**About JPAC**

The mission of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) is to achieve the fullest possible accounting of all Americans missing as a result of the nation’s past conflicts. The highest priority of the organization is the return of any living Americans that remain prisoners of war.*

JPAC is located on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. The command was activated on Oct. 1, 2003, created from the merger of the 30-year-old U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii, and the 11-year-old Joint Task Force - Full Accounting. Commanded by a flag officer, JPAC is manned by approximately 400 handpicked Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Department of the Navy civilians. The laboratory portion of JPAC, referred to as the Central Identification Laboratory (CIL), is the largest forensic anthropology laboratory in the world.

JPAC also maintains three permanent overseas detachments, each commanded by a lieutenant colonel, to assist with command and control, logistics and in-country support during investigation and recovery operations. They are Detachment One located in Bangkok, Thailand, Detachment Two in Hanoi, Vietnam and Detachment Three in Vientiane, Laos. JPAC has a fourth detachment, Detachment Four, located at Camp Smith, Hawaii, responsible for recovery team personnel when they are not deployed.

*To date, the U.S. government has not found any evidence that there are still American POWs in captivity from past U.S. conflicts.

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**About JPAC**

The core of JPAC’s day-to-day operations involves investigating leads and recovering and identifying Americans who were killed in action but were never brought home. This process involves close coordination with other U.S. agencies involved in the POW/MIA issue, including the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, Department of State, the Joint Staff, U.S. Pacific Command, Defense Intelligence Agency, the Armed Forces Medical Examiner, and Armed Forces Institute of Pathology.

JPAC routinely carries out technical negotiations and talks with representatives of foreign governments around the world in order to ensure positive in-country conditions are maintained or created for JPAC investigative and recovery operations wherever JPAC teams deploy in the world.

On average, JPAC identifies about six MIAs each a month. To date, the U.S. government has identified over 1,300 individuals.
The search for unaccounted-for Americans starts with in-depth research. JPAC historians and analysts gather information such as correspondence, maps, photographs, unit histories, medical and personnel records about POW/MIAs from many sources. At any given time, there are more than 1,000 active case files under investigation.

In most cases, the search for a missing person will involve outside researchers, the national archives, and record depositories maintained by the U.S. and foreign governments. Veterans, outside historians, private citizens, families of missing Americans, and amateur researchers also routinely provide information about cases. JPAC experts put all of this information together in what is called a “loss incident case file” for each unaccounted-for person.

In addition to conducting research to support ongoing field activities, the research & intelligence section also provides historical analysis to help with the identification of remains.

Once research is completed to pin down the likely location of an unaccounted-for individual, an Investigative Team (commonly referred to as an “IT”) will be assigned to visit the site. JPAC’s six field investigative teams deploy to locations around the world for about 35 days at a time. An IT consists of four to nine members with specialized skills, including a team leader, assistant team leader, analyst, linguist, and medic. In some instances, an anthropologist, explosive ordnance technician, or life support technician (for identifying aviation life support equipment) will augment the team.

During a typical mission, teams interview potential witnesses, conduct on-site reconnaissance, and survey terrain for safety and logistical concerns. In many cases, investigative teams turn up new information that may help with eventual identifications. Teams operating in countries with active media outlets or a strong community network often gain new, valuable information about additional sites simply by talking with people who reside in the area. The main goal of investigative mission is to obtain enough information to correlate or connect a particular site with an unaccounted-for individual.

If enough evidence is found, a site will be recommended for recovery.
JPAC has 18 Recovery Teams whose members travel throughout the world to recover missing from the Vietnam War, the Korean War, World War II, the Cold War and the Gulf War.

JPAC’s recovery missions can last from 35 to 60 days, depending on the location, terrain and nature of the recovery. Reaching a site can be a challenge in itself. Team members routinely walk through jungles, traverse difficult terrain in 4x4 vehicles, rappel cliff-sides, climb mountains, and ride on horseback, boats, or trains to reach sites. The most common method of reaching remote sites is via helicopter. Adding to the difficulty, teams travel with up to 10,000 pounds of survival and excavation equipment. To date, teams have traveled to locations as diverse as rice paddies in Southeast Asia, cliff-sides in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, 16,000 foot mountaintops in the Himalayas, and underwater sites off the coasts of Tunisia and England. At any given time, JPAC has a queue of over 200 sites that have already been investigated and validated, and are “ready for recovery.”

