MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
FOR MILITARY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY POLICY
DIRECTOR, JOINT STAFF

SUBJECT: Case Categorization of Unaccounted-For Personnel from our Nation’s Past Conflicts

I am writing to inform you that I have created the following four categories to be applied by DPAA to all cases of unaccounted-for personnel from past conflicts. Over 250 different official terms have been used to categorize personnel who are still unaccounted-for from our Nation’s past conflicts. The excessive terminology causes confusion when communicating with families and stakeholders, and complicates our ability to allocate resources. The categories are:

Under Review: Cases will be categorized as under review if they have yet to be placed in one of the categories below. If circumstances or new evidence are presented that cause a previously categorized case to be re-evaluated, the case shall be categorized as under review until such time that a new category determination and assignment can be made.

Active Pursuit: Active pursuit cases are assessed to have sufficient information to justify research, investigation, or recovery operations in the field. These cases are the priority for operational planning and allocation of resources.

Deferred: Deferred cases are assessed to have no new and/or viable leads, or have restrictions to site access which make field operations impractical.

Non-recoverable: Non-recoverable cases are assessed to have negligible potential for accounting, such as cases in which the remains are lost at sea, or remains of an individual were cremated and/or systematically destroyed. This assessment will be based upon historical research, scientific analysis, and the limits of current technology. To deem a case as non-recoverable does not account for an unaccounted-for individual.

I have directed my staff that accessible case files be created and maintained for all unaccounted-for individuals, regardless of the assigned category. Each case file will contain the individual’s current categorization and will be briefed to families as required. Researchers and Analysts within DPAA are to begin categorization of each case effective immediately. Individual cases may be re-categorized in circumstances where new evidence, circumstances, or technology becomes available.
Cases of unaccounted-for personnel from WWII and the Korean Conflict in which the remains of a decedent were not recovered were determined to be “Non-recoverable” after post war efforts to find them did not yield results. If individual cases from WWII and Korea are re-categorized from Non-recoverable to Active Pursuit or Deferred, my staff will work with the respective Service Casualty Office(s) to ensure family members are notified of these changes in case category.

Michael T. Franken, RADM, USN
Director