



ISSUE BRIEF: Fully Fund the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency

The Situation

- The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency provides the fullest possible accounting of missing American personnel to their families and the nation, carrying out a mission rooted in the promise that America will never leave a service member behind.
- More than 80,000 Americans remain unaccounted for from World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and Gulf War and Libya operations. Accounting for them requires historical research, investigations, disinterments, field recoveries, partner-nation coordination, forensic identification, laboratory analysis, and ongoing communication with families.
- DPAA's budget is moving in the wrong direction, falling by about \$25 million from FY 2025 to the projected FY 2027 level. This reduction threatens the people, planning, equipment, travel, scientific analysis, and international coordination needed to find, recover, identify, and return missing Americans to their families.

The Challenge

- The impact is especially serious in the Indo-Pacific, where many remaining cases are located and where recovery work is complex, time-sensitive, and resource intensive. The Indo-Pacific Directorate faces a projected cut of more than \$9 million, reducing its operating plan by roughly one quarter.
- After fixed mission-support costs are covered, only about half of the projected Indo-Pacific funding remains for field operations. In practical terms, that means fewer teams in the field, fewer sites investigated, fewer remains recovered, fewer identifications completed, and more families left waiting for answers.
- Delays matter. Time, weather, development, aging witnesses, and access to foreign sites can make already difficult cases harder to resolve. Once a mission is postponed or canceled, the opportunity to recover evidence and provide answers may not return on the same terms.

The Solution

- Congress should provide stable, sufficient funding to keep DPAA missions moving forward and protect the full accounting process from start to finish. These funds support search teams, travel, equipment, translators, safety support, research, excavation, underwater recovery, disinterments, laboratory analysis, DNA testing, case management, and family outreach. Protecting DPAA's budget prevents mission delays, preserves international partnerships, supports more recoveries and identifications, and honors the nation's promise to never leave a service member behind.
- DAV urges Congress to prevent further reductions, restore resources needed for Indo-Pacific field operations, and ensure DPAA can sustain the missions, science, partnerships, and family support required to bring missing Americans home.