



Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) is an agency within the Department of Defense (DOD), which is “using a secondary Department of War designation,” under Executive Order 14347, dated September 5, 2025. The DPAA’s stated mission is to “provide the fullest possible accounting for our missing DOD personnel to their families and the nation.” The DPAA considers “fullest possible accounting” as being “achieved when all practicable investigations and reasonable recovery efforts are complete; and based upon the evidence gleaned from such efforts, an analytic and scientific conclusion is reached that a person’s remains are deemed ‘non-recoverable.’” The DPAA’s authorities and responsibilities are codified in Chapter 76 of Title 10 of the *U.S. Code*.

On January 30, 2015, DOD announced the establishment of the DPAA. DOD Directive 5110.10, *Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA)*, established the mission, organization and management, responsibilities and functions, relationships, and authorities of the DPAA on January 13, 2017. The DPAA was formed through the merging of formerly separate components of DOD’s accounting mission: the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), and select functions of the U.S. Air Force’s Life Science Equipment Laboratory (LSEL). This merging was in response to a February 2014 memorandum from then-Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, which stated that the DOD needed to “increase to the maximum extent possible the numbers of missing Service personnel

accounted for annually while ensuring timely and accurate information is provided to their families.” See **Figure 1** for a consolidated graphic of the Department of Defense’s personnel accounting agencies and their consolidation since 1973.

As of March 2026, the DPAA has three laboratories that conduct forensic identification. Two laboratories are in Hickam Air Force Base and Naval Station Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and one is in Nebraska within Offutt Air Force Base. DNA identification occurs at the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System-Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, located at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware.

Major Accounting Projects

The DPAA’s ongoing accounting and identification efforts fall into five broad categories, which coincide with major conflicts that the United States has been involved in since 1941. These categories include World War II (December 7, 1941–December 31, 1946); the Korean War (June 27, 1950–July 27, 1953); the Vietnam War (July 8, 1959–May 15, 1975); the Cold War (September 2, 1945–August 21, 1991); and the Gulf Wars and conflict in Libya (April 15, 1986–present day). DPAA maintains public “Facts and Figures” displays for each of these accounting and identification projects, which are periodically updated as unaccounted-for personnel are retrieved, repatriated, identified, or accounted for. See **Table 1** for these consolidated statistics as of March 4, 2026.

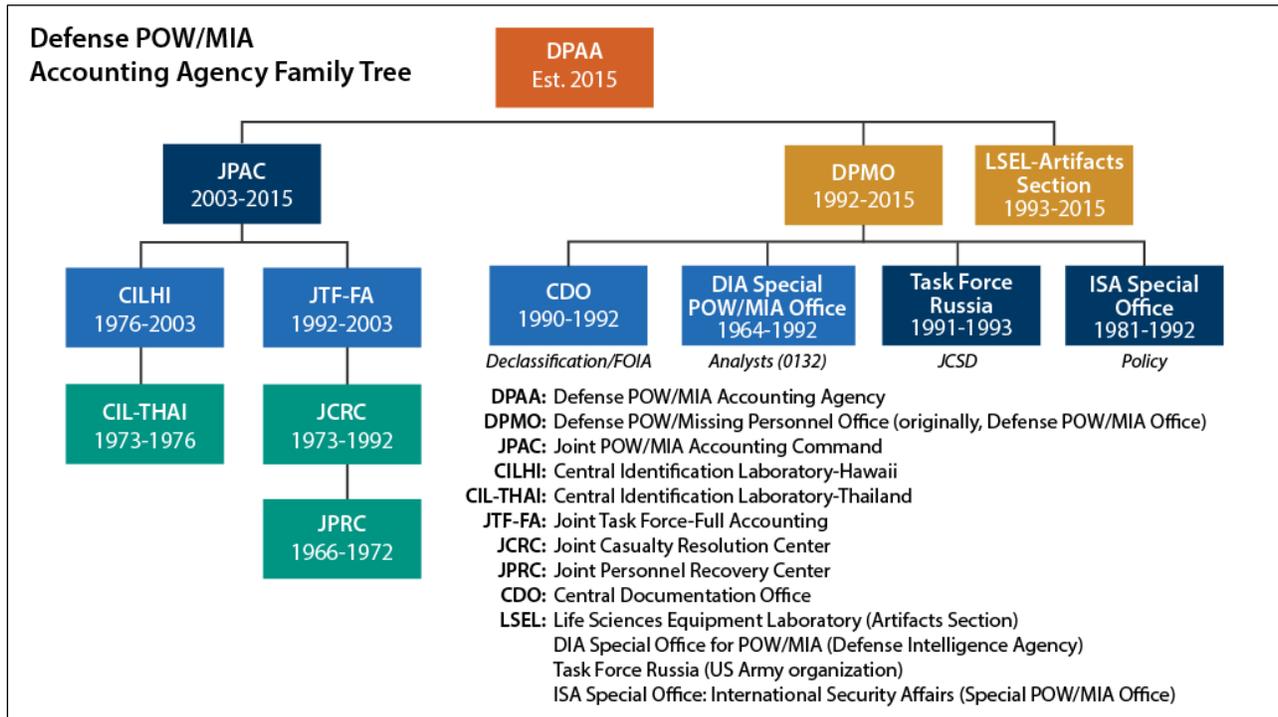
Table 1. Accounted and Unaccounted for DOD Personnel, as of March 4, 2026

