

Supporting Those Who Serve: Understanding the Quality of Life of Our Troops

Submitted by April Kollmorgen, Central Division Chairman

The men and women who serve in the United States Armed Forces dedicate their lives to protecting our freedoms. While their mission is vital, it often comes with personal sacrifices that impact their overall quality of life. As members of the American Legion Auxiliary and specifically a part of the National Security program, we are uniquely positioned to advocate for and support those who stand in defense of our nation.

As John F. Kennedy once said, *“A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers.”* Honoring our troops means more than words—it means action.

Quality of life for service members includes physical and mental health, financial stability, family support, and access to strong community networks. Military life often brings frequent relocations, extended separations, and the stress of operational demands. These challenges can affect not only the service member, but their families as well.

The American Legion Auxiliary’s National Security program emphasizes the importance of maintaining a strong, prepared nation—and that begins with ensuring the well-being of those who serve. A ready military is not just well-trained and well-equipped, but also well-supported at home.

Today’s service members face evolving challenges, including mental health concerns, financial strain among junior enlisted personnel, and the difficulties military families encounter with employment, childcare, and education due to frequent moves. When troops face hardships at home, it can impact morale and readiness—making quality of life a matter of national security.

What Can We Do as Auxiliary Members?

Promote Awareness of National Security: Educate ourselves and others about the connection between troop well-being and a strong national defense. Share information through meetings, newsletters, and community outreach.

Support Troops and Their Families: Send care packages, write letters, and participate in programs that uplift deployed service members. Locally, offer support to military families through community events or volunteer efforts. Even one night of babysitting or a dinner with kid activities at your Post can mean so much.

Advocate for Strong Policies: Follow along with the Legislative program and The American Legion Legislative agenda. Engage with legislators and community leaders to support policies that improve military pay, housing, healthcare, and family services.

Partner with Like-Minded Organizations: Work alongside other veterans’ groups and military support organizations to expand our impact and resources. Work together for the biggest impact possible.

As Ronald Reagan reminded us, *“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction.”* Supporting our troops today ensures that future generations continue to live in freedom.

Supporting the quality of life for our troops is not just an act of kindness—it is a critical component of national security. Through advocacy, education, and service, we honor those who serve and reinforce the foundation of our country’s strength. Together, as American Legion Auxiliary members, we can ensure that no service member or military family stands alone.

May Dates to Remember

- **Month of the Military Caregiver**
- **Mental Health Awareness Month**
- **May 8th Military Spouse Appreciation Day**
- **May 16th Armed Forces Day**
- **May 22nd National Poppy Day**
- **May 25th Memorial Day**

Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA)

Submitted by Pam Seelye, Western Division

The **Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA)** is an agency whose mission is to recover and identify unaccounted Department of Defense personnel listed as prisoners of war (POW) or missing in action (MIA) from designated past conflicts, from countries around the world.

Formed on January 15, 2015, as the result of the merger of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office, and parts of the United States Air Force's Life Sciences Lab.

The Vision, Mission, and Values of the DPAA -

Compassion: We conduct our work and communication with empathy.

Integrity: We live our lives with truthfulness and objectivity.

Teamwork: We are committed and willing to do all we can to assist each other, thereby strengthening our collective ability to partner with family organizations, veterans, public and private entities, foreign governments, and academia to achieve our mission.

Respect: We always demonstrate the utmost regard for one another, our partners, and our missing personnel and their families.

Innovation: We apply fresh thinking and continuously improve everything we do.

The mission of the DPAA is to provide the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel to their families and the nation.

When American personnel remain captive, missing, or otherwise unaccounted for at the conclusion of hostilities, the DoD accounting community becomes the responsible agent for determining the fate of the missing.

For those killed-in-action, the accounting community is charged with locating, recovering, and identifying their remains. More than 81,000 Americans remain missing from World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War.

The term "fullest possible accounting" is a significant, historically rooted, and motivated description of the U.S. Government's commitment to determining what happened to U.S. personnel who are unaccounted-for from past conflicts.

Unaccounted-for personnel are commonly referred to as "missing."

According to Section 1513, Title 10, United States Code, and Department of Defense (DoD) policy, unaccounted-for DoD personnel from past conflicts may only be "accounted for" if they are returned alive or their remains are recovered and identified.

Agency teams deploy to countries throughout Asia, the Pacific, and Europe, as well as to sites in the United States. The agency also performs humanitarian missions worldwide to recover and identify individuals as directed by Pacific Command. The DPAA is made up of more than 700 scientists, historians, mountaineers, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), translators, archeologists, dentists, logistics, and support staff. Scientific laboratories are maintained at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, and Joint Base Pearl Harbor–Hickam, Hawaii, with their headquarters located at The Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

National POW/MIA Recognition Day is observed on the third Friday in September. In 2026, that date is September 18th. It honors those who were prisoners of war (POWs) and those who are still missing in action (MIA). A national-level ceremony is traditionally held at the Pentagon; it features members from each branch of the military services. In addition to the national-level ceremony, "observances of National POW/MIA Recognition Day" are held across the country on military installations, ships at sea, state capitols, schools, and veterans' facilities.

For further information, go to the DPAA website www.DPAA.Mil

References: www.dpaa.mil and Wikipedia

American Legion Auxiliary Salute to Servicemembers Award

<https://member.legion-aux.org/Salute-to-Servicemembers-Award-Form>

The American Legion Auxiliary has officially opened nominations for the **2026 ALA Salute to Servicemembers Award**, an annual honor presented at National Convention to recognize up to seven outstanding servicemembers — one from each branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserve. The award highlights individuals who stand out among their peers and make meaningful contributions both in and beyond their military careers.

Any ALA member, Unit, or Department may submit a nomination, allowing nominators to tell the story of why their chosen servicemember exemplifies exceptional service and community impact. Requirements are intentionally simple — a narrative of up to 1,000 words, a photo (preferably an official DoD image), and an endorsement from the nominee's command group.

Nominations are open now through **June 1, 2026**, and the online form is currently live. This award reflects the ALA's mission of honoring those who serve and strengthening communities through recognition, advocacy, and service. If your newsletter readers know a servicemember who goes above and beyond, this is their chance to help shine a spotlight on that dedication.

For more information, visit the ALA National Security Facebook Page and review the file Salute to Servicemember Informational Handout, or reach out to any of your National Security Committee members.