

Opening Remarks
By
Ambassador Charles Ray
Korean/Cold War Annual Govt Briefings
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Good morning!

And welcome to our Annual Government Briefings for Korean and Cold War MIA families. You'll hear this next phrase often at gatherings preparing to hear a keynote speaker. The phrase is "We're honored this morning to have as our keynote speaker a distinguished gentleman who....." Well, you've certainly heard that before.

This morning, however, I want to set the stage in a different way. Probably a bit more picturesque than you were expecting. But here's the setting.

The competition for resources in the Defense Department is a lot like the scramble among animals in the wild at a watering hole. The smaller animals are at a disadvantage and only get their fair share of water when they have a larger patron – like an elephant, for example. In an environment of finite resources and with the large number of equally – and in some cases MORE – important projects that must compete for resources, we in DPMO and the personnel accounting community are lucky to have our speaker as the big animal at the watering hole.

Joseph A. Benkert not only understands the importance to you of accounting for your lost loved ones, he fully and aggressively supports our mission.

Though we all think of our mission as one of the most important and crucial ones among this government's commitments, it goes without saying that nothing is a given any more.

Even **with** strong advocates within our Defense Department, our mission still faces withering fire when lined up against other crucial ones. In that environment, you don't survive unless your case is sound, and your voices are heard.

Joe Benkert is a man whose credentials are extraordinary. He is a distinguished graduate of the Naval Academy, and served as commander of a U.S. Navy frigate, a guided missile cruiser, and two destroyer squadrons.

Today, his Global Security Affairs office is responsible for defense-related issues concerning building the capability of partners and allies....technology security policy...security cooperation...counternarcotics, counterproliferation, countering global threats... and detainee affairs.

Oh yes. He's also responsible for POW/MIA issues.

Though I'm sure he's still pondering the image of an elephant at a watering hole, I **am** honored to introduce to you our keynote speaker, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Security Affairs, the Honorable Joseph A. Benkert.