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House of Representatives  
Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Military Personnel  
Committee Hearing

Rep. Susan A. Davis Holds a Hearing on Oversight and Status of Prisoner of War-Missing in Action Activities

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES, SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY  
PERSONNEL HOLDS A HEARING ON OVERSIGHT AND STATUS OF POW-MIA  
ACTIVITIES

JULY 10, 2008

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WITNESSES:

REAR ADMIRAL DONNA CRISP (USN),

COMMANDER,

JOINT POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND

CHARLES RAY,

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY,

POW/MISSING PERSONNEL AFFAIRS,

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DAVIS: (OFF-MIKE)... order. And I want to thank our witnesses  
for coming. We certainly appreciate you're being here with us. We  
know this is a very important topic.

Our hearing today focuses on the status of POW/MIA activities, which this subcommittee has been tasked with overseeing. The last subcommittee oversight hearing on POW/MIA activities was back in October of 1998, 10 years ago.

However, while the subcommittee did not hold hearings in the intervening years, it has not forgotten its oversight responsibility, and nor has it been sitting idly by on this issue. And I know certainly that the ranking chair, Mr. McHugh, has been involved in this discussion over the last number of years as well. And so we look forward to the discussion.

The subcommittee put forward a number of initiatives which have become law. For example, it is the sense of Congress that the United States should pursue every lead and otherwise maintain a relentless and thorough quest to completely account for the fates of those members of the armed forces who are missing or otherwise unaccounted for.

The Department of Defense is required to maintain a minimum level of personnel and budget resources for POW/MIA programs. The secretary of defense is required to submit a consolidated budget justification display that includes prior year and future year funding for specified organizations supporting POW/MIA activities of the Department of Defense as part of the president's annual budget request.

And the committee increased funding for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command by \$7.5 million and the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office by \$200,000 above the president's budget request for fiscal year 2008.

So suffice to say, the subcommittee remains dedicated to the full accounting of all American POW's and those missing in action. We owe it to their families, but most importantly, we owe it also to the men and women who are currently serving in uniform.

We know we have many priorities today. No question about that. So while we focus on those who are serving in harm's way today, we also want to give closure to those wonderful families who have sacrificed so much and whose loved ones still are missing and we want to recover.

So I want to welcome the Honorable Charles A. Ray, deputy assistant secretary of defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs, and Rear Admiral Donna L. Crisp, commander, Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command.

Ambassador, Admiral, welcome once again. I would ask that you testify in the order that I stated, and I know that my colleague, Mr. McHugh, also has some remarks to make.

Mr. McHugh?

MCHUGH: Thank you, Madam Chair. While I certainly want to add my words of welcome to our two distinguished witnesses, Mr. Ambassador, Admiral, thank you both for being here, and of course, equally important for the great job you do.

And I might add, I got to see a little bit of that firsthand in 2005 when I went to Vietnam and Laos and saw the good folks who do the very obviously important, but very dangerous mission of going into the field and joint field activities, the very risky effort they put forward to, as the chair stated so very correctly.

Something so important. This for over 30 years has been a

national priority for this government to achieve the fullest possible accounting of all those Americans missing or as prisoners of war as a result of conflicts of first the 20th and now the 21st century. And the challenges in achieving that fullest possible accounting are many, as I know you two know so very well.

Just the numbers -- I had a chance to review those, who yet today remain unaccounted for in spite of all the efforts for these past years -- for America's 20th century conflicts, are staggering: 74,374 from World War II; 8,55 from Korea, 127 from the Cold War, and 1,757 from the Vietnam War.

And even as we find today in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, where our forces operating and searching in areas that are present with our military and civilian personnel, there's no certain result. In short, this is very, very difficult and very, very hard work. But still, the fact of the matter is, there will be no fullest possible accounting with the cooperation of governments who, in the past, were not always our best of friends and allies. And getting China or North Korea or Vietnam or even Russia, by way of example, to open their archives, their lands, their waters and people to research and discover or persuading them to make the unilateral revelations which we happen to believe are critical, and we happen to believe as well they're very capable of doing, requires more than just a DOD effort.

At least in my judgment, I think it takes an integrated national strategy involving both the executive and the legislative branches of our government. And that kind of integrated effort is absolutely essential.

And in that regard, I want to pay my compliments to the gentlelady, the distinguished chair for having the foresight and the concern to call this hearing. And clearly, our two witnesses today, as you know, Madam Chair, have the two largest DOD organizations involved in the accounting effort.

And I think while both organizations have come in for their fair share of criticism over the years without DPMO and without JPAC, or organizations like them, we'd have no progress at all, it seems to me, toward that very important national objective of the fullest possible accounting.

In know in the past several years, as you noted, Madam Chair, this subcommittee has been concerned that while the accounting missions being assigned are assumed by both organizations were expanding, the resources that were being provided were not. And the chairlady cited some of the increases and some of the beneficial effect that this Congress has tried to have.

But I think it's our view that -- certainly my view that in the competition for limited budget dollars, neither DOD nor the Pacific Command have been fully committed to fully resourcing the accounting effort. And I would hope today's hearing will provide us with the opportunity to further examine those resourcing questions, and of course looking forward to the discussion today that might as well help get us some perspective on what kinds of adjustments we can make to the strategy and approach both DOD and JPAC believe are needed. So thank you, again, for being here. And Madam Chair, again, with my appreciation to you for holding this hearing. I yield back

and look forwards to the testimony.

DAVIS: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. McHugh. Ambassador Ray, would you like to start?

RAY: Thank you. Madam Chair, Mr. McHugh, distinguished members of the subcommittee, I'd like to thank you very much for the opportunity to appear today to update you on the current state of our mission to account for the nation's missing service personnel. As the deputy assistant secretary of defense for Prisoners of War, Missing Personnel Affairs, I'm responsible for policy oversight of this mission and for carrying out those policies established by the secretary of defense. Our worldwide team is made up of more than 600 specialists, men and women who are recognized as top professional in their areas of science, intelligence, historical analysis, public outreach, family support and foreign area analysis. My team here in Washington drafts the policies which will lead us to the fullest possible accounting of our missing. We negotiate with foreign governments, draft and coordinate agreements and arrangements throughout the U.S. government.

It also declassifies and releases information to MIA families, to the public and to the Congress, and provides support and assistance to our field operational agencies.

Coming out of my final combat tour in the Vietnam War in the early '70s, I was a bit skeptical, and I really had no expectation that our government would keep up the search for our missing, many of whom were personal comrades of mine.

I thought maybe it would be done for a couple of years, but certainly not for more than three decades and beyond. I am happy now to sit here before you over 30 years later and say that mission continues. And the personal commitment by our worldwide team continues.

Our 600 team members are posted in Washington, in Hawaii, in Rockville, Maryland, in Texas, in Russia, Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. Their travels take them to remote and inhospitable former battlefields, where encounters with diseases, snakes and unexploded ordinance confirm that our mission today is not without risk. Nine Americans have lost their lives while pursuing the effort to account for our missing from past conflicts.

Our mission of accounting for the missing is the embodiment of this nation's commitment to those it sends into harm's way. We're keeping that promise to every soldier, sailor, airman and Marine, and to their families, that should you fall in battle, this government will make every effort to return you to the loving arms of your family.

For example, of the more than 2,500 who were once missing from the Vietnam War, our team has accounted for 889 and returned them home for burial with full military honors. Another 1,757 are still unaccounted for from that conflict, of which the remains of more than 650 we deem no longer recoverable.

There is, in addition, another 127 from the Cold War period, almost 8,100 from the Korean War, and more than 74,000 from World War II. It's comprised of nearly 84,000 from these conflicts who are still unaccounted for.

And while we may be pleased with what we've been able to

accomplish, all of us constantly seek ways to improve our work to locate, identify and return these heroes to their families as quickly as we can.

In that regard, we face the challenges of time, the environment, disappearing witnesses and a loss of possible crash or burial sites from conflicts of more than 60 years ago.

