

DEFENCE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY

DEC 20,2024 TO MARCH 14,2025

Vietnam War – July 8, 1959 to May 15, 1974

Missing as of 1973

Missing – 2,636

Accounted for – 1,063

Unaccounted for – 1,573

WWII – 12-7-1941 to 12-3-1946

From the last WSC meeting – 12-7-2024 to 3-15-2025

Missing – 73,679

Accounted for – 1,705

Unaccounted for – 71,974

Accounted for from 12-10-2024 to 3-15-2025

U.S. Army – 8

U.S. Navy – 1

U.S. Army Air Force – 9

Total – 18

Korean War – 6-27-1950 to 7-27-1953

Missing – 8,157

Accounted for – 717

Unaccounted for – 7,440

Accounted for from 12-18-2024 to 3-15-2025

North Korea

U.S. Army – 3

South Korea

U.S. Army – 1

Total – 4

Cold War – No Change

Gulf War – No Change



PERSONNEL PROFILE



Service Member

LT COL DONALD WILLIAM DOWNING

[Return to Service](#)

[Member Profiles](#)



Conflict

Service

Status

Date of Identification

VIETNAM WAR

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Accounted For

12/20/2024

On December 20, 2024, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) identified the remains of Lieutenant Colonel Donald W. Downing, missing from the Vietnam War.

Lieutenant Colonel Downing entered the U.S. Air Force from Wisconsin and served in the 557th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 12th Tactical Fighter Wing. In September 1967, he held the rank of Captain. On September 5, he and another aviator made up the crew of an F-4C Phantom II (tail number 63-7547, call sign "Sharkbait 42") conducting a nighttime armed reconnaissance flight over Quang Binh Province, North Vietnam. As "Sharkbait 42" and another U.S. plane approached a target, the other crew reported seeing a fireball and losing radio contact with Capt Downing. Search and rescue efforts began at daylight, but electronic and visual searches didn't find anything. On April 28, 1978, the U.S. Air Force declared Capt Downing Killed in Action. He was later posthumously promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. After decades of investigation into the incident yielding no results, a Joint Field Activity team recovered life support equipment, possible material evidence, aircraft wreckage, unexploded ordnance, and possible osseous material at a site in Quang Binh Province in May and June 2024. Evidence from the mission was accessioned into the DPAA laboratory in June 2024. The laboratory analysis and the totality of the circumstantial evidence available allowed Lt Col Downing to be identified from remains recovered from the crash site.

Lieutenant Colonel Downing is memorialized on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. His name is also inscribed along with all his fallen comrades on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, DC.

If you are a family member of this service member, [you may contact your casualty office representative to learn more about your service member.](#)



LT COL DONALD WILLIAM DOWNING

Unit

555 TFS 12 TFW

Historical Country of Loss

North Vietnam

Current Country of Loss

VIETNAM

Home of Record* WI

*Home of record is the city and/or state where the service member joined the service. This may not be the same location as where the service member was from.



PROGRESS IN VIETNAM



Current Status of Unaccounted-for Americans Lost in the Vietnam War

Of the remaining missing personnel still unaccounted for in Vietnam, over 400 are in a "non-recoverable" category. This means that through rigorous investigation and or excavation, we have conclusive evidence the individual perished, but do not believe it possible to recover their remains. On rare occasions, new leads can arise that bring a case back to an active status.

RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATIONS

U.S. POW/MIA investigators rotate into Vietnam on a continuous basis to pursue leads associated with the remaining missing personnel.

In addition to the interviews conducted during JFAs, U.S. and Vietnamese investigators have conducted nearly 300 oral history interviews of former and current Vietnamese government and military officials. This program is ongoing.



Since Vietnamese troops occupied large portions of Cambodia and Laos where Americans went missing during the War, the U.S. asks Vietnamese veterans and civilians to cooperate in our operations in the two countries. Vietnamese veterans have actively supported DPAA investigation and recovery operations in both Cambodia and Laos; many of these veterans have participated more than once.

A research effort continues in the Ministry of National Defense (MND) central archives. Since May 2012, Vietnam has turned over policy, strategic, and tactical level archival documents regarding unaccounted-for Americans.



FIELD OPERATIONS

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) conducts multiple Joint Field Activities (JFAs) per year in Vietnam. Each JFA involves approximately 95 U.S. personnel plus their Vietnamese counterparts.

Together, they work on investigations and excavations throughout the country for a period of approximately 30 days per JFA.



[About DoD](#)

[Top Issues](#)

[News](#)

[Photos & Videos](#)

[Military/DoD Websites](#)

[Contact](#)

[DoD Inspector General](#)



PROGRESS IN LAOS



CURRENT STATUS OF UNACCOUNTED-FOR AMERICANS LOST IN THE VIETNAM WAR

More than 280 Americans are still unaccounted for in Laos, with some of them in a "non-recoverable" category. This means that through rigorous investigation and or excavation, we have conclusive evidence the individual perished, but do not believe it possible to recover their remains. On rare occasions, new leads can arise that bring a case back to an active status.



PROGRESS IN LAOS

RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATIONS

- The U.S. completed an archival research arrangement with the Lao in 2007. The initiative, begun in June 2004, did not uncover any information regarding Americans missing in Laos during the war, but the U.S. continues to seek relevant archival records that may still exist.
- A Joint Archival Research Team (ART) accessed the Lao National Film Archives and Video Center from 1994 - 1999. The ART reviewed over 18,000 photographs with 8 depicting U.S. POWs and 9 depicting aircraft wreckage.



