

**Presentation by
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Thank you Charlie for that most unusual introduction. I'll carry that image with me for a long time.....big elephant at a watering hole!

I know he wanted to make a point, and it's a good one. I'm privileged to play the role of the big elephant. I'll talk a bit about that later, but I do want to thank you all for being here this morning.

I'd like to also take just a moment to thank Ambassador Ray for his leadership of DPMO. He is a skilled manager. His military and diplomatic experiences serve you well. Most importantly he is a passionate advocate for your mission.

Now, I understand that more than 400 family members have registered for this event, and I think that is just outstanding. These briefings are entirely for your benefit. It is extremely important for us to have open lines of communication with you – to make sure you are aware of what's being done to keep our promise to those who have served.

I'm told this is one of the largest meetings of MIA families, ever – and I consider it an honor to speak with you this morning as you begin what I think will be an informative series of briefings.

Charlie touched briefly on my military background. Like others who have served in uniform, I place a special emphasis on efforts to account for missing, captive or killed American military members. I think you will find that Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines, past and present, share your values. It is a part of a service member's ethos. And, I would like to convey to you today that the United States Government, and the Department of Defense in particular, is deeply committed to obtaining the fullest possible accounting for Americans held captive or otherwise missing from our Nation's ongoing and past conflicts.

As the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Security Affairs, I have had the privilege to be part of the team responsible for ongoing and future efforts to identify remains, and provide closure for families who have long wondered what has become of their loved one. I've learned a lot in the process.

Early in my tenure as the head of GSA, Charlie invited me to attend one of your Family Updates, which I did in Boston in 2007. I was impressed with the intensity with which most of your fellow family members dealt with this issue. I hesitate to call it an

"issue" because it's not just an issue to you, it's a person....your brother....your dad.....your son. I was also impressed with the enormity of the effort required to manage the thousands of individual cases. Further, and most importantly, I have been impressed with hundreds of the dedicated, earnest people who work to bring closure for you and your families.

Recently, I traveled to San Antonio where I had the opportunity to visit some of those hundreds of people working on your behalf. I visited with the leadership of the Air Force Casualty and Mortuary specialists and toured the Missing Persons Branch – where the staff meticulously maintain and archive personnel records. Their mission is actually you. I was impressed – and moved – by their dedication to this mission, and their recognition of how much it matters to you and to our country. You are the reason they exist, and we count on them to keep you fully informed, to treat you with compassion and with professionalism. I would encourage you, if you have not yet had the opportunity, to sit down with our team to review your member's case file.

Also located in San Antonio is the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory, where again I encountered a passion for the mission. John Goines and his Lab colleagues draw upon their knowledge of exacting details of aircraft cockpit design, crew equipment and personal gear to solve previously unanswerable questions and are providing closure for families.

Now, I've referred to some of the people who work so diligently to bring resolution to the yet thousands of unanswered questions. There are many more – over 600 experts working on your behalf. These are analysts at DPMO, team leaders and anthropologists at JPAC, and DNA technicians at AFDIL. They're all here to serve your mission and you're going to hear from these outstanding specialists today and tomorrow.

But I need to say a few words about our constraints. I now know exactly what the Ambassador is referring to when he says that many, many important missions are competing for the same dollars. While we have protected our budget allocations, the demand for answers grows. With new technology come new opportunities to identify previously unknowable facts. This growth in technology combined with the prospects for greater access to excavation sites and growing public awareness have also led to greater demands – that's good new - on our limited resources – and that's a challenge.

In an effort to provide better balance among the equities of different POW/MIA eras, Ambassador Ray, with my support, is exploring options for increasing the resource allocation for accounting efforts associated with the Korean and Cold Wars. I should note that in the current fiscal environment – one with responsibilities for conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and a world-wide financial crisis – any such increase in funding for Korea and the Cold War will come in the form of a budgetary trade off from somewhere else.

Another constraint we must contend with is diplomatic in nature. Access to Russian and Chinese archives that are so important to our research and access to

promising excavation sites in North Korea are inextricably linked to governmental relationships. We are working on these issues. An example of DPMO's ongoing, worldwide diplomatic efforts is the U.S. – Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs. This dialogue not only supports efforts to identify Cold War missing, but seeks to exploit the archives of the former Soviet Union to garner information about American service members missing since World War II. DPMO has also, within the past year, concluded an agreement with China that will provide greatly increased access to their archives.

While the recent removal of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from the U.S. list of states that sponsor terrorism is an encouraging development, the overall relationship remains complex and we must gird ourselves for continued difficult roads ahead. The same is true for relations with China and Russia.

We are continually striving to make inroads with our counterparts in other countries, but our expectations must remain realistic. One of the most difficult parts of the POW/MIA mission is negotiating with foreign nations in an effort to move them toward our view of the world. The results are not always satisfactory, but the people serving you here in this room are going to keep at it. They know -- and I know -- who we are all working for.

The final constraint I'd briefly mention is time. As you know better than I, time continues to march on while we pursue rounds of negotiations with our foreign counterparts. It marches on as we study the need for additional identification laboratory capabilities. Time marches on as we struggle to secure the resources necessary to meet the mission requirement. We are, however, very much aware and sympathetic to family desires for a timely resolution of their loved one's case.

We understand your frustration that everything doesn't move faster. I wish it were otherwise, but we are all stuck here in the real world and we simply have to move ahead through some daunting barriers. As a leader, I have the responsibility to serve as an advocate for those who have the toughest job...those who carry out the mission in the field and inside the Beltway. I think this is what Ambassador Ray meant when he referred to that powerful elephant at the watering hole.

The DPMO extended family – the hundreds of people working on your behalf - has achieved remarkable things over the years, from advancing scientific techniques in the laboratory to actually identifying hundreds of your loved ones who everyone thought were lost forever.

On behalf of the Secretary of Defense, I want to close by telling you how much we honor you and your loved ones. We know the story of sacrifice, and we try to honor it in everything we do. You stand head and shoulders above the rest of us, and we are often awestruck by who you are, and what you and your families have done for our great nation. We have a sacred mission. You have our eternal respect.

Thank you.