We are always exploring options, looking for ways that we can carry out this mission better and faster. We owe that, at least, to missing service members and to their families.

You only have to visit the Central Identification Lab at JPAC in Hawaii to know what advances their scientists have brought to the world of forensic anthropology. As I note in all of our presentations to the families of the missing, and to our veterans, it's not CIA Miami. This is the real world where JPAC scientists and team members don't have the luxury of writing a script so that the case is solved in less than an hour.

They're the ones who are forced to work with the cards they've been dealt. And while I don't pretend to be expert in the advances in science that they're responsible for, I do know they're always leaning forward, trying to do more and more, all in the name of that missing serviceman.

You'll soon hear from Rear Admiral Donna Crisp, JPAC's commander, about how her unit for field operations carries out the Department of Defense policies. I've never met a senior officer of the United States military who set the bar so high for her people and for our mission.

Admiral Crisp and I confer almost daily on one issue or another, but I believe I'm safe in saying that every conversation, every single conversation, is ultimately about the family members and how we might do our work better and faster.

Even though we all speak proudly of what we've been able to accomplish with your help, it's simply not acceptable that many family members have had to wait decades for answers. I wish it were otherwise, but realities being what they are, we're pushing the envelope every day of every year.

To take advantage of the brightest minds in our field, I formed a senior study group of senior government experts to advise me on the way ahead in accounting for missing Americans.

Put simply, I wanted to be sure that every agency which had equities in the personnel accounting mission had an opportunity to periodically review where we're going and where we've been. The core membership of this group includes my organization, Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office, JPAC, the Armed Forces DNA Identification Lab, the Life Sciences Equipment Lab, the U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. European Command, each of the military services and the joint staff.

The senior study group principles, those of flag or general rank, are represented at our periodic meetings by colonels, navy captains or senior civilians. We meet not less than twice a year and discuss issues with the goal of making recommendations to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the accounting mission.

This group gives Admiral Crisp and me the benefit of input from a wide range of experts and policy makers. But more importantly, it

forces all of us to look at the future and seek to make wise decisions as we move this mission forward.

And while I know the primary focus of these hearings is accounting for the missing from past conflicts, we must continue to look to the future as well to be better prepared to deal with the results of current and future conflicts.

One of our responsibilities is that of establishing and overseeing U.S. policies on personnel recovery. In the current conflicts personnel recovery saves lives. It brings Americans home again alive.

It's far broader than just combat search and rescue, as it involves a wide range of options available to the government to bring our people out of harm's way, out of captivity, and out of isolation behind hostile lines.

At some point in the not too distant future, we have to be prepared to make a transition from current conflict accounting, to include personnel recovery, to post-conflict accounting. And if we don't make the right decisions, the right policies now, then I don't believe we're living up to the promises to our men and women in uniform or to their families.

I'd like now to address briefly our work around the globe. In a general sense, I believe our work in Southeast Asia goes well. We enjoy a continued positive relationship with Cambodia, with their senior leaders and other officials cooperating in every way possible to help us accomplish our mission.

We are at a point where we will gradually begin reducing operations there because we've exhausted existing leads. As always, we will continue to review individual cases and to reinvestigate any where additional leads offer new information.

We'd like to see a fast pace of progress in Laos, but we won't be deterred. Recent changes in some key personnel have not appeared to have a negative impact on our work.

We know the 25th anniversary this year of joint U.S./Lao cooperation, and it's theoretically possible that some of our younger team members who are working this issue there weren't even born when the first U.S./Lao team carried out its mission.

And to some, to me definitely, that is the embodiment of our motto, keeping the promise. Both the families and the government teams are now drawing from a younger generation. The commitment and the determination remain firm.

Both the U.S. and Laos have now agreed to exchange defense attaches, a step in our relationship which I think will contribute positively toward the effective use of our resources there. Now there still exists a backlog of cases to be worked in Laos, but we're working to address this with the Lao government on a continuing basis. Our working relationship with Vietnam is showing steady progress. The economic relationship between the two countries continues to grow. Yet as we saw last month, the POW/MIA issue remains a key area of discussion in every meeting with Vietnamese officials.

Military to military exchanges continue to evolve, offering yet another avenue to improve the bilateral relationship. And I believe this can only benefit our mission.

This year, we will hold a 20-year assessment of U.S. and

Vietnamese cooperation. We'll continue to work to bring the benefits of the evolving bilateral relationship to bear on the accounting mission to make it more effective and more efficient.

So what does the future hold? To put the Vietnam War in context, it's been more than 40 years since the first U.S. losses there. By comparison, 40 years after World War II, we were in the Reagan administration.

The world changed dramatically in those years. Former enemies became allies. We see that same evolution in Southeast Asia, and as our relations improve, it should aid our accounting efforts.

As dramatic as those changes were following World War II, since Vietnam, we've seen profound movement on our issue, including the rising profile of World War II and Korean War families, and more recently, the direct threats to our national security from terrorism. We're all certainly aware that the competition for resources within our government is fierce and something we have to deal with on virtually a daily basis. And while I think sometimes we exceed their expectations, the founding fathers intended that there be constraints on the executive branch, and that all branches of government function more effectively when there's coordination and cooperation among them. And we recognize, and I would like express my personal and professional appreciation for the longstanding interest and deep support for this mission by this subcommittee.

This coordination is especially important in activities relating to security and foreign affairs. Because while ours is a humanitarian mission not linked directly to other activities, we are affected by, and we do affect them.

Our activities, then, must be coordinated fully within the interagency community and with the Congress so that we proceed with full awareness of any impacts across the entire government. So that we humanitarian, we do not operate without limits.

Some of those limits are legal and constitutional, some are bureaucratic. But like budgetary constraints, they serve to shape our actions.

Our work continues in seeking to account for the missing from the Korean War and World War II. We negotiated an arrangement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to begin recovery operations there in the summer of 1996.

And since that time, as a result of annual negotiations, in 33 joint field operations, our teams recovered the remains believed to be those of 229 Americans. Of those, JPAC scientists have identified 61 and returned them to their families.

We temporarily suspended remains recovery operations in North Korea in the spring of 2005, and JPAC redirected more teams to South Korea and to other parts of the world. The forensic identification work in the lab continues, however, with the remains that were already recovered, and our teams continue to locate and identify the remains of servicemen lost during World War II in the South Pacific, in Central Europe, in South America and even in North America.

To the families of those missing from this war and others, we often see shock and amazement that the government has not forgotten their loved one's sacrifices.

I'd like to close my formal statement today by reaffirming our

commitment to keeping our MIA's families fully informed of the work we're doing on their behalf.

All of our investigative case files are available to family members for review, either in person or by mail. Where certain intelligence information may be classified, we declassify it for them. And each month we send a team of 30 to 40 of our specialists into hometowns around the country where these families live to update them on their cases and to make our scientists and analysts available to them for questions. In addition, we meet annually in Washington with Korea and Cold War families and with Vietnam War families.

Through these two programs, we've met face to face since 1995 with more than 14,000 family members. We take very seriously our obligation to keep the families, the American public, and the Congress fully informed about what some consider our sacred mission.

I appreciate the opportunity you have given us today, and I will be pleased to respond to your questions. Thank you.

DAVIS: Thank you.

Admiral Crisp?

CRISP: Madam Chair, members of the committee, this is the first time I am coming before you as the commander of the Joint Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Command. I want to thank you for your support for personnel accounting.

And I also want to thank you for your support for the military in uniform, both abroad and at home, for civilians who have been lost in the field, or the veterans who focus on passionately returning their comrades back home, and for the families who have waiting so long for those that are missing to return. So thank you so much for your support.

As you heard from Ambassador Ray, JPAC is an integral part of the Department of Defense. It's a humanitarian mission, it's a global mission.

We research, we investigate, we recover and we identify military and civilians who gave their lives for our country and our freedom. We have a detachment in Thailand that provides logistic support for our detachment in Vietnam and Laos. Thailand also does the missions for Cambodia, India and Papua New Guinea.

We are also home to the world's largest skeletal forensic lab.

