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STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD OF
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BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
U.S HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

October 29, 2019

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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Hice, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, it is a privilege to appear before you today. As provided in Section 916 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (NDAA for FY 2015), then Secretary of Defense Hagel established the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) in 2015 as the single organization within the Department of Defense (DoD) responsible for policy, control, and oversight of the program to resolve missing person cases; to account for missing persons from past conflicts, including locating, recovering, and identifying the remains of the missing; dissemination of appropriate information regarding these efforts to family members; and establishment of a means for communications between DPAA and the family members, veterans service organizations (VSO), concerned citizens, and the public on the Department's past conflict accounting efforts.

DPAA was established by merging the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, and past conflict elements of the Air Force's Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory. The agency's overarching mission is to harness resources, research, and conduct operations to maximize the number of DoD personnel missing from past conflicts accounted for annually, while ensuring timely and accurate information is provided to their families and the public.

DPAA, in concert with the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System-Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFMES-AFDIL); the casualty and mortuary affairs offices of the Military Departments and Department of State; U.S. Combatant Commands; U.S. Embassies in

foreign countries in which DPAA operates; government officials of partner nations; and non-federal entities have worked hard and contributed immensely to improve how the DoD accounts for missing personnel from past conflicts. Through this statement, I will highlight some of the major improvements the agency has made and challenges we face in vigorously pursuing the fullest possible accounting of Americans missing from past conflicts.

As DPAA's Director, I have the honor to lead more than 600 military and civilian personnel. They are all very talented, dedicated to, and passionate about, this noble mission-- providing answers for families who have waited decades for information about their loved ones. DPAA is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and has a major facility at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, as well as a second forensic skeletal laboratory at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, and a life sciences equipment laboratory at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. Also, DPAA has detachments in Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam; Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic; Bangkok, Kingdom of Thailand; and Miesau, Germany.

The mission is global in scope, with investigations marked by painstaking research and analysis, challenging recoveries in inhospitable environments, and a remarkable scientific enterprise. While the task is daunting, the obligation, if not imperative, is steadfast. There are 81,977 unaccounted for DoD personnel from World War II to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Of these, DPAA assesses the remains of 38,979 are possibly recoverable, the majority of those who are unrecoverable being deep water losses. The following table depicts the current number of losses and those that are possibly recoverable, delineated by conflict.

Conflict	Total Unaccounted For	Possibly Recoverable
World War II	72,650	30,563
Cold War	126	5
Korean War	7,608	7,308
Vietnam War	1,587	1,099
Other*	6	4

*Operation EL DORADO CANYON; Operation DESERT STORM; Operation IRAQI FREEDOM

Accordingly, it is DPAA’s policy to achieve the “fullest possible accounting” of those missing from our Nation’s past conflicts and other designated conflicts. This important, aspirational, and legacy concept succinctly captures the U.S. Government’s commitment and goal to account for as many missing DoD personnel as possible by the return of living Prisoners of War, recovery of the remains of the dead, or by providing the family an explanation of why neither is possible. A determination that fullest possible accounting has been achieved does not officially account for the individual; however, any further activity to recover the individual occurs only if new information about that person’s loss becomes available; essentially moving accounting efforts for that person from a pro-active to a reactive posture.

Widely recognized as a humanitarian endeavor, DPAA’s mission continues to advance U.S. Government policy, engagement, and diplomacy objectives abroad. Working with 40 countries in FY 2019, DPAA made several noteworthy gains:

- In commemorating 30 years of sustained joint operations with Vietnam last December, DPAA is mindful of the fact that cooperation predated normalized relations by 7 years, and that

today, Vietnam has been increasingly amenable to initiatives that advance the mission. The most prominent of these is the additional fielding of unilateral investigation and recovery teams that are highly effective.

- Active and effective collaboration, including scientific exchanges, with both the Republic of Korea and Japan, as they pursue recovering the remains of their war dead, contributes to the strength of each of these critical alliances.

- This past January, after successful DPAA recovery operations of a World War II loss in Myanmar, the first-ever repatriation of remains was held there, providing the United States with a positive engagement opportunity.

- Operating in six island nations in the South Pacific, among them Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, DPAA's presence and established rapport with the partner nations strengthens the respective bilateral relationships.

- And although cooperation with both the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China has waned, DPAA's mission still affords the United States a viable channel of communications and engagement.