In order to facilitate ready support to teams, JPAC maintains storage facilities in Hawaii, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, North Korea and in Papua New Guinea. Having these facilities strategically placed around the world saves the cost of shipping, and more importantly, provides ready access to supplies for teams in remote locations. The equipment necessary to support a recovery mission is extensive, from generators, wet-screening stations, tents, and medical supplies, to batteries, bottled water, eating utensils, and film.

A typical recovery team is made up of ten to 14 people, led by a team leader and a forensic anthropologist. The team leader is responsible for the overall safety and success of the mission, while the civilian anthropologist directs the excavation of the
The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command

JPAC History

- 1973: Central Identification Laboratory, Thailand (CIL-THAI) established; focused on the Americans still missing in Southeast Asia
- 1976: Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI) established to search for, recover, and identify missing Americans from all previous conflicts
- 1992: Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA) established to focus on achieving the fullest possible accounting of Americans missing as a result of the Vietnam War
- 2002: Department of Defense (DoD) determined that POW/MIA accounting efforts would be best served by combining JTF-FA and CILHI
- Oct. 1 2003: The two separate organizations joined together to form the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command

Repatriation

In honor of the sacrifice made by those individuals whose remains were recovered during a recovery mission, JPAC holds a repatriation ceremony with a joint service honor guard and senior officers from each service. Veterans, community members and local active-duty military often attend the ceremonies to pay their respects as the remains are transported from a U.S. military plane to JPAC’s Central Identification Laboratory.

Site Selection

Factors such as weather, terrain, site accessibility, and various logistical concerns help determine how and when JPAC teams deploy to recover a site. If a site is in jeopardy (due to urbanization, environmental concerns, political issues, etc.) a recovery may be launched quickly so the site is not lost.

How Many are Still Missing?

Each year, JPAC conducts at least five recovery missions associated with the Korean War, ten missions in Southeast Asia for Vietnam War cases, and ten missions in other areas of the world to search for MIAs associated with World War II and the Cold War. To date, over 1,300 Americans have been identified. The Central Identification Laboratory identifies, on average, about six individuals a month.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korean War</td>
<td>78,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold War</td>
<td>8,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf War</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam War</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*35,000 deemed recoverable. The others are lost at sea or entombed in sunken vessels.*
RECOVERY

site much like a detective oversees a crime scene. Other members of the team typically include a team sergeant, linguist, medic, life support technician, forensic photographer, and an explosive ordnance disposal technician. Additional experts are added to the mission as needed, such as mountaineering specialists or divers.

At the beginning of a recovery, the anthropologist sections the site into grids with stakes and string. Then, each section is excavated one at a time. This allows the team to precisely track what the teams find and where they find it. To help with what can be a massive soil removal effort, JPAC may hire anywhere from a few to over one hundred local workers. Every ounce of soil dug from the site is sifted by hand through quarter-inch wire screens. The screens allow team members to catch even the smallest pieces of remains, artifacts or personal effects. Recovery sites range in size from a few square meters, such as individual burials, to areas larger than football fields for aircraft crashes. When dictated by the environment or soil conditions, teams may also employ wet-screening techniques, where all soil/mud is washed through wire mesh with high-pressure hoses.

Once the recovery effort is completed, the team returns to Hawaii. All remains and artifacts found during the recovery operation are then transported from a U.S. military plane to JPAC’s Central Identification Laboratory.

Upon arrival at the laboratory, all remains and artifacts recovered from a site are signed over to the custody of the CIL and stored in a secure area. Only a small percentage of JPAC personnel have access to the remains to maintain the highest level of security.

Depending on the amount and condition of recovered remains, the CIL’s staff of forensic anthropologists first produce a biological profile from recovered skeletal remains that includes sex, race, age at death, and height of the individual. Anthropologists may also analyze trauma caused at or near the time of death and pathological conditions of bone such as arthritis or previous healed breaks.

