



# JOINT POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND DETACHMENT THREE

JPAC FS-6

"Until They Are Home"



The mission of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) is to achieve the fullest possible accounting of all Americans missing as a result of the nation's past conflicts.

Detachment Three is one of three JPAC forward operating locations in Southeast Asia. Det. Three is located in Vientiane, Laos, with offices located in the U.S. Embassy and a forward operating logistics center in Savannakhet. Det. Three's mission is to provide command, control, and logistical support required to conduct field operations in Laos.

Det. Three, in cooperation with the Lao Government, conducts five Joint Field Activities each year. Det. Three also facilitates one unilateral investigation period a year, carried out solely by the Lao government component of the joint team, and coordinates trilateral investigations with Vietnamese witnesses to cases in Laos. These efforts are supported by the Lao Unilateral Investigation Program and the Trilateral Investigation Program. The Lao Unilateral Investigation Program has made consistent progress over the past 12 years, and since 1995, a number of difficult cases have been resolved using Vietnamese wartime witnesses. Det. Three also continues to work with Lao government counterparts to facilitate the Archival Research Program. In the past, the Detachment has also conducted the Oral History Program, and a number of Live Sighting Investigations.

Four active duty military personnel, two Department of the Navy civilians, and seven foreign service nationals are permanently assigned to Det. Three.

The following is a synopsis of the process JPAC follows to locate, recover, and ultimately identify Americans.

## ANALYSIS & INVESTIGATION

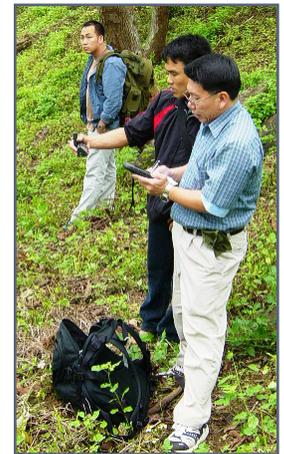
### RESEARCH

The search for unaccounted-for Americans starts with in-depth research by JPAC historians and analysts. These experts gather information from records, archives, interviews and other sources.

Researchers gather information from many sources and create a "loss incident case file" for each unaccounted-for individual. This file includes historical background, military medical and personnel records, unit histories, official correspondence, maps, photographs, and other evidence. This groundwork lays the foundation to locate possible sites where American MIAs may be located. At any given time, there are more than 1,000 active case files under investigation.

### INVESTIGATION

After evidence and information is gathered, JPAC sends out an investigative team to these potential sites. Each team consists of four to nine people including a team leader, analyst, linguist, and medic. In some instances, an anthropologist, explosive ordnance disposal technician, forensic photographer, and life support technician augment the team. These teams survey potential recovery sites so that recovery teams have the most up-to-date information about a case prior to deployment. They also search for new leads that may result in future recoveries. Most importantly, investigative teams help determine if and when JPAC should send a recovery team to excavate a site.



In addition to conducting research to support ongoing field activities, the research & intelligence section also provides historical analysis to help with the identification of remains.

## RECOVERY OPERATIONS

### EXCAVATION

Once the decision has been made to excavate a site, a recovery team is organized. JPAC has 18 recovery teams consisting of 10 to 14 people including a team leader, forensic anthropologist, team sergeant, linguist, medic, life support technician, forensic photographer, communications technician, explosive ordnance disposal technician, and mortuary affairs specialists. Standard recovery missions last 35 to

60 days depending on the location, terrain, and recovery methods.

Recovery teams use standard field archeology methods in the excavation as directed by the on-site anthropologist at each site. Recovery teams have to be in top physical condition to reach excavation sites, which often are in very remote places. Teams routinely have to walk through dense jungles, hike mountains and glaciers, and rappel down cliffs. Each team travels with up to 10,000 pounds in survival and excavation equipment.

Recovery sites can be as small as a few meters for individual burials to areas exceeding the size of a football field for aircraft crashes. At the beginning of a recovery, the anthropologist sections the site into grids with stakes and string. Then, each section is excavated one at a time. To help with what can be a massive soil removal effort, JPAC may hire anywhere from a few to over 100 local workers.

Once the recovery effort is completed, the team returns to Hawaii. All remains and artifacts found during the recovery operation are then transported from a U.S. military plane to JPAC's Central Identification Laboratory.



## ARRIVAL CEREMONY

In honor of the sacrifice made by those individuals whose remains were recovered during a recovery mission, JPAC holds an arrival ceremony with a joint service honor guard and senior officers from each service. Veterans, community members and local active-duty military often attend the ceremonies to pay their respects as the remains are transported from a U.S. military plane to JPAC's Central Identification Laboratory.

## IDENTIFICATION

Upon arrival at the laboratory, all remains and artifacts recovered from a site are signed over to the custody of the CIL and stored in a secure area. In the laboratory, anthropologists are responsible for the skeletal analysis of hu-

man remains and the analysis of material evidence such as military uniforms, personal affects, and identification tags.

Depending on the amount and condition of recovered remains, the CIL scientists first produce a biological profile from recovered skeletal remains that includes sex, race, age at death, and height of the individual. Anthropologists may also analyze trauma caused at or near the time of death and pathological conditions of bone such as arthritis or previous healed breaks.



## CLOSURE

While the CIL identifies about two Americans a week on average, the recovery and identification process may take years to complete. Approximately 74 POW/MIAs are identified, on average, per year.

Once a case is completed, the identified American is transferred to the appropriate service mortuary affairs office. Military members from these offices then notify families personally of the identification.

## DETACHMENT THREE HISTORY

- Det. Three was officially established in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic, in Jan. 1992 as one of four geographically separated detachments under Joint Task Force-Full Accounting Headquarters at Camp Smith, Hawaii.
- On Oct. 1, 2003, JPAC was formed from the merger of the 30-year-old U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CIL-HI) and the 11-year-old Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA).

## CONTACT US

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