STRATEGIC PLAN

To ensure mission success, DPAA is implementing its five-year Strategic Plan that details the Agency's vision and its desired state by 2025 to further advance an agile, innovative,

collaborative, and digital agency capable of an increased pace and scope to account for the missing. The Strategic Plan focuses on four lines of effort: Research and Analysis; Accounting; Communication and Engagement; and Business Enterprise. Inherent to this plan is DPAA's continuous improvement to streamline processes, optimize operations, leverage efficiencies, and generate cost savings or cost avoidance as much as possible.

Research and Analysis Line of Effort

The goal of this line of effort is to increase the pace and scope of accurate research, investigations, and analysis to accelerate the accounting and communication process. To achieve this goal, DPAA has instituted a Research Working Group that will develop and propose comprehensive agency-level research strategies and standards to streamline research processes and implement innovative techniques that support the increase in pace and scope of accounting efforts across time, and shape recommendations as changes in personnel, leadership, and public-private partnership management evolve.

Also, DPAA has developed a methodical, continuous case categorization process to manage the cases of DoD and select civilian personnel who are unaccounted for from World War II through Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. This process is dynamic, and a case in a category may move to another, if additional information about the loss is found. Each case is categorized as follows:

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

- Deferred: Cases that have no new and/or viable leads, or site access is restricted, making field operations impractical.

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

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

Section 916 of the NDAA for FY 2015 also revised 10 U.S. Code § 1509 to direct the Secretary of Defense to establish and maintain a single centralized database and case management system containing information on all those missing persons DPAA is seeking to account for. Additionally, Congress directed that the database and case management system would be available to all elements in the DoD involved in past conflict accounting. The case management system cuts across all four lines of effort. DPAA’s case management system became fully operational in April 2019. This system allows for digital document and content management, mission planning, case file management, and is the agency’s authoritative source

for data and case-related documents. DPAA is now moving away from many of its legacy data systems and the goal is to fully integrate its case management system into all agency operations related to accounting for missing personnel by the end of FY 2020.

As I will discuss in more detail later, DPAA has, pursuant to 10 U.S. Code § 1501a, increasingly utilized public-private partnerships, cooperative agreements, grants, and voluntary services to increase capacity and capabilities to pursue the past conflict accounting mission. DPAA's innovative Hub and Spokes Program, developed through a cooperative agreement, has resulted in more than a half-dozen universities and other academic institutions around the country supporting DPAA's efforts to conduct the historical research and analysis that is the essential first step in finding the remains of missing personnel and recovering them.

Accounting Line of Effort

DPAA's goal under the Accounting Line of Effort is to accelerate remains recoveries and laboratory accessions and in turn, progressively increase the number of individuals accounted for each year. In FY 2019, DPAA sent 118 teams to conduct field operations in more than 35 countries, a 23% increase from the previous year. In FY 2016, DPAA accounted for 161 individuals; in FY 2017, 183; in FY 2018, 203; and in FY 2019, 218.

Accounting for those missing from the Vietnam War remains DPAA's primary operational priority and the agency continues to refine its methods and to work with partner nations on initiatives that increase the pace and scope of operations. It is a priority because first-

hand witnesses are aging and dying, or memories are fading; soil acidity is destroying remains; and potential incident sites are being lost to development and nature. Challenges to accounting for personnel missing from the Vietnam War also include rugged, inhospitable terrain necessitating a heavy reliance on helicopter support driving higher costs; adverse weather conditions negatively impacting mission scheduling; extensive unexploded ordnance mitigation; and the partner nation government's ability to support joint field activities. These challenges combine to make Vietnam War accounting often complex, time-consuming, and highly resource-intensive, consuming nearly 70% of DPAA's operations budget.

It is often the case that a single Vietnam War excavation does not lead to the recovery of remains, or if remains are recovered, the degraded state of the remains and the associated complications for identification can contribute to a perceived "slow pace" of recovery and identification. Over the past 40 years, the Department has successfully resolved many of the less difficult cases; the remaining cases will be the most challenging, requiring extensive investigation, recovery, and scientific analysis, thus requiring more time and resources. However, achieving the fullest possible accounting of those missing from the Vietnam War is an achievable objective, and in the case of losses in Cambodia, realistically achievable in the next few years.