Accounting Project	Covered Time Period	Locations	Missing as of 1973	Accounted For	Unaccounted For
World War II	Dec. 7, 1941–Dec. 31, 1946	Global	73,687	1,904	71,783
Korean War era	June 27, 1950–July 27, 1953	Korean Peninsula	8,157	777	7,380
Vietnam War era	July 8, 1959–May 15, 1975	North and South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia	2,633	1,067	1,566
Cold War era	Sept. 2, 1945–Aug. 21, 1991	The former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Hungary, East Germany, North Korea, Albania, China	128	2	126
Gulf Wars and Libya era	Apr. 15, 1986–Present Day	Iraq, the Persian Gulf, Libya	6	0	6
Total Accounting	Dec. 7, 1941–Present Day	Global	84,603	3,742	80,861

Source: Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency’s Accounting and Identification Project Facts and Figures, <https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/dpaaOurMissing>.

Notes: Casualty numbers are related to only those associated to the DPAA and its predecessors' mission starting from 1973 to present and do not reflect the total number of missing from each conflict. To respect the next-of-kin, individuals are displayed as "Accounted For" in the grids and case profiles only when (1) the DPAA has made the identification and (2) the next-of-kin has been notified. Numbers that are not associated with individual names will continue to update as soon as an identification has been made. Table is updated as of March 4, 2026.

Figure I. Family Tree of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's Preceding Agencies



Source: Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency Historical Background at <https://www.dpaa.mil/About/History/>.

Notes: This figure has been re-created by CRS based on a DPAA graphic for ease of readability and clarity.

The DPAA has partnered with foreign nations in an effort to comprehensively account for missing DOD personnel from previous conflict zones. In 2024, the DPAA conducted identification and repatriation missions within the People’s Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Accounting efforts have also been conducted within the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK). From 1990 to 1994, the DPRK returned 208 boxes of human remains. From 1996 to 2005, the DPAA conducted Joint Recovery Operations (JRO) within North Korea with the Korean People’s Army. During the 2018 Singapore Summit between President Donald J. Trump and DPRK leader Kim Jong-un, the DPRK returned 55 more boxes of human remains.

Authorizations and Appropriations

DPAA funding is typically appropriated in the Defense-Wide Operations & Maintenance (O&M) and Procurement accounts. For FY2025, DOD requested \$188 million, Congress authorized \$188.5 million, and Congress later appropriated \$186.3 million. For FY2026, DOD requested \$171.8 million, Congress authorized \$171.8 million, and Congress later appropriated \$171.8 million.

Agency Organizational Structure

Section 1501 of Title 10 of the *U.S. Code* designates the head of the DPAA as the Agency Director, who is “subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of

Defense, who is using “Secretary of War” as a “secondary title” under Executive Order 14347. The DPAA leadership team consists of the Agency Director, a Principal Deputy Director, a Deputy Director for Operations, and a Senior Enlisted Advisor.

Related CRS Products

CRS Report RL32492, *American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics*, by David A. Blum

Relevant Statutes and Selected Resources

10 U.S.C. Chapter 76 Missing Persons
 DPAA, Operation and Maintenance, Defense-Wide Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Budget Estimates, March 2024.
 DPAA, Operation and Maintenance, Defense-Wide Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Budget Estimates, June 2025.
 DOD Directive 2310.07, *Past Conflict Personnel Accounting Policy*
 DOD Directive 5110.10, *Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency*

Clayton M. Levy, Research Librarian

IF13175

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.