



JOINT POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND

JPAC FS-1

"Until They Are Home"



The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command's mission is to conduct global search, recovery and laboratory operations to identify unaccounted-for Americans from past conflicts in order to support the Department of Defense's personnel accounting efforts.

The Command is located on the island of Oahu in Hawaii, and was activated Oct. 1, 2003. Employing more than 400 joint military and civilian personnel, JPAC continues its search for the more than 83,000 Americans still missing from past conflicts.

The laboratory portion of JPAC, referred to as the Central Identification Laboratory, is the largest and most diverse forensic skeletal laboratory in the world.

The command maintains four permanent detachments to assist with command and control, logistics and in-country support during investigation and recovery operations. Detachment One is located in Bangkok, Thailand; Detachment Two in Hanoi, Vietnam; Detachment Three in Vientiane, Laos; and Detachment Four, in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Personnel from JPAC, along with other U.S. and foreign specialists, research, investigate, recover and identify remains of Americans unaccounted-for from World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Cold War.

The Command is organized into the following areas: analysis and investigations, recoveries and identifications.

ANALYSIS & INVESTIGATIONS

The search for unaccounted-for Americans starts with in-depth research by JPAC historians and analysts.



These experts gather information from records, archives, interviews and other sources.

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, historians, private citizens, families of missing Americans and amateur researchers also routinely provide information about cases.

Researchers take this information and create a "loss incident case file" for each unaccounted-for individual. This case file includes historical background, military medical and personnel records, unit histories, official correspondence, maps, photographs and other evidence. This groundwork lays the foundation to locate possible sites where missing Americans may be located.

After evidence and information is gathered, JPAC sends out an investigation team to potential sites. Each team consists of four to nine people including a team leader, analyst, linguist, communication technician and medic. In some instances, an anthropologist, explosive ordnance disposal technician, forensic photographer and life support technician may augment the team. Investigation teams also survey potential recovery sites so that recovery teams have the most up-to-date for future recoveries.

The analysis and investigation section also provides historical analysis to help with the identification of remains. At any given time, there are more than 1,000 active case files under investigation.

RECOVERY OPERATIONS



Once the decision has been made to excavate a site, a recovery team is activated. The command has 18 recovery

teams consisting of 10 to 14 people including a team leader, forensic anthropologist, team sergeant, linguist, medic, life support technician, communications technician, forensic photographer, explosive ordnance disposal technician and mortuary affairs specialists. Standard recovery missions last 35 to 60 days depending on the location, terrain and recovery methods.

Team members have to be in top physical condition to reach excavation sites, which are often in very remote places. Teams routinely walk through dense jungles, hike mountains and glaciers and rappel down cliffs to reach a site. Adding to the difficulty, teams travel with up to 10,000 pounds in survival and excavation equipment. Sites can be as small as a few meters for individual burials to areas exceeding the size of a football field for aircraft crashes.

Recovery teams use standard field archaeology methods in the excavation as directed by the on-site anthropologist. To help with what can be a massive soil removal effort, JPAC may hire anywhere from a few to more than 100 local workers.

At any given time, JPAC has a queue of more than 200 sites that have already been investigated, validated and are ready for recovery.

In honor of the sacrifice made by those individuals whose remains were recovered during a recovery mission, JPAC holds an arrival ceremony with a joint service honor guard and senior officers from each service. Veterans, community members and local active-duty military attend the ceremonies to pay their

respects as the remains are transported to the lab for analysis and identification.

IDENTIFICATIONS

Upon arrival at the lab, all remains and artifacts recovered from a site are signed over to an evidence coordinator and stored in a secure area. Forensic anthropologists are responsible for the analysis of human remains and material evidence, such as military uniforms, personal effects and identification tags.

Scientists use a variety of techniques to establish the identification of unaccounted-for individuals, including analysis of skeletal and dental remains and sampling mitochondrial DNA. They also analyze 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.

Once a case is complete, the information is transferred to the appropriate service mortuary affairs office who personally notifies the family of the identification.

While JPAC identifies an American about every four days, the recovery and identification process may take years. Since 2003, JPAC has identified more than 560 Americans. More than 1,800 Americans have been identified since the accounting effort began in the 1970's.

CONTACT US

Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command

310 Worcester Avenue, Bldg. 45
Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii 96853
Phone: (866) 913-1286

Follow Our Mission...

Facebook & Twitter: JPAC Teams

On the web: www.jpac.pacom.mil

**Download this fact sheet by scanning the 2D tag  with your smart phone

