



The Torch

Keeping the Promise

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AFDIL reaccredited as reliable, high-quality laboratory

The Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) staff recently celebrated its new laboratory reaccreditation. Army Lt. Col. Louis Finelli, chief deputy medical examiner and director of the Department of Defense (DoD) DNA Registry, spoke to more than 100 scientists, researchers, DNA analysts, technicians and other personnel from AFDIL, and congratulated them during a luncheon held in their honor.

"The American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors Laboratory Accreditation Board is the gold standard of accreditation for crime laboratories around the world seeking the highest measure of quality for lab work and their procedures," he said. "This is a great reflection on the technical leaders and the whole staff in making sure that we maintain such a high level of work."

Retired naval officer Tom Dee, Director of Defense Biometrics, Office of the Secretary of Defense, also addressed the AFDIL team at the luncheon.

"You're one of only four accredited labs in the DoD," Dee

said. "The lab is one of only three that work with DNA, and the only one with the breadth of capabilities that has such a direct impact on our war fighting operations. Your accreditation demonstrates that your conclusions are accurate and reliable and that the department can have confidence that you will deliver the goods, whether it's closing a missing-in-action case, or positively identifying a recently fallen service-member. Your work brings comfort to many families."

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many families."
-Tom Dee*

In closing, Dee said that AFDIL has a compassionate mission and its people are heroes in their efforts to identify military service members.

"The skill set you have developed for your primary mission of identification of U.S. service-members' remains has become very applicable to that new kind of global paradigm of how we fight and who we fight today," he said. "We have to be able to identify those anonymous individuals."

(Adapted from Armed Forces Institute of Pathology article by Michelle Hammond)

Personnel recovery exercise provides life-saving training

About 900 Air Force, joint, coalition, interagency and international players participated in a personnel recovery exercise in December at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.

Exercise Angel Thunder 2008 included people from the active duty Air Force and Army, Guard and Reserve, National Reconnaissance Office, State Department, National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, Joint Forces Command and the Department of Justice.

The nationwide event involved people and aircraft from all over the country. International players from Chile, Colombia and Germany also joined in the training while military members from Mexico, Canada and Pakistan were on hand to observe.



Exercise Angel Thunder participants prepare survivors for rescue by an inbound HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter crew Dec. 12, 2008 at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz. Exercise Angel Thunder is a personnel recovery exercise involving joint, interagency and international partners. *(Photo by Greg Morehead, U.S. Air Force)*

Various personnel recovery training scenarios, such as a downed helicopter under attack, were simulated.

Ambassador Charles A. Ray, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs and Director of the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), was an exercise participant.

Ray said the lessons learned from Angel Thunder are invaluable to DPMO in its policy oversight responsibilities for personnel recovery programs.

"This exercise was another example of how important it is to build personnel recovery relationships throughout the U.S. government and among coalition partners," he said. "In exercising our capabilities together, we're keeping a promise to take care of those who go into harm's way in support of their nation, reducing the number of people who get captured or go missing."

(Adapted from U.S. Air Force News article by Air Force Maj. Kristi Beckman)

Family update and government briefing selection process

Each year, DPMO schedules eight family updates across the country and two annual government briefings. Family members often ask how the locations and other details, such as hotel selections, are determined.

DPMO strives to provide a comfortable and safe meeting space that offers the services necessary to conduct the family update program at the lowest possible price for the families and the taxpayers. The selection process involved is extensive.

Planning begins about a year and a half from the beginning of the calendar year. A U.S. map-based computer program pinpoints the cities where primary next-of-kin families live, and cities are selected in areas where there is a high population of family members. Site selections are rotated annually.

After the cities are selected, a monthly calendar is developed which must take into consideration holidays and other local events. Specific hotel requirements are then written for each location based on the proposed attendance in each city. Roughly ten percent of invited family members in each location will register to attend, and the number of government officials who attend each meeting is determined by how many family members are registered.

A few of the many requirements include: the number and size of the meeting rooms; number of sleeping rooms required; audio visual equipment available; on-site parking; restaurant accommodations on site and the number of restaurants available within walking distance. The requirements are provided to a DoD meeting planner who forwards them to the visitor's bureau in each city.

Some hotels will respond with a cost proposal, but some will not because they require commitments that the government is not le-



Family members attend a presentation during the Korea/Cold War Annual Government briefing in October 2008 in Washington, D.C. This year's Korea/Cold War meeting will be held in St. Louis, Mo. in an effort to reduce lodging and other expenses for the family members who will attend. (Photo by Rob Goeke)

The remaining dates and locations for this year's family updates and annual government briefings are:

Feb. 28—Albuquerque, N.M.

***March 28**—Bethesda, Md.

April 25—Denver, Colo.

***May 30**—Richland, Wash.

June 27—Nashua, N.H.

July 23-25—Southeast Asia annual govt. brief, Washington, D.C.

Aug. 29—Minneapolis, Minn.

Oct. 23-24—Korea/Cold War annual govt. brief, St. Louis, Mo.

Nov. 21—Jackson, Miss.

**These family update locations have changed since the last publication of The Torch.*

gally able to make. For example, some hotels won't reserve a large meeting room for a one-day event if the government won't purchase food. Additionally, some hotels won't allow blocks of rooms to be reserved without upfront funding for all of the rooms.

When all hotel proposals are reviewed, some will be eliminated if they don't meet the requirements. The remaining hotels are thoroughly researched, and preliminary selections are made.