Among the four stipulations in the joint statement issued by President Trump and Chairman Kim at the June 12, 2018, summit in Singapore is the stipulation to repatriate and recover Korean War remains from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The repatriation on August 1, 2018, of 55 boxes containing purported remains of U.S. service members was an

encouraging first step in fulfilling that stipulation. DPAA scientists immediately began forensic testing of these remains, followed by AFMES-AFDIL scientists conducting DNA analysis, and 41 service members have been accounted for to date. Recently completed analysis of DNA extracted from the unidentified remains indicates the boxes contain the remains of 250 individuals; 170 that appear to be of Western descent and 80 that appear to be of Asian descent. Twenty of the 170 had been previously accounted for, and it is possible DPAA may account for as many as 150 service members from the 170. Additionally, DPAA's dedicated scientific team continues to actively conduct forensic analysis and make identifications of remains previously turned over by the DPRK in the early 1990s, and those recovered from the DPRK by DoD teams during the period 1996-2005.

In addition to identifying the remains of those repatriated by DPRK, DPAA stands ready to work with the Korean People's Army (KPA) on the remains recovery aspect of the summit stipulation. In spite of DPAA's multiple attempts to conduct a meeting with the KPA, we have not been able to progress past a working level planning meeting and exchanges of letters. We remain open to meet with the KPA at any time to discuss a proposal for joint recovery operations in FY 2020.

In FY 2015, the Department sought and received the authority to enter into public-private partnerships to facilitate accounting for personnel missing from past conflicts. DPAA has relied on the authority to establish a robust program to develop partnerships with universities, non-profit organizations, and other non-federal entities. DPAA's successful public-private

partnership program has substantially augmented our organic capabilities – often at significant cost avoidance -- in research, field operations, and other DPAA accounting mission activities.

DPAA currently has 57 active public-private partnerships, 34 under development, and 14 inactive with entities in 24 states, 1 U.S. territory and 14 foreign countries. Active partnerships are those entities with which DPAA has some formal arrangement; the in-development group encompasses those DPAA has researched and is considering a relationship with, and may ultimately enter into an arrangement based on the partners' capabilities and DPAA's needs; and inactive partnerships are those no longer actively working with DPAA.

During FY 2016 through FY 2019, DPAA funded 41 partnered field investigation and 41 partnered recovery missions at a cost of \$11.3 million. Associated with these missions was an estimated cost avoidance of \$32.1 million.

One example of an innovative partnership operation occurred in FY 2017, when DPAA partnered with Project Recover, a non-federal entity with global experience and access to cutting-edge technology, to recover the remains of U.S. Navy crewmen who were killed when their TBM 1-C Avenger aircraft crashed near Malakal Harbor, Republic of Palau, during World War II. After several Project Recover (and its predecessors) investigations of a debris field that was consistent with a TBM 1-C Avenger, in early FY 2018, a DPAA team conducted an underwater excavation of that suspected crash site and recovered life support equipment, as well as possible remains. In FY 2019, DPAA identified the remains as those of two of the three crewmen who were onboard the aircraft. Due to the in-kind public-private partner contributions

of Project Recover locating the crash site and providing excellent positional data, there was no direct expense to DPAA for this phase of the operation. DPAA only had to expend resources to conduct a recovery operation.

Similarly, in FY 2019, DPAA partnered with Deep Sea Productions, a non-federal entity from Sweden focused on outreach and education for underwater sciences, to conduct several operations to locate Cold War-era aircraft lost in the Baltic Sea. The project's initial results are promising. To date, this partnership has leveraged more than \$2.5M in partnership contributions, at no direct expense to DPAA, in pursuit of DPAA's accounting objectives.

One of DPAA's most poignant examples of successful partnership operations occurred in FY 2017, when DPAA entered into arrangements with the University of New Orleans, the National World War II Museum-New Orleans, and the University of Innsbruck, Austria, to recover the remains of U.S. Army Air Forces pilot Captain Lawrence Dickson, a Tuskegee Airman, whose aircraft crashed in Austria in 1944. While the estimated cost of conducting this operation with DPAA assets was \$280,000, using this arrangement, it was completed for \$25,000. Captain Dickson's remains were subsequently identified by DPAA and returned to his daughter for burial with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery on March 22, 2019.

Since almost 20 percent of the missing who are estimated to be recoverable are buried as Unknowns in U.S.-controlled cemeteries here at home and abroad, DPAA executes a rigorous and successful program to disinter the remains for the purpose of identification. To streamline the process and achieve efficiencies, DPAA developed disinterment projects that focus on large

concentrations of remains from a single incident or battle. Since 2015, DPAA has accounted for 237 of the approximately 384 Sailors and Marines from USS *Oklahoma* who were killed during the December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor. When initial efforts to identify their remains were unsuccessful, they were buried as Unknowns at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP), in Honolulu, Hawaii. Other large disinterment projects that DPAA has undertaken involve unknown remains recovered from the Battle of Tarawa, the Cabanatuan Prisoner of War Camp, the Ploesti bombing mission, and the sinking of USS *West Virginia* and USS *California*.

