549</td>
<td></td>
<td>30,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Pursuit</td>
<td>3494</td>
<td>4,033</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1395</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3885</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred</td>
<td>4754</td>
<td>1,170</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1113</td>
<td>249</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under Review</td>
<td>3094</td>
<td>3,789</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>2381</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold War</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under Review</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean War</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>5779</td>
<td></td>
<td>629</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>156</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Pursuit</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1078</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>4699</td>
<td></td>
<td>593</td>
<td>146</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under Review</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam War</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>394</td>
<td></td>
<td>156</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>1099</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Pursuit</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>352</td>
<td></td>
<td>146</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation Desert Storm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under Review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation Iraqi Freedom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under Review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>