Lab scientists use a variety of techniques to establish the identification of missing Americans, including analysis of
skeletal and dental remains, sampling mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), and analyzing material evidence, personal effects and life-support equipment. The JPAC scientific director evaluates these overlapping lines of evidence in an effort to identify the remains.

This anthropological procedure is carried out “blind.” The forensic anthropologist assigned the case in the laboratory is not the individual who completed the recovery in the field. This anthropologist does not know the suspected identity or details of the loss incident. This prevents any bias from influencing the scientist’s analysis.

Teeth are often the best way to identify remains because they are durable, unique to each person, and may contain surviving mtDNA. Ideally, JPAC’s forensic odontologists will have antemortem (before death) X-rays to use for comparison, but even handwritten charts and treatment notes can be critical to the identification process.

JPAC uses mtDNA in about three-quarters of its cases. All mtDNA samples taken at the CIL are analyzed at the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL), in Rockville, Md. These genetic patterns are compared with genetic patterns from family reference samples provided by each unidentified service member’s family.

Unlike nuclear DNA, which is unique to that person, mtDNA is passed directly from a person’s mother. Generally, all persons of the same maternal line have the same mtDNA sequences. Since these sequences are rare but not unique within the general population, they cannot stand alone as evidence for identification.

All items relating to an unresolved case, excluding skeletal or dental remains, are considered “material evidence.” Some examples are aircraft data plates, ordnance, and pieces of issued items such as weapons, packs, mess kits, and uniforms. These artifacts are examined in the field. Items considered relevant to the identification are selected by the anthropologist or life-support technician and brought back to the laboratory for analysis. This material evidence often aids in the identification of Americans.

Personal effects are a special category of material evidence. Every effort is made to recover all personal items (such as a ring, watch, comb, etc.) from the excavation sites since these items aid in identification, but are also invaluable mementos for surviving family members. Once the identification process is complete, these items are returned to families and loved ones.

Life-support equipment includes any piece of gear associated with a pilot that would indicate his presence within a crashed aircraft. Items such as parachute parts or helmet pieces can be critical in determining if a pilot was in the aircraft at the time of impact and if the crash was survivable. Furthermore, multiple life-support items may indicate the number of individuals associated
Closure

with a crash site. JPAC utilizes the U.S. Air Force Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory at Brooks City-Base, Texas, to help analyze items recovered in the field.

While JPAC’s CIL identifies about six Americans a month on average, the recovery and identification process may take years to complete. In addition to the factors previously mentioned, each separate line of evidence must be examined at the CIL (bones, teeth, and material evidence) and correlated with all historical evidence. All reports must also undergo a thorough peer review process that includes an external review by independent experts. Additionally, if mtDNA is part of the process, the search for family reference samples for mtDNA comparison can add a significant amount of time to the identification process.

Completed cases are forwarded to the appropriate service mortuary affairs office, whose members personally notify next-of-kin family members.
For specific information on a missing American write or call:

**Department of the Army**

US Army Human Resources Command  
Attn: AHRC-PED-F  
200 Stovall Street  
Alexandria, VA 22332-0482  
www.perscomonline.army.mil/tagd/cmaoc/cmaoc.htm

**Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps**

Manpower and Reserve Affairs (MRA)  
Personal and Family Readiness Division  
3280 Russell Road  
Quantico, VA 22134-5103  
https://www.manpower.usmc.mil

**Department of the Navy**

Navy Personnel Command  
Casualty Assistance and Retired Activities Branch  
POW/MIA Section (PERS-P665)  
5720 Integrity Drive  
Millington, TN 38055-6210  

**USAF Missing Persons Branch**

HQ AFPC/DPWCM  
550 C Street West, Suite 15  
Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4716  
www.afpc/randolph.af.mil/powmia

**Department of State**

Office of American Citizens Services and Crisis Management  
CA/OCS/ACS/EAP  
2201 C Street, Northwest, Room 4811  
Washington, DC 20520-4818  
(202) 647-6769