And this is a really great lab, a world-class lab. And just to show you how proud I am of them, they have just completed recredation on international standards by the American Society of Crime Labs with nothing wrong in the entire laboratory. So I'm real proud of them and I'm sure that you are as well.

JPAC currently has 354 personnel, both military and civilian, working on board. We have 251 military and 103 civilian.

We maintain a very high operational tempo. We do about 70 missions a year. That includes research and investigation missions, and the deployment tempo is 113 days average deploy time per employee. This year, we've gone to 15 countries to look for both World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. We've been to Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Papua New Guinea, Palau, the Solomon Islands, South Korea, Japan, Pagan Island, Canada, Belgium, Poland, Hungary, Germany and France.

As Ambassador Ray noted in his remarks, we talk together on a

daily basis. I seek his frank advice and our team, both JPAC and BPMO, work together for a unity of effort. Our whole focus is accounting for those missing in action.

DAVIS: Excuse me, Admiral Crisp, if I could just let you know, we have a vote in about 10 minutes. So if you could take about another four or five minutes, and then we're going to have to go vote and we'll come back.

CRISP: OK.

DAVIS: If it's possible to complete your remarks, that would be great, and then we'll come back for questions.

CRISP: OK. Basically, what we've done this year, in Vietnam we've done 46 missions, and 16 for World War II and five for Korea. We've done a lot of host nation work. We have an operational plan that's out that we're reviewing. JPAC coordinates with host nations, and also primary U.S. agencies to ensure mission success. In the past six months, we've done extensive bilateral discussions with many countries. We're very proud we're starting to go back to the Republic of China and do our very first missions with the Republic of India.

I can't overemphasize the support of the host nations. Wherever we go, they really want to help us find our ancestors that are missing from past conflicts.

In Cambodia, they set the standard. They are very cooperative. They're the blueprint by which other nations should follow.

Lao People's Democratic Republic, they have sustained cooperative for over 25 years. We have issues that we work through, but all in all, that is an incredible cooperative nation.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, we continue with a measured approach. We're marking our 20 years of regular operations, and in September we're hosting a meeting and we're going to basically look at reassessing everything we've done in the past and how we can do a better job in the future.

The Republic of Korea I work with closely. We have a similar organization called MACRAE that looks for 130,000 Koreans that were lost during the Korean War. I met last month with the vice minister of national defense, and we talked about a memorandum of understanding between MACRAE and ourselves and pledged that we would work closely with the Republic of Korea.

Papua New Guinea, I can't say enough of. What a wonderful group of people. They are always open and we spend time and we go into the field. They provide support, safety and security for our people. So basically, we are in constant with your 2000 congressional direction to work very closely with them, and I report back. They are fantastic people.

People's Republic of China, we've just restarted negotiations with them after five years of not going there. Again, we're working very hard with the support. We're focused on going into a mission in Dandong, which is for the Korean War. And so as soon as the Olympics are over, we will start back up again with negotiations with the Republic of China.

The Republic of India has embraced us coming there. We meet monthly and we are hoping to do several recoveries in 2009.

In Europe, although 78 percent of JPAC's work is in the Pacific

AOR, we do spend time in Europe. Much of it is burials and graves that people find. And so we send teams into the fields to work those. My commanders' priorities are basically safety first, safety for our teams and our people. That is always the most important. As Ambassador Ray mentioned, it's a dangerous business, and so if at any time I feel our troops are in danger, I will call off a mission, and I have already done that once this year.

Quality of life and quality of service. You can't beat having a great working environment. And so my focus has been to ensure that the people of JPAC have good office spaces, have a good working environment, a place where they're proud to bring their parents and their families.

Done a lot of innovative things, doing military to civilian conversion. I'm studying the pay structure under the National Security Personnel System.

I'm looking at recruiting and retention for our laboratory and our scientists. I want to make sure that everything that you have approved for the Department of Defense to do in anything that deals with human resource management, we are going to use all of those enablers to ensure that JPAC has the finest staff that we can have. Our headquarters building is on track, and we really appreciate that. We're split up on three different bases. We got people in tent trailers, but the bottom line is, you've given us the money for the design. We're going ahead with that. The MILCON is on track, and so again, I appreciate your support.

Continuous improvement is an area that I love to focus in personally. And so Ambassador Ray and I have really embraced the challenge of looking at every single facet of personnel accounting, looking at it from a Lean Six Sigma kind of perspective of checking every function to make sure it's optimum and effective.

In the area of technology application, we have a geographic information, a system in a nutshell. We're taking all of the legacy data that has existed in people's files, and we're putting it together so that if you're in the field and you want to know information of a site you're going to, you can click a button and find out everything that's happened to include if there's any avian flu in that area.

Phase-two testing is a very old standard way of doing business in our anthropology, archaeology. We have just embraced it, and I think it's going to save us a lot of money and time.

In closing, thank you for having me here to address you. The two of us work together, and all we focus on is soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines, and dedicated civilians who gave their lives for our country so that we can bring them home.

So thank you very much for having me, and I look forward to your questions.

DAVIS: Thank you, Admiral Crisp and Mr. Ambassador. We're going to go vote. Members are going to have to rush down there really quickly. It could be about 40 minutes, 45 minutes. So we certainly appreciate your being here.

We wish we could have a hearing that was all together, but that doesn't always work for us. At least we got through your two presentations, and we appreciate that. We'll be back. Thank you.

(RECESS)

DAVIS: Well, thank you very much to everybody in the room. I know how warm it is in here, and we know it was a long -- I estimated about 45 minutes. Sorry, I was really off. Hard to tell. I just want to thank you again for your patience.

Ambassador Ray, why don't I just start with you. I think we'll have a few members coming in, but I'm afraid we've got some flights going and so members were not able to stay.

In 2007, the department sent to Congress a report regarding the organization, management and budgeting of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command. And it stated the department has implemented steps that resulted in the improvement of organization, management and budget of JPAC.

And I know you've been through a number of areas, but could you try and just very specifically and pointed, tell us what those were, what improvements you think in organization, management and budget occurred and whether or not they have begun some of those improvements and where you are in that process in the most significant areas that you would pinpoint for us?

And also, could you share with us the results of the review that look at decreasing the time between recovery and identification, and what recommendations came as a result of that review?

RAY: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

On the issue of what efficiencies we have instituted, on the one hand, the personnel accounting budget exhibit which we do has helped give us much more visibility across the community in the budgeting in terms of what's requested, what's needed and what's actually made available.

And it has enabled me to be more effective and responsive in advocating when there are the occasional budget difficulties.

The other area that we have made improvements, as I mentioned in my opening statement, is the institution of the Senior Study Group. What this has done has enabled us to apply expertise across the community, not only to the problems that have been identified in past communication with the committee and with other members of Congress, but to look forward at those things that might be problems in the future and to look at where we can find new efficiencies.

And these are some of the general areas where we've achieved some improvement in process. And as Admiral Crisp said, we've also begun the process of applying business methods to everything we do. And the Lean Six Sigma is just one.

I apply the -- my grandmother's common sense method is look at it, and if it ain't working, figure out a new way to do it, rather than do the same thing over and over again and look for a different result.

And on the second question, if I may, I would defer to Admiral Crisp on that, as the identification process is part of her command and she's much more, I think, qualified to address what efficiencies and changes have taken place in that area than I would be.

DAVIS: OK, thank you, that would be great. And I wanted to come back to just one of the budget comments ...

RAY: Yes, ma'am.

DAVIS: Well, go ahead.

CRISP: One of the two most important changes that we have done

as a department, the first one I would say was in the year 2006. And as a result of looking at the individuals that came out of Punchbowl, from the Korean War, where the remains had been covered with a powder, which destroyed DNA, (OFF-MIKE) did a considerable amount of research. And it allows you -- it is basically called the demineralization process. And let me explain it this way. If you were to look at a picture of a skeleton several years ago, you would see that you would have to have your giant leg bones, your femurs, and that would be your only bonds for 90 percent identification.