Particularly helpful with these large, and in some cases, highly commingled projects, DPAA scientists are leveraging innovative techniques and technologies. One prominent example is an analytical comparison of recovered clavicles against the service member's wartime x-ray. Developed by DPAA scientists and certified as a line of evidence, this technique has streamlined the analytical process and contributed to many identifications. Another example is the employment of a forensic stable isotope testing capability that determines the geographic origins of unidentified remains and assists in sorting commingled remains. These tests are vital to resolving identity when common DNA sequences are shared between multiple persons, only partial DNA profiles can be obtained, or no DNA results are available. In fielding isotope testing and equipment within the laboratory, DPAA will gain operational, time, and fiscal efficiencies.

In 1999, one of DPAA's predecessor organizations began to disinter unknown remains from the Korean War that were buried at the NMCP because there was a correlation to remains

previously recovered from, or turned over by, the DPRK. While this effort achieved success, it was administratively inefficient and operationally limiting leading to DPAA developing an innovative, clustered and phased plan to disinter all 652 of the remaining Unknowns from the NMCP. The Korean War Disinterment Plan was approved in August 2018 and announced later that month during DPAA's annual government briefings to families of those missing from the Korean War.

The plan has seven phases and is expected to take five to seven years to complete, depending on DPAA and AFMES-AFDIL laboratories capacity and the operational schedule agreed to by the NMCP. Each phase is grouped by its reported geographical recovery location, and the temporary cemeteries in those geographic areas, and then by remains recovery circumstances (including loss location, timing of loss, and/or circumstances of remains return). The phasing and order of disinterment were carefully considered to ensure efficient use of agency analytical resources, and to provide answers to the greatest number of families in the most expeditious manner possible. DPAA completed disinterring remains from the plan's first phase in March 2019, and began disinterring remains from the second phase in June.

DPAA cannot successfully execute this line of effort without strong relationships with key DoD organizations. First, AFMES-AFDIL is crucial to accounting for personnel missing from past conflicts. Pursuant to 10 U.S. Code § 1509, a senior medical examiner from AFMES is assigned to DPAA to exercise scientific identification authority; establish identification and laboratory policy consistent with AFMES; and advise the Director, DPAA, on the forensic science discipline. Additionally, AFMES has authorized another medical examiner assigned to

Tripler Army Medical Center to assist the DPAA medical examiner. AFMES-AFDIL provides all DNA testing and reporting services for DPAA's past conflict accounting mission, and is the sole DoD DNA laboratory tasked with current and past conflicts human identification efforts. Certified by the ANSI National Accreditation Board, AFMES-AFDIL works very closely with the casualty and mortuary affairs offices of the Military Departments to collect DNA reference samples from suitable family members, and with DPAA's identification laboratory to analyze DNA samples extracted from remains. With DNA serving as a major line of evidence, AFMES-AFDIL analysis is critical to making a large number of DPAA's identifications.

DPAA also collaborates with the casualty and mortuary affairs offices of the Military Departments. These offices are DoD's official conduit for information flowing to and from families of the missing, and are critical to DPAA's efforts to locate suitable family members to collect DNA reference samples from for comparison with DNA extracted from recovered remains. These offices are also responsible for notifying family members when a service member's remains have been identified. Additionally, these offices are responsible for making funeral and memorial arrangements, and handling benefit and entitlement issues for the families.

DPAA also works closely with the Combatant Commands when operating in their respective areas of responsibility, particularly the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. European Command, where the vast majority of DPAA's field operations occur. These commands provide a significant number of active duty personnel to augment DPAA personnel on investigation and recovery missions. In FY 2019, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command provided 398 short-term augmentees, and U.S. European Command provided 71. These short-term augmentees contribute critical skillsets, such as

explosive ordnance disposal technicians, medics, and linguists, where DPAA lacks sufficient organic capacity.

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

DPAA also coordinates and collaborates extensively with the Department of State, its regional bureaus, and U.S. Embassies in the 46 countries in which the agency has conducted operations. Their support runs the gamut from assisting DPAA personnel in interactions with foreign officials and citizens to incorporating accounting for DoD personnel into broader diplomatic and engagement efforts.

