

INTRODUCTION:

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

It is my honor to be here as a representative of History Flight to share my 15 years of volunteer experience in the mission to repatriate Missing In Action servicemen from past conflicts. Thank you for this opportunity.

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David Colley wrote in the prologue of "Safely Rest" "We have lost touch with the immense pain and suffering caused by the war and the ripples of sorrow that still flow across America from that devastating conflict. We know little of the men who gave their lives and nothing of the struggles of their families." Prescient words indeed.

Mrs Irene Rogers wrote Army Air Force Commanding General 'Hap' Arnold in 1945 to inquire about her son who had gone missing in a plane in WWI:

'Dear General Arnold,

We appreciate your kind words and sympathy. Also the nice things you say about our son LT M.G. Rogers. I would appreciate it so much if you could tell me what evidence you have that all the boys died that day. Every branch of the service has been very kind. His six months gratuity pay is coming and his insurance papers have been taken care of but the thing I want to know is, where is my boy?'

Today, 81,864 families of America's missing servicemen and women still ask the same question, where is my boy?

Since 1952 to today, the search for America's 72,661 WWII missing, our 7,616 Korean War missing, our 1587 Vietnam War Missing and our 200 missing from the Cold War and beyond has been chronically underfunded. Since 1952 the mortal remains of America's missing have been lost in the passage of time, discarded as trash, covered up by infrastructure development and accidentally disinterred in construction and agricultural cultivation of former battlefields. The first two Marines History Flight recovered on Tarawa for example were garishly displayed on a battlefield tour guide's front porch in April of 2010.

In a forthright effort to help solve the issue of America's 81,864 missing service personnel we founded History Flight, a 501(c)3 non profit organization capable of deploying multiple trans disciplinary recovery teams to any part of the world to recover US Service Personnel. For the last 15 years we merged multiple professional skill sets into a holistic winning combination of search and recovery methodologies.

To date, History Flight has accomplished the 3 largest recoveries of American missing personnel since the Korean War and has recovered a minimum number of individuals associated with American loss incidents totaling 309 from Tarawa and 16 from Europe totaling 325 recoveries to date. History Flight recovered a minimum number of individuals totaling 79 in FY 19 alone.

History Flight has been a steadfast partner in the public/private partnership program with the DOD and our recoveries now constitute 20% of the DOD's annual identifications.

Last Friday I was honored to be able to attend the funeral of Pfc Joseph Livermore in Bakersfield California. Pfc Livermore was a Tarawa Marine that HF recovered in March and he was identified in record time by the DPAA Central Identification Lab. The outpouring of public support for PFC Livermore was inspiring as more than 1,000 people lined the streets to welcome him home and hundreds attended his funeral. His primary next of kin told me "Today is the best day of my life."

Today I was fortunate to be able to attend the funeral of Tarawa Marine Pfc Edwin Benson of West Newton, MA at Arlington National Cemetery. The meaning of a deceased family member returning to America for a hero's welcome is of infinite value to his family and to the missing as they regain their dignity and identity. Our experience has shown that more than 50% of the missing men that we have recovered have had living brothers and sisters and children at their funerals. The recovery of America's missing servicemen is a vital endeavor for their families and for our country. What we are accomplishing in recovering the missing is putting a little bit of America back into America across this great country from Bakersfield to Boston.

History Flight operates from offices in Virginia, Belgium, Tarawa and the Philippines. History Flight deploys trans disciplinary teams of forensic archaeologists, historians, genealogists, geophysical scientists and combat wounded warriors who know what it means to shed their blood for our country. Synthesizing our team's skills and life experiences has resulted in a business like and passionate approach to the recovery mission where the objective is success and the team will stop at nothing to fulfil our nations promise of never leaving a fallen comrade behind.

To date, History Flight enjoys a 93 percent success rate at every search and recovery operation they are involved in, a result that is unmatched by any other organization. To achieve that, History Flight team members have raised and contributed more than 3.5 million dollars and countless volunteer hours to the effort that has not been reimbursed by the DOD.

Land of the free, home of the brave. 81,864 missing servicemen are buried in unmarked graves.

Every Government Building, State Capital and Post office in our country flies the POW/MIA flag, yet our great country has yet to allocate resources equal to the need to recover our missing from America's wars of the 20th Century. Resources remain the only major impediment to America being able to recover the men and women who lost their lives in the service our our country. Despite the fact that History Flight recovered 325 missing individuals including 79 in FY 19 alone and has recovered 200 of those individuals for the cost that the DOD spends on average for 1 recovery in South East Asia, History Flight received a 66% funding cut for FY 20. How does the legislature expect the DOD to accomplish the vital endeavor of recovering America's Missing In Action if they don't adequately fund the cost of the work?

I thank you for your time and will now take any questions.