Now, after all the research and discoveries, mostly to try to figure out how to do the unknowns at Korea, your entire skeleton will give you a 90 percent identification. And instead of having to have a sample that's 2 grams, its 0.2 grams.

So that will accelerate the time between recovery and identification, particularly for the Vietnam War, where the pieces that you find are so small. So that's an innovation in science, particularly as we try to figure out Korean remains, that helps all of the Vietnam identifications.

For Korea itself, one of the things that the scientists said to me is, you know, we have these 208 boxes of remains, which are probably 400 people, but we have no place to lay them out. Our lab is so small, we just can't lay them out.

And so what the Navy has done is helped me find temporary space in Pearl Harbor. And I'm taking the entire floor of an old lab building and I am fixing it up so by October, the laboratory will have increased three times in size, and we will for the first time be able to lay out the remains from the Korean War, undisturbed on tables so the scientists can begin piecing together all of the people that were commingled remains.

So those are the two things that come to mind of innovative things that have happened in the last couple of years to decrease recovery and ID time.

DAVIS: Could you give us just a kind of a ballpark figure? I know it would it would differ between the wars and the time frame, but about how long does that take?

CRISP: I'll be honest with you: Some cases I see come in and are solved within a week, and that's if you're lucky enough to find a skull and a few teeth. Because if you can find that, you've got it made to identifying a person.

After that, it could take up to 10 years. Before, if it were just a tiny piece of bone and there was no way I could identify you, you would have been sitting there for years. So it's dependent on the work...

DAVIS: Now does the family reference...

CRISP: Family reference samples are very important because if you have a large enough sample of bones that you can get DNA out of it, and the family has given a reference sample, preferably through the maternal line, you can...

DAVIS: Is it preferably or it only to the maternal...

CRISP: We'll, I'll be honest to you, they are just now finding new ways of doing paternal, but it's not quite ready. So again, all of these struggles for the Korean War unknowns are producing incredible results for the entire country in DNA analysis.

But right now, I would say maternal reference. And so you would have to -- I'll show you how hard it would be. You might have to go to your grandmother's sister's cousins because if you didn't happen to have sisters, and your mother didn't happen to have sisters, you'd have to go to your grandma and start genealogically searching down another path.

So I realize some cases are easy, and some cases are a lot tougher. Some could take three years to just do the genealogical search to find all of your fourth and fifth cousins. So that's why it takes long on some cases. That...

DAVIS: Well, that's helpful. Because I had heard that it was just a very, very long time, and it...

CRISP: Well, it is. But I'll tell you, both Ambassador Ray and I, like we say, every process that we look at, we tear apart. So family reference samples is the same process.

You cut the -- you do the whole reference sample and then it goes through the services. They do genealogical searches, they find the individuals, they send the sample to AFTIL (ph).

And what the two of us are doing, again, through a Lean Six Sigma kind of approach, is OK, where does every sample go, who's got the sample, how long is it there, do they need more people, what do they need to get it done so there's no backlog?

So that's the kind of things that our junior officers and junior civilians are working together on.

DAVIS: And that's some of the liaison positions that help and work with the families in that case. OK, great, thank you.

Mr. Mesh (ph), I'll come back in a few minutes. Mr. McHugh? Some questions.

MCHUGH: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I, as somebody who lives on the Canadian border, I was interested to hear we had an operation in Canada. I thought maybe it was Benedict Arnold back in 1775, but I'm told it was a training mission off Newfoundland. Is that...

CRISP: Yes, sir.

MCHUGH: Just curious, was that successful?

CRISP: It's an under-order (ph) investigation and we haven't done it yet.

MCHUGH: Well, we wish you all the best.

CRISP: Thank you, sir.

MCHUGH: I talked about, as the chair did as well, about resourcing. Obviously, budgets are a difficult thing. They're never enough money to do all we'd like to do. Lean Six Sigma comes out of that recognition in part that you want to do all you can with whatever resources you have available.

Still, as we get the submissions for your activities, we're told that you are -- all your requirements are being fully funded. And yet, as we look through from '09 to fiscal year '13, and yet as we look at some of the realities, I really question if maybe we might go beyond full, if you are fully funded.

You're authorized for 18 field teams, but we're told you only have sufficient manning for 15. And the question I would have is, do the budgets from '09 to '013 provide for full manning of all 18 teams that we have available? If you want to respond to that, I've got some

other pertinent questions as well.

CRISP: The manpower authorizations are there. I would say 86 to 90 percent manning, 90 percent which would be in what we would call a C-1 category, a mission-ready category, is a good number.

I have never in my 34 year been in a command that was 100 percent manned without ever having a gap. And I have worked through several wars, Vietnam on forward.

So if you are a non-combat team and you are anywhere 86 and 92 percent manned, that would be what I would consider to be optimum in a wartime environment.

MCHUGH: Well, not to nitpick...

CRISP: Does that...

MCHUGH: Well, I understand what you're saying, and from a technical perspective, on a war basis, I guess that's pretty correct. But when you're talking about 18 or 20 divisions, a company here or a platoon there that is not rated C-1 is one thing.

But when you only have 18 field teams technically authorized to go out and to find the thousands of undiscovered remains that lack to operate at 100 percent becomes a little bit more important. Wouldn't you agree?

Well, is it a question of money, or just being able to recruit and get the people into the slot? Let's step beyond the percentage, et cetera. Why are there not 18, if there are not, slots available and funded through '13? What is the reason? You're not able to get those individuals, or you don't expect to have the money?

CRISP: It would not have to do with money, sir. There are probably a few captains' slots that are not filled at the '04 level, but that really doesn't have to do with money. It just deals with manning.

MCHUGH: So you're not immune from the end strength and deployment problems we're facing across the board?

CRISP: For the entire department, yes sir.

MCHUGH: OK, that's fair. As I look at the budgets from '09 through '13, that fully funded, or all requirements funded designation does not, of course, include North Korea.

Mr. Ambassador, in your opening comments, you used the phrase, "temporarily left"; someone stole my tab, but I believe it was May of '05. When are we going back? That was our decision. Let's concede for the moment it was done for good cause. But that was three years ago.

RAY: Sir, we are currently reviewing the circumstances, as all of us are aware, that have changed over the last few weeks, and are beginning the effort to get interagency discussions going to make an assessment of what our recommendation to the president and to the national authority would be if the situation continues to develop in a positive direction.

MCHUGH: Certainly given some of the declarations the North Koreans have been taken off the sponsor of state terrorism list, they've had some pretty good developments with respect to de-nuclearization, et cetera, et cetera.

I hope that the way in which we continue over the longer term to express -- and I'm speaking through you, not at you here, Mr. Ambassador -- I would hope the way we continue, if we choose to

express displeasure with some of the actions of the North Koreans are not placed on the backs of those families of those thousands of lost souls in the North Korean theater.

And I won't ask you to comment, but I'd be surprised if you didn't agree with that as well. And I hope we can re-examine the policy. But it gets us back to the question, what, for example, would happen if all of a sudden now that theater does become available to us, what do we do on the budgets?

Would you expect to be a part of any future supplemental request, or have you had an opportunity to think about that?

RAY: We're having discussions with the Office of the Defense Comptroller, actually address this issue. And when we prepared the first budget exhibit I believe two years ago, the decision was made then.

It was recognized that resumption of operations in North Korea would require a significant increase in the budget, that that would be funded. I think the additional amount was about \$14 million at that time.

That get adjusted as we continue to take another look at requirements. And it's an estimate, at best, because once we do go back in, of course, JPAC will have to go in and examine all of the equipment they left. The question of whether we have to replace all of the equipment we left in place will probably revise that. I would -- based on what I have been told by the comptroller, not assume that this would be a supplemental request, but that it would be funded out other DOD budget lines.

MCHUGH: OK, all right. But the recognition of more money would be essential is there. That's the important thing.

Madam Chair, if I may just one more quick budget question, and then I know you have others who want to question, obviously, Ms. Tsongas and Ms. Shea-Porter.