Negotiations begin with the hotels in an attempt to lower the meeting and sleeping room rates, and parking rates. Hotels in densely populated areas, where the meetings are typically held, may sell their sleeping rooms at a high rate during seasonal weather and this likely drives up the cost. If the cost is too high, the process starts over. Additionally, if there are no hotels in a city that can meet the requirements, an alternate city must be researched.

Not only are written requirements and costs considered in the selection process but other factors are examined such as safety, parking rates, restaurant capacity, distance of the parking lot to the hotel, and convenience for the families traveling to the hotel. These are all factors that play an equally important role in the hotel selection process.

DPMO's priority is to serve the families of the missing. It will continue to seek the most affordable, comfortable and accommodating cities and hotels to hold family updates for the largest number of potential attendees.

FAQ: "Why are there black boxes on documents I receive from DPMO?"

When families of the missing and members of the public request government documents pertaining to the POW/MIA issue, the documents they receive may contain black boxes over some of the text.

The black boxes are redacted information and they are there to make the documents publicly releasable under U.S. law. The three primary reasons DPMO documents have black boxes are: to protect current classified national security information; to protect information prohibited from disclosure by U.S. statute; and to protect privacy-related information prohibited from disclosure by law.

It is often assumed that those declared "dead" no longer have

privacy rights. In general, this is true. However, the Supreme Court declared that in certain categories, the protection of privacy information relating to the dead is extended to surviving family members. Additionally, birthdays and social security numbers of the deceased are also protected to reduce identity theft and other forms of fraud.

These redactions are required by all agencies and offices in the U.S. executive branch, not just DPMO. There are numerous measures taken to ensure that lawfully protected information is redacted from publicly releasable documents, but great efforts are taken to be transparent and provide the most complete information possible.

RESOLVED: Museum exhibit highlights identification of MIAs



Resolved exhibit at the National Museum of Health and Medicine. (Photo by Kathleen Stocker)

The National Museum of Health and Medicine (NMHM) of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology recently opened an exhibit that highlights the underlying forensic sciences that have evolved to fulfill our nation's commitment to the identification of U.S. servicemembers. The exhibit, *RESOLVED: Advances in Forensic Identification of U.S. War Dead*, is open to the public and is located on the campus of Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

RESOLVED features presentations on milestones in forensic identification. The exhibit highlights the six disciplines critical to a positive scientific forensic identification: material evidence; fingerprinting; forensic dentistry; forensic anthropology and forensic pathology; and DNA analysis. Visitors can examine objects including a portable dental x-ray device, an FBI Disaster Squad fingerprinting kit, and new "virtual autopsy" technologies. Also, they can view photographs that showcase the working environment of today's forensic anthropologist and DNA technician.

Historical case studies detail events that led to the development of new policies and technologies. For example, DNA was critical to the positive identification of U.S. Air Force pilot 1st Lt. Michael Blassie, identified in the 1990s as the Vietnam Unknown buried in

Arlington National Cemetery. Also highlighted is the unique story about the identification of Air Force Col. Charles Scharf, whose plane was shot down during the Vietnam War. His body wasn't recovered at the time, but in 2006, Scharf was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery after his remains were identified using a DNA sample taken from love letters he mailed to his wife during the war. His widow, Patricia Scharf, attended the grand opening of the museum exhibit.

RESOLVED was made possible through the contributions of numerous Department of Defense agencies, including the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Office of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner, AFDIL, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) Central Identification Laboratory, DPMO, and federal agencies such as the FBI Disaster Squad Latent Print Operations Unit.

The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (except December 25). Admission and parking are free. For more information, visit <http://www.nmhm.washingtondc.museum>, or phone (202) 782-2200. (Adapted from article published by NMHM)

Recent Identifications

Since October 2008, the following servicemen have been accounted for:

WWII

Pvt. Henry Marquez, USA
Maj. Marion McCown, Jr., USMC
Pfc. Julian Rogers, USA
Staff Sgt. Martin Troy, USAAF

Korea

Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Arthur, USA
Sgt. Stanley Baylor, USA
Pfc. Ricardo Castor, Jr., USA
Sgt. Dougall Espey, Jr., USA
Cpl. Luna Librado, USA
Sgt. 1st Class Jose Parra, USA

Vietnam

Maj. Bernard Bucher, USAF
Lance Cpl. Ralph Harper, USMC
Staff Sgt. Frank Hepler, USAF
Lance Cpl. Kurt La Plant, USMC
Lance Cpl. Luis Palacios, USMC
Maj. John McElroy, USAF
1st Lt. Stephen Moreland, USAF
Pfc. Jose Sanchez, USMC



Army Sgt. Dougall Espey Jr., was recently identified.

Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office
2900 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-2900



Downed plane in India



U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsmen Chief Peter Janse, a team medic for JPAC, searches an aircraft engine for a serial number at a crash site in Arunachal Pradesh, India, on Nov. 2, 2008. An 8-member JPAC team deployed out of Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, for 45 days attempting to recover the remains of U.S. servicemembers lost during World War II. JPAC's mission is to achieve the fullest possible accounting of all U.S. servicemembers lost during our country's previous conflicts. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt Bradley Church)

For your information

Family members seeking more information about their missing loved ones may call their respective Service Casualty Office:

U.S. Air Force
1-800-531-5501

U.S. Navy
1-800-443-9298

U.S. Army
1-800-892-2490

U.S. Dept. of State
202-647-5470

U.S. Marine Corps
1-800-847-1597

There are still 2008 POW/MIA Recognition Day posters available. Call (703) 699-1131, or visit www.dtic.mil/dpmo to order posters.

The Torch newsletter is online: www.dtic.mil/dpmo. To unsubscribe, change your address or sign up to receive the hard copy of this quarterly newsletter, write to or call:

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