FIELD OPERATIONS

- The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) planned to conduct five Joint Field Activities (JFAs) this fiscal year in Laos. Each JFA can involve up to 65 U.S. personnel plus their Lao counterparts. Together, they will work on investigations and excavations throughout the country for periods of between 30 - 45 days per JFA
- Recovered remains believed to be those of Americans are transferred to DPAA's laboratory in Hawaii for further analysis and identification by forensic anthropologists.



[About DoD](#)

[Top Issues](#)

[News](#)

[Photos & Videos](#)

[Military/DoD Websites](#)

[Contact](#)



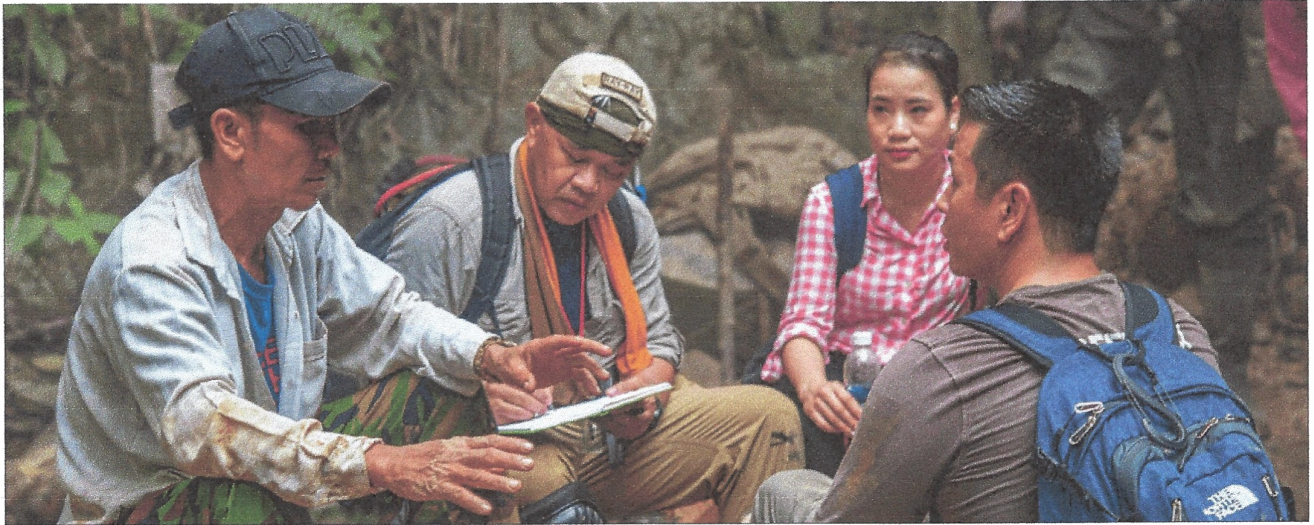
PROGRESS IN CAMBODIA



Current Status of Unaccounted-for Americans Lost in the Vietnam War

More than 40 Americans are still unaccounted for in Cambodia, with some of them in a "non-recoverable" category. This means that through rigorous investigation and or excavation, we have conclusive evidence the individual perished, but do not believe it possible to recover their remains. On rare occasions, new leads can arise that bring a case back to an active status.

RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATIONS



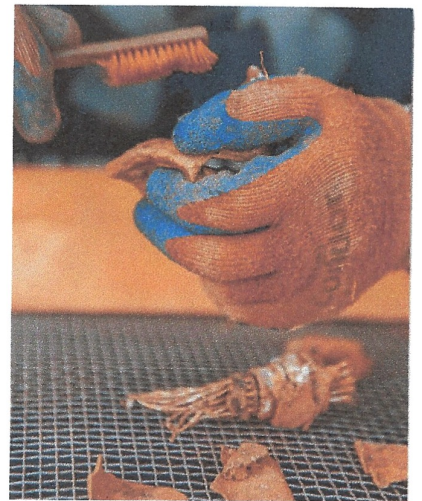
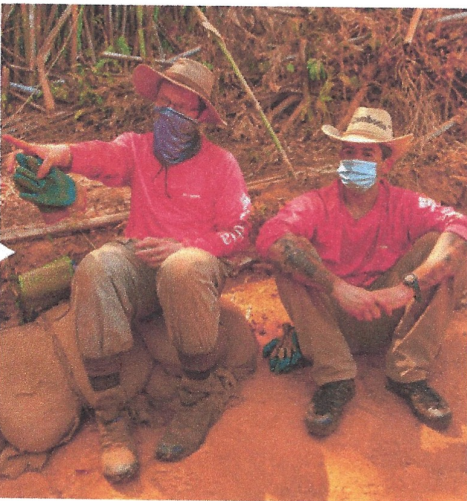
- U.S. researchers continue to review materials in Cambodian archives. Private researchers studying Khmer Rouge Wartime in Cambodia have also shared relevant information they have uncovered.
- Witnesses have assisted in identifying recovery sites on Koh Tang, the island associated with the Mayaguez incident. Thirteen of the 18 Americans missing from that incident have been recovered and identified.



FIELD OPERATIONS



The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) conducts at least one Joint Field Activity (JFA) per fiscal year in Cambodia.



Recovered remains believed to be those of Americans are transferred to DPAA's laboratory in Hawaii for further analysis and identification by forensic anthropologists.

[About DoD](#)

[Top Issues](#)

[News](#)

[Photos & Videos](#)

[Military/DoD Websites](#)

[Contact](#)

[DoD Inspector General](#)