GAO took a look at this program and how it became directed, and of course, it's rooted in the effort to find all of those left behind in Vietnam. But over the years, through regulation and, to a lesser extent, through statute, it has obviously grown.

And now we're covering virtually every theater in which -- just about every theater Americans have found themselves in conflict on. Budgets are -- there's intra as well as interdepartmental politics afoot. And I don't necessarily mean that in a denigrating way. It's just -- it's a fight.

You are not specifically -- your current charge is not specifically legislated. Would it help in the budget fight, would it give you a seat closer to the table if in the discussion in allocation of resources with the department, you actually had a congressionally mandated charge to do the broader scope of what you're doing now?

RAY: It certainly would not be unwelcome if we had very clear mandates. But we look at what we're required to do and accept it clearly.

MCHUGH: Well, it might change your scope. That's not my objective, and it's not...

(CROSSTALK)

I'm just trying to say, would that give you and your budget people an additional tool to make the argument, you know, Congress has

told us to do this as well. Maybe we ought to have X dollars more.

RAY: I think it probably would. It wouldn't hurt.

MCHUGH: Well, maybe that's something we need to take a look at.

Thank you, I appreciate your responses, and thank you, Madam Chair.

DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. McHugh. Ms. Tsongas?

TSONGAS: I'd like to thank Chairwoman Davis for holding this important hearing. And I'd also like to thank our witnesses for being here today, and for the important work that you do.

We all know how families really do need to bring closure, and this allows them to do that, however, time consumer and lengthy it may be.

But I'd like to ask a question about our current conflicts, in particular, the war in Iraq. Because I happen to represent a district in which a young man has been missing for over a year.

On May 12, 2007, Sergeant Alex Jimenez of the 10th Mountain Division was ambushed south of Baghdad. There has been no information regarding his whereabouts since that time.

And on June 27, the U.S. Army changed his status from duty status, whereabouts unknown to missing or captured. Sergeant Jimenez, as I said, is from my district. I have met several times with his family, and you can imagine how difficult this past year has been. We can only all be fortified by the kind of inspirational capacity they've had to deal with this. He is one of three soldiers currently designated as missing, and we pray that each of these young men will return home safely.

I recognize that most of the work that JPAC and DPMO's work is focused on is past conflicts, and that we rightly regard unaccounted for personnel from our current conflicts as recovery missions. But DPMO is the lead agency for personnel recovery policy within the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Ambassador Ray, to the extent possible, could you elaborate on our current policies for recovery in Iraq, particularly given the unique nature of the conflict we're engaged in there?

RAY: Thank you, ma'am.

I am responsible for policy formulation for personnel recovery. The actual recovery operations in an active theater are the responsibility of the combatant commander, in this case, CENTCOM. We work very closely with them to ensure that they have all of the assets they need to do this. And to their credit, the fact that we only have three missing says that they are doing a very effective job.

What we are looking at is the phenomena that has been made clear in this current conflict, is that there is a point when personnel recovery becomes active combat theater personnel accounting. And we are currently working with CENTCOM primarily, but other theaters as well, to develop a policy that recognizes this overlap between accounting and recovery, and enables us to make a seamless transition to post-conflict accounting, if in fact the conflict ends and we haven't settled a case.

At this point, this is still very much a work in progress. We're using lessons learned from our historical accounting from Vietnam and other conflicts.

And I might add, we're also using the lessons we're learning from

the current conflict to help shape more efficient operations in our historical accounting as well.

TSONGAS: So as that transition is being made, how does that play itself out in the lives of these young men, so that we don't -- you know, we hear this so often between the transition from active duty to V.A. status, how so many people are sort of left in limbo for some time.

And I'm just wondering if the process remains engaged so that all appropriate action is taken to look for these young people, in spite of the fact that they've been missing for a year.

RAY: Our objective is that there will be no change in the tempo of trying to account for them, regardless of the status of the conflict. And that's why I said that we're working very hard to establish a seamless transition so that when someday it's declared that hostilities are ended and the combatant commander is no longer responsible, there will be no -- from the outside you will see no change in the effort to account for them.

TSONGAS: And what would you say the tempo is today in terms of the active seeking out and trying to discover their whereabouts?

RAY: It's very active. The briefings I get indicate that in many cases, some of the units on the ground are taking incredible risks to try and get information as to their whereabouts and status.

TSONGAS: Thank you.

DAVIS: Thank you. Ms. Shea-Porter?

SHEA-PORTER: Thank you. And thank you, Chairwoman, for this very important hearing, and thank you to the witnesses for coming. We all share our absolute -- a debt of gratitude to those who served, and to those who didn't come home, we have the debt that we need to find them and bring them. And I thank you for the work that you're doing for this.

I, too, have been very concerned about what's happening to those who are missing in action in Iraq, and I want to bring up Commander Speicher and ask how involved are your commands in locating him and the others who are still missing in action?

RAY: Thank you, ma'am. We currently are required, DPMO, to do a quarterly report to Congress on the efforts to account for Captain Speicher. And there are intelligence or information requirements that are active in CENTCOM and in other areas whenever there is an interrogation or interview with people.

All of these cases, to include Captain Speicher, are included as those elements that we seek information on. That is also a very active case.

SHEA-PORTER: OK. And I'm sure you're aware of a piece of legislation introduced in the House calling for a select committee on POW/MIA affairs. And both of you have made a career as members of the armed services.

Now this part of your job requires you to bring the remains of service members and heroes home to us. In your professional and personal opinion, do you believe that creating a select committee in Congress would benefit your mission or detract from it?

RAY: Ma'am, I have to -- there is recently a Department of Defense position provided to a member of Congress on that. We oppose the establishment of a select committee.

From a professional standpoint, I fear that such a committee would be a distraction, could cause us to have to diminish our efforts to our core mission as we respond to the requirements. And from my own, I have frequent contact, as do people from JPAC, with this committee.

We feel that the current level of interchange and oversight serves the purpose of ensuring that we are doing -- that we're following the congressional intent, and that we are doing what we can with available resources to serve the American people.

And so the bottom line is that, we oppose any such establishment.

SHEA-PORTER: When you "with available resources," would more resources make the difference, or are we still getting a straight-out effort, all we could do?

RAY: We are constantly looking at what we do to see if we're using those resources in the most effective way. I am reluctant to say give me more resources until I'm sure that I am using the resources that you're giving me to the best advantage.

SHEA-PORTER: Thank you.

DAVIS: Thank you, Ms. Shea-Porter. Could you speak, Ambassador Ray, to the interagency issues around this? Because we know that in many ways, you and the department in many ways shoulder the burden here.

And yet many other departments, tools of government can also be used in this way. You mention it in your comments. Obviously, recent pronouncements coming out of North Korea will have an effect there.

How do you see that progress? What can you point to that has shifted, changed, been helpful in that area? And are enough of these elements, whether it's trade, whether it's -- the State Department, I would hope, certainly, is part of this interagency work.

But talk to us a little bit more about that, and where do you think some obvious voids are and have not really changed much over the years?

RAY: Well, our work with the interagency, Madam Chairman, goes on on a continuous basis. It's a big challenge because within the interagency, there are a lot of competing elements that have to be balanced.

I would say that in general, the support that we get from the interagency has been extremely good. We get from the State Department outstanding support.

A lot of what we're able to do abroad, we could not do if it were not for the support we get from our embassies and our consulates and from the geographic bureau people in the State Department, one who knows the ground much better than we do, but who also carry our water for us on many occasions.

Other elements of government we've had fairly good responses from them, including our issues and their messages to foreign governments when they deal with them. And so, I would not characterize it as a void.

We don't win every round. But we do, I think, in general, win the war, and that is the interagency -- we spend a lot of time making sure that the interagency understands the importance of what we do. And as far as the State Department and the intel community is concerned, they are actually a part of the community because when we

do Southeast Asia, when we do the Korean War and we do the Cold War, the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency also have missing people in there, and they participate with us in outreach to families.