Communication and Engagement Line of Effort

Under this line of effort, DPAA actively engages with families and other stakeholders to strengthen transparency and trust, and to provide information about DPAA's activities. DPAA proactively communicates with families, VSOs, Congress, public-private partners, foreign government officials, other Federal departments and agencies, and the public.

DPAA hosts as many as seven regional Family Member Updates each year for family members of unaccounted-for DoD personnel who live within a 350-mile radius of major metropolitan areas around the country. DPAA and other government representatives meet individually with family members to discuss the details of each of their losses, and provide mission updates of general interest. This past fiscal year, FMUs in Philadelphia and San Antonio had the first and third largest attendance ever, 324 and 350 family members, respectively. The Department has conducted these update programs since 1995, reaching nearly 23,000 family members.

DPAA also hosts annual government briefings in the national capital region -- one for Vietnam War families, in conjunction with the National League of POW/MIA Families' annual meeting, and the other for Korean and Cold War families. The location of these events makes it possible for senior government officials to attend, and during these briefings, family members have the opportunity to receive updates on foreign government negotiations, formulation of national policy, remains recovery and identification, DNA science, archival research, and intelligence analysis. In 2019, the League commemorated its 50th anniversary, and the year prior, 720 family members attended the Korean-Col War briefings, a record number.

DPAA also maintains contact and communications with leaders from the major family organizations – the National League of POW/MIA Families, the Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs, and the Korea-Cold War Families of the Missing so they may keep their membership apprised of agency efforts. The family leaders also provide key insights and opinions to DPAA on policy, outreach, and other efforts. DPAA leaders regularly meet with the national

leadership of VSOs, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Korean War Veterans Association. These organizations routinely invite DPAA leaders to brief their membership at their national conventions and other venues. To stay engaged, DPAA hosts a telephone conference call each quarter with representatives from these family organizations and VSOs. During these conference calls, DPAA provides information about recently completed and upcoming agency activities, operations, and events.

Business Enterprise Line of Effort

To operate at a high level of efficiency and effectiveness, DPAA must invest in its workforce, refine its processes and procedures, and optimally apportion its resources to best accomplish its mission. The Strategic Plan includes a specific line effort to address these, as well as affording them both attention and prioritization. The overarching goal for the Business Enterprise Line of Effort is to shape DPAA's processes, capabilities, and culture to enable and produce efficient, effective, informed, and collaborative outcomes. This will be accomplished by identifying initiatives, instituting pilot programs, and making recommendations to advance a culture of innovation throughout the Agency.

DPAA's Business Enterprise efforts will focus on:

- continuously shaping the Agency's decision-making processes to drive efficiencies, effectiveness, and collaboration;

- adjusting the Agency's facilities footprint to optimally support operational requirements; and

- expanding and integrating partners into appropriate aspects of the business enterprise Agency-wide.

To achieve these objectives, DPAA has begun tasks that will lead to:

- Developing a leadership and professional development program to enhance workforce expertise and expand workforce capabilities.

- Leveraging the Case Management System to develop an agency-level common operating picture that will allow agency leaders to quickly and efficiently receive information that facilitates fully informed decisions;

- Developing a long-range resourcing plan that will allow DPAA to optimally place its personnel in order to gain operational efficiencies, use its resources to their greatest effectiveness, and maintain DPAA's capabilities as a center of excellence for its mission; and,

- Continue to expand ways to more effectively partner with non-Federal entities to augment other aspects of DPAA's enterprise, such as potential public-private partnerships with commercial genealogical firms to research family trees to aid in collecting DNA family reference samples;

CONCLUSION

DPAA has become the single, unified agency the Department and Congress envisioned. DPAA has increased the number of missing personnel accounted for each year it has been in existence, twice exceeding Congress' stated goal of having the capacity and capability with which to account for at least 200 missing personnel annually. Although we still face significant challenges, I am confident DPAA will continue to overcome them, and will not waver in its commitment to the families of missing heroes, Veterans, or the American people – a moral obligation to seek the fullest possible accounting of those who lost their lives in service to this great nation.

DPAA's mission is emblematic of the values of the United States. This nation sent its service members off to conflicts from which many never returned. They must never be forgotten. DPAA will continue to search for, find, identify, and return these lost heroes home to their families. Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you, and more importantly, for your support of this noble mission that -- in some ways -- defines us as a nation.

I welcome any questions you may have.