Other agencies, in general, we get a very good supportive response from them. The Justice Department, FBI and DEA have been very supportive of what we do, and particularly because we now do the personnel recovery and they have people who are at risk.

They understand that we need -- that we're all in it together and we have to work together. I would say in general, interagency support has been good. It can always be better, and that's partly our responsibility to stay out there and make sure that they don't forget and we keep it

-- and we keep making it better.

DAVIS: Is there an area specifically that you would want to seek some help?

RAY: Madam Chair, I can't at this time think of any area where I would think that there is a void that we needed. We simply need to keep doing what we do and doing it better.

DAVIS: But you think that there -- the opportunity to engage where these issues are front and center is there where appropriate?

RAY: Yes, ma'am.

DAVIS: And that's very important to us, I think, that there's a consistent and strong message in that regard. And I would hope that any of you would call upon us, that you would call upon the interagency to do that.

Because there are some ways in which we can leverage this, and I think it's important that we continue to do that.

RAY: Yes, ma'am. Well, I would go so far, if I may, Madam Chairman, to point out that it's not only the interagency and not just from my position in this job, but having served as a ambassador and also as consul general in Ho Chi Minh City, that the assistance we've gotten from others in the interagency and from traveling congressional delegations to carry this message to our foreign audiences has been extremely supportive and first rate.

And so, what I would say is, what we need is for people to continue to do what they're currently doing.

DAVIS: OK. Thank you. I'm going to go to Mr. McHugh and then come back for another round. Thank you.

MCHUGH: Thank you. And in response to that last very good question and the ambassador's comments, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, I do have a chance to make a trip through Southeast Asia and I would highly recommend it to any member who is so disposed, because it is an eye opener -- I had a vision of people just kind of leisurely walking through fields, kicking over rocks.

And it's quite a different challenge than that. And rappelling down mountains, climbing up other mountains, as the ambassador said in his comments, dodging snakes and hopefully you're out of there before the monsoon season starts.

It really shows the depth of that challenge. And I agree, Mr. Ambassador, the governments in that part of the world, although not always as forthcoming as we like, certainly from my experience were very willing to sit down and talk about this. And I hope it helps in

some fashion.

I appreciated Ms. Tsongas' comments about Sergeant Jimenez. As someone who has the honor of representing the 10th Mountain Division, I'd be remiss if I didn't also add the names of PFC Byron Fouty and PFC Joseph Anzack, who are also involved in that attack that left two of those brave soldiers missing.

It must be a very sobering pause for good folks like yourselves to remember at times that you're really a big source of hope for people like that. And there's no question involved there, but just an underscoring of the importance of the work that you do.

Mr. Ambassador, I appreciated your comments of using resources to their best advantage. And we all like to talk about that in government. It's nice to run into somebody who's actually thoughtful about it and trying to do it.

So let's talk a little bit about the way ahead. It's not quite warm enough in here, let's warm it up a little bit. And you know, we've got a process now that talks about most recent first. And I can certainly see the efficacy of that. I'm not trying to paint a stilted question here one way or another. But there are those who are making the argument to me and I'm sure to the chair and others who have had the discussion that we are too resource heavy in one area, in this case, Southeast Asia, about 70 percent. And the rest is left to go around somewhere else. And if you look at the rate of recoveries in Southeast Asia, that they've help relatively steady, while you do have other opportunities in other places.

To what extent and how often do you have a chance to sit down and contemplate that most recent first? I could argue in support of that as well. I'm not trying to tell you what to do. I'm just curious, is that something that comes under thoughtful consideration, and how often do you get a chance to re-evaluate that?

RAY: Sir, that is something that is currently being re-evaluated. It is part of the mission review of the Senior Study Group that I mentioned earlier.

And we are looking at what our policy should be across all conflicts and conflict-specific and our policy in general. To address the comment about the resources being applied to one conflict or another, it is true that the Vietnam War takes a rather large portion of the monetary resources.

That has to do with the nature of that terrain and the conflict as much as anything. Vietnam operations are much more expensive than others because of the requirement for paying for helicopter support to get teams and equipment to sites.

And as you mentioned, some of these sites are on ridgelines where you can get one helicopter in at a time. With the increase in fuel costs over the last couple of years, our costs to support operations in this area have also increased.

There are other elements, though, of accounting across the conflicts that get left out when we talk about resources, and that is investigations, identifications and others -- and research. If we were to simply do a mathematical parsing of the money and divide resources up on conflict on hard mathematical grounds, we run the risk of damaging the gains that we're making across all conflicts.

If we were to reduce the resources that we apply now to Southeast Asia, the fairly slow rate of recovery and ID could be diminished even more. And therefore it's not a matter of whether this conflict is most recent or not. It's a matter that in an area where operations are extremely difficult and costly, if you take away resources, you simply make it more difficult to do these operations.

As we look at how we do our resources, how we allocate our efforts in research as well as in operations on the ground, we're looking at ways we can do a better job in World War II and Korea without disadvantaging any other conflict. And that includes looking at the current and future conflicts and the personnel recovery activities.

MCHUGH: The last statement you made about re-evaluating World War II, that current DOD posture, and this is a quote, with respect to World War II, is the mission remains, quote, "very much a work in progress," end quote.

So, as you look at that work in progress, at least from my perspective, it's a little hard to tell what the plan way ahead is. And I suspect that's because there isn't yet one, and you're working on that.

RAY: We're still working on it. Yes, sir.

MCHUGH: When might that evaluation work be done, do you think?

RAY: I'm really reluctant to make predictions on that because the group that's working on it has that and several other things, and usually when I make these predictions they prove me wrong very quickly.

But I would hope very soon. We've had some progress in shaping our view of how we should be looking at conflicts across the board, and I would hope that certainly before the end of this year, we would have a more concrete idea of how we approach the resource allocation and work for all the conflicts.

MCHUGH: Thank you. Madam Chair, if we go to another round, I certainly could ask a few other questions. But I know other members want to weigh in as well again. So I'll yield back for the moment.

DAVIS: Thank you. Ms. Shea-Porter?

SHEA-PORTER: Yes. I want to ask you about recent revelations that China had a body, an American soldier's body from North Korea. And I wanted to ask you to comment further on these revelations about American POW's taken during the '50s and '60s.

RAY: I believe you're referring to the Desautels case. We have, in fact, engaged with the Chinese on a number of occasions on trying to find where this particular individual's body is buried, so far without success.

There were others who we have information on, confirmed information who were taken in, but who were returned.

SHEA-PORTER: This is a surprise?

RAY: Not really.

SHEA-PORTER: No really.

RAY: Not really. These are issues that have been a matter of our conversations with these governments for a long time. We have not had the success we would like.

My hope is, having just recently signed an archival access arrangement with the Chinese, that we will be able to see a little

more progress in getting information about a lot of these cases. Not just the Korean War, but Vietnam War and World War II as well.

SHEA-PORTER: Well, this is something that POW/MIA groups have been talking about for a great while, as you know. So this has a poignancy and a bitterness and a sense of tragedy to it. And I would hope that we would stay right on this issue.

Thank you.

DAVIS: Do you have questions? Are you ready?

MURPHY: Yes, ma'am.

DAVIS: We're just moving. Thank you.

MURPHY: I want to thank most of you for service to our country.

I'm Patrick Murphy from Pennsylvania, and I want to open up my comment real quick, and I want to tip my hat, even though it's not on your domain, but to the CIA agencies that actually just helped free three of our hostages over in Colombia.

They did an incredible job in the 15 hostages overall. They did

an incredible job with those three hostages for the past (ph).

They've been in captivity in Colombia with the FARC for over five years.

So I know they don't get a thank you enough. (OFF-MIKE) the public acknowledge their work.

I understand that the policy of the United States is to pursue the most recent first strategy in deciding how to allocate funding assigned to each conflict unaccounted-for servicemen. And that obviously, if there's a chance that any MIA or POW serviceman is still alive, then we should do whatever it takes to rescue them.

The most recent first strategy leads to a funding breakdown where 65 percent of the funds are allocated to Vietnam, 20 percent of the funds to Korea, and 15 percent of the funds to World War II.

But when you look at the numbers, there are over 74,000 servicemen unaccounted for from World War II, but only 8,000 from the Korean War and about 1,700 from Vietnam. If there's any chance that there are servicemen still alive, we need to pursue that vigorously, as I know you already agree.

However, the DPMO and JPAC estimate that the remains of 19,000 of the 74,000 unaccounted-for World War II servicemen might be recoverable. So my question is, how much of the funding allocated to Vietnam is actually dedicated for the search for those possibly still alive?

Is that funding separated from the funding used to recovery remains? So what am I -- I guess what I'm trying to get is, can we will continue to aggressively search for possibly living servicemen, but also focusing at the same time for recovering and identifying the most remains possible, even if those remains are not from the most recent conflict?

CRISP: If I could just share, when I have the percentages, I actually don't apply them to the money. Although I could do that, I don't have that right now.

But I do apply them to the different functions within JPAC. So I look at recoveries and investigations. And so, if I were to just look at that over a four-year period of time, 67 percent of recoveries and investigations are Vietnam; 14 percent are Korean War; and 19 percent are for World War II.

But when I look at the laboratory, and I also look at their level of effort, identifications are 36 percent for Vietnam; 42 percent for World War II; 21 percent for Korea. And I also look at the sampling, because the scientists have to spend their time cutting samples and sending them to AFTIL (ph) for designation.

So 65 percent of the samples are for the Korean War this just is an example -- and 24 percent for Vietnam. So I look at the guidance given by OSD of the 65, 20 and 15, and then I try to apply that to all of the areas of work that we're doing, knowing that each war is different and just trying to ensure that we comply to the best way possible.

MURPHY: Thank you.

RAY: On the issue, sir, of possible living personnel and their recovery, we have not broken down what is spent on that effort. And the reason for that is that that shapes everything we do.

Every contact we have with governments on this issue, that's the number one priority. It's also difficult for us to break down how this is funded because there are other agencies besides R2 that are involved in it.

The intelligence agencies have standing requirements on this issue. Most embassies in areas of interest, these are pieces of information that they would be responding to for us.

So this effort, what we spend on recoveries of remains across the various conflicts has no impact on what we do to try and recovery any living people. And if we should find someone alive, you can bet that everything else would stop while we took effort to get that person back.

MURPHY: Thanks. A very brief question (OFF-MIKE). For years, the government of China has denied that any U.S. service member was moved from North Korea into China. And the Pentagon (OFF-MIKE) that China return all the POWs that were inside of China.

I'm not sure if this panel already addressed this issue, and I apologize if it did. But obviously last month, we all became aware of Sergeant Richard Desautels, who was buried in Chinese territory in 1953.

I have a constituent, Charlotte Mini (ph), whose brother has been missing in action in Korea since June of 1952. I just want to make sure that I can respond to her effectively and to say that she can believe in her government, that we're all working together and that we're going to make sure that we're being straight with her and the rest of America that -- because it was obviously, we've said we've known this for five years that there were remains in China, and yet we just made the American public aware of this a month ago.

RAY: This is true, and it is not at all unusual that we would provide information to the next of kin without providing that information publicly. There are a number of reasons why that might not be done.

And in terms of prisoners taken to China, as I said earlier, we do have -- the only information we have, other than Desautels, who we have been told was buried in China, we know that. We are now working with them to try and determine where so that we can do a recovery. The others that we have information on were prisoners who were taken into China for interrogation and returned.

MURPHY: Thank you. Thank you, ma'am.

DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Murphy. Ambassador, I know you mentioned earlier that the prioritizing and the apportioning issue is being looked at.

And I'm just wondering, in the work that you all do, and as you were talking about how you use the percentages or don't necessarily focus that with the budget, is that helpful? OR would it be helpful to not have those kinds of apportionments?

RAY: We're actually looking at that issue. I inherited that policy, and for the last two years, it's been under review as to whether that makes good business sense to go about, especially given that each conflict is very different.

The areas of conflict are different. We face, for example, in Vietnam a real serious problem with the type of soil there. Biologic remains don't last very long.

On the other hand, in parts of Eastern Europe, and in Papua New Guinea and other areas, we're quite lucky. We usually find entire skeletal remains that have been fairly well preserved.

And so one of the first questions I asked when I came in and found out that I'd inherited this numerical policy is, why? And that has been under study.

We have actually made minor adjustments, but the entire policy is being looked at to determine if it makes sense to do that. And also, how will we fit that into current and future conflicts?

How will the current conflict, when it ends, be fit into a numerical policy? Who do we take a percentage from to cover this?

My own guess, just from my own assessment of how it would be done, is we will probably scrap the percentage policy and go to a more rational basis for resource allocation.

DAVIS: Well, I'm glad to hear that it is being reviewed, not because I know better how to do it. I just think that it's helpful to have people taking some fresh eyes on that and trying to understand it better.

If we can turn to the personnel issues for just a minute, because Admiral Crisp, you mentioned earlier that it is not much a matter of money in filling positions, but just difficult in some cases to fill those positions.

And I'm wondering if you could share with us, what are some of the difficulties in doing that? The other issues is just the consolidation of operations, and whether it makes sense to have a number of different operations or whether consolidating some of that makes any more sense, having operations near the archives in some cases.

How best to be more, not necessarily efficient with it, but also to have it work better for the people that are engaged in this operation?

CRISP: I am looking right now at our laboratory. When you look at the laboratory, if you're just talking manning, I don't have the numbers, I did it back home. The laboratory as a whole was manned at 93 percent.

That doesn't really tell you the story. So you have to dig down into well, what are the specialties that you're having problems with? And the scientists came to me, the anthropologists, and said,

we're having problems, maybe we should move somewhere else. And so from my background, I said, well, what is the real issue? Is it recruiting? Is it retention? Is it an increased capacity of identification? What are we dealing with? And so, they said, well, it's really recruiting and retention.

And so what I said is, OK, there is a suite of things that are available to any command in the Department of Defense to handle recruiting and retention issues. Have we done any of these? No. I said, OK. Well, the first thing we're going to do is we're going to look at robust internship programs. We're going to look at the national security personnel pay system, (OFF-MIKE) that allows a labor market supplement. Let's do the analysis to see if our anthropologists are paid differently than those in the rest of the United States so you know if you're basically shooting yourself in the foot before you even start to do all of the homework.

Do you have career ladders? No. What do you expect from your people? We want them to go out to the field and then have one or two managers. And I said, OK, you need to have a career ladder system for your scientists.

And so those are all of the things that we're looking at. And what I've asked Ambassador Ray is that rather than to rush into a singular person's thought of, well, gosh, if I just lived in Virginia, life would be fabulous.

Rather than to rush into that, to do all our homework to do a business case analysis, to do the appropriate things we need to do in recruiting and retention, and look at, do I need to change end strength within my own command?

Do I have too many linguists and not enough anthropologists? I want to look at that whole picture, fix the command to where I think it needs to be for an optimum laboratory. And then if that doesn't work is when I would come to my boss and to Ambassador Ray and say, OK, we need another solution.

So I know that's not as fast as some of my constituents would like me to do it. But I think that is the best approach.

DAVIS: Well, thank you, because I think clearly you're saying that there may be a way that you can have the kinds of qualified people that you need, but to have them differently, and that that might bring about a much better result, and the results that certainly serve our families.

And that's really what we're all about, is trying to find a way to do that. Appreciate that.

Mr. McHugh?

MCHUGH: Let me just tie into the question. Admiral, you just responded to the chair. I'm assuming -- and I get in trouble when I do this -- but I'm assuming at the end of this hearing, at some point the chair will move to accept into the record a number of documents that have been submitted to us.

You've not had a chance to see this, and I'm not going to quiz you on it. But one of them comes from a gentleman, Ron Broward, who may be familiar to you. But he lists a lot of thoughts and a lot of suggestions.

One of the observations he makes is of the number of unidentified remains that are currently in the Punchbowl from the Korean War. And

of course, as you all well know that those are -- that figure is just part of the 1,200 to 1,400 number of remains that are currently at the Central Identification Lab awaiting identification.

I spoke earlier about the concerns I have with respect to the out year budgets of '09 through 2013. And I'm just curious, Admiral, is that process you're undergoing right now, it would seem a reduction of that number would require more anthropologists.

Maybe I'm wrong. I don't -- scientists, something, more something, or re-balancing. So how are we going to achieve a reduction of that number, that backlog?

CRISP: The first way we're going to achieve it is by expanding the facilities, which we did temporarily. So by October, I'll be able to lay out the remains so that anthropologists have a better chance of identifying the Koreans in the 208 that were -- boxes that were given to us.

MCHUGH: So part of that backlog is generated by the mere fact we don't have the physical space to tackle...

CRISP: To lay it out, yes, sir. With the identifications in Punchbowl, I know that the DNA was destroyed. All that is left, at least right now, scientifically, is if I have a skull with teeth in it, and in fact I just sat down with Ron and we were going through some of his thoughts on the database, there are things that can be done, but it isn't going to be a massive fix for all of the unknowns at Punchbowl.

And that will only take time. And when AFTIL (ph) and their scientists break through that barrier of figuring out how to get in, into the bone of whatever DNA might be left.

So just so we all know, the Army during the Korean War, they didn't do it during World War II, they did not do it after the Korean War, soaked all of the bones in formaldehyde and then covered it with a formaldehyde paste, and it did indeed keep the bones perfect, but destroyed DNA.

So unless we have the skull with the teeth, there is nothing we can do. I have advised that it is not prudent to dig up all these heroes and put them in JPAC and leave them for some future advancement at AFTIL (ph) when they're honorably buried there at Punchbowl.

So what I would prefer to do is to wait till that scientific breakthrough takes place and then take them out. Because as soon as you remove people from Punchbowl, new people come in and then you're just left with them being at JPAC.

MCHUGH: I appreciate your laying that out. Your description raises a question in my mind. It's hard to know what you don't know. However, I'm going to ask you anyway. Of those 1,200 to 1,400, you presumably have a certain number that are non-U.S. They're Korean or -- are you sure they're all U.S.?

CRISP: I know they have reported to me that there are some non-U.S. But the information that I have with me today is strictly what is believed to be U.S. So...

MCHUGH: OK. Of that 1,200 to 1,400, those with currently unrecoverable DNA samples is what number? Do you know?

CRISP: For that, that would be about 800. Let me look.

MCHUGH: So basically, the Korean...

CRISP: So I have -- all of the unknowns that are in Punchbowl,

OK, 857, 857...

MCHUGH: And under current method, we have no way to extract DNA.

CRISP: The only way we can do it is if...

MCHUGH: Without teeth.

CRISP: If I had the teeth. So for that reason, that would be the last group of people I would begin just exhuming. I prefer to take the remains of the 208 that were given to me from North Korea that are actually 400 people and begin working on those as my first line for Korea.

MCHUGH: OK, understand. I would assume all of us, and I know you're familiar with certainly thousands -- and I don't have a number -- of individual family members, family groups that are concerned about the identification of a loved one that was lost. And I have a number of them. It's a source of inspiration in a very important way to see these folks after all these years still care so much about a family member, be so moved when closure finally comes. Or at least a little peace that takes them closer to closure. Many of those, one lady and her family, Christine LeFrey (ph), have been very active and have shared some questions with me, most of which I will submit for the record, Madam Chair.

But, I would like to ask you one here today. From their experience, they note that there are really multiple organizations involved in the accounting, two of which are here today, DPMO, JPAC are the largest.

But they've had to deal with those service casualty offices and other agencies. And they're not so much questioning that fact, but rather they have at times been frustrated as they cite other families have been as well, because each of the government agencies responsible for POW/MIA issues apparently continue to individually maintain their own files on each unresolved case.

And through their experience, none of these files always contain all of the information that another file does. And that's bureaucracy at its finest. And they're just curious to what extent we may be working to have a centralized file, if nothing else? We don't want to cripple that multiplicity of effort, necessarily, but one file.

CRISP: I'll tell you the small part that we're doing, and on that geo-spatial system that we're building. It's basically a middle ware that begins drilling down on any legacy data or people's individual files in order to create a holistic picture of every case. And so we are at the point where we're data testing it in the field so that I can download it and a team can begin taking all the data with them. And I'm just beginning to share that with several people to test it at DPMO so they can drill down with the expectation that all of our historians and all of our analysts and everyone who has files will be able to feed that into a singular system so they can all work with the same picture.

RAY: And I might add, sir, that we are also looking at a project now for creating a portal so that each element of the community can have visibility into the files of every other element, which would then hopefully mitigate some of this bureaucratic missing of papers. But back to the Service Casualty Offices. We find that while there are occasionally instances where one agency's files will maybe not have something that another has, is that having the Service

Casualty Office be the principle point of contact with the family members prevents a lot of confusion and it enables us to make sure that the families are getting a consistent message. That they're not getting different stories as they move around Washington, that they also don't have to run around Washington to find someone to talk to. That Service Casualty Office is their primary point of contact, whether it's an identification made by JPAC or a new piece of information found by one of my analysts, we seldom provide that directly to the families ourselves, except at our family update meetings monthly.

That's given to the Service Casualty Office to be relayed to the family through there.

MCHUGH: Well, without question, they'll be uplifted to hear that there's going to be some progress in that area.

And, Madam Chair, if I may just close my portion here today, do want to thank both the ambassador and the admiral for joining us, for everybody in the audience who didn't take that hour or so hiatus that we did in the cool Capitol for sticking it out here.

And again, I have enormous respect for the mission that you've taken up, and the deepest admiration for those, particularly those out in the field who try to bring some closure and hold up one of this nation's most, I think, outstanding pledges, and that is to bring everyone home, and that full accounting, no matter how long it takes, and no matter what the barriers in front of us.

And I just want to, again, underscore the great challenge that you faced. Finding these remains is an incredibly difficult chore, and it's only half the chore. Then we have to match them and bring them home to those that have waited for so long.

And it's a dual challenge, each of which is of great dimension.

And I know all of us here on this subcommittee, the full committee, indeed, the entire House want to be as supportive as we can.

And with that final word of appreciation, my thanks again to you, Madam Chair, for holding this hearing. I would yield back.

DAVIS: Thank you very much, Mr. McHugh. No questions?

SHEA-PORTER: I, too, would like to thank you for your work. It is a grim task, and I'd like to thank all those who do this every single day. In this way that we honor our commitments to our POW/MIAs, and they are certainly in our prayers and in your workload every single day. Thank you for that.

CRISP: Thank you for hearing us.

DAVIS: I want to thank you as well. It certainly -- it's a painstaking effort, but it's to help relieve some of the pain of those who have sacrificed so greatly. And we appreciate that.

I have not had an opportunity to work with this issue before, but I feel that you come with great seriousness, and I really appreciate that.

And we want to work with you to try and help to make those steps come together as easily as possible because it is quite difficult moving from one phase to another, I know, can be quite difficult. And we appreciate that.

I also wanted to acknowledge the work of -- there are many, many people, but I think that we have submissions from two individuals particularly who have gone through great lengths to work over the

years with families and I want to acknowledge them and their submissions that I would ask unanimous consent that their written submissions be included in the record.

Ann Mills Griffiths, the executive director of the National League of POW/MIA Families, and also Mr. Ron Broward, supported by the World War II Families For the Return of the Missing, the National Alliance of Families, the Korean War Families and the Korean War Veterans Association.

And they will be submitted for the record. And certainly members have up to five working days to submit any additional questions that they may have.

Thank you very much for your testimony today. Thank you to all of you in the audience for being so patient and having to sit through this warm room today. We appreciate it.

Thank you very much.

END

REP. SUSAN A. DAVIS

Chairwoman

Washington, D.C.

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