

M.I.A. Recovery Network

M.I.A. Recovery Network is a 501-c-3 organization incorporated in the State of Texas. The goal of the organization is to provide primary source archival research services to historians and family members of the missing in action of World War II, which number approximately 73,000. Of this 73,000 there are 20,000 or more estimated to be recoverable or identified, as stated by the Defense Missing Persons and POW-MIA Agency.

We began as a group of volunteers and continue as such today. Kenneth Breaux, the founder, is a retired US Naval Officer who first became acquainted with the MIA issue serving during the Vietnam war. In 2001 he was moved to search for the missing airman father of a friend who was lost over Germany in 1944. The resulting search and recovery of his remains was a book, Courtesies of the Heart, which resulted in a more active role in the MIA effort and subsequently the formation of the MIA Recovery Network. Much of his time in retirement now is devoted to MIA issues.

In 2013, an MIA researcher approached him for assistance in the development of a database to apply structured information to the research effort. The result was a relational database consisting of a review of several thousand files of the buried unknowns in ABMC cemeteries in Europe and North Africa. This data was later applied to a Geographic Information System that is web based and illustrate both the data and physical location of every buried unknown in Europe and North Africa. During the years of development MIA Recovery Network has been involved in several recoveries. The data is able to be sorted for physical characteristics of the unknown, the date of death, dental characteristics, uniforms denoting branch of service, the physical recovery location, temporary and permanent cemetery, longitude and latitude of recovery site, personal effects such as pictures, letters, et cetera, and a sketch of the recovery site when available.

MIA Recovery Network does not intend to sell this data or use it to pay for their operations. The goal is to seek out other organizations that might benefit from having the data and then go on to generate recoveries and identifications of the missing. MIA Recovery Network will then donate the data to those organizations or family members, and provide updated information on a regular basis. The only restriction we ask for the data is that it be presented with a copyright notification when and if distributed.

The next, and much more ambitious vision for the data is the analysis of some 80,000 pages of scanned data from the national archives from Morning Reports, After Action Reports, Combat Interviews, Missing Aircrew Reports. These need to be indexed and placed into a data flow algorithm that will enable researchers to drill down into the data and develop further clues to assist in identification of the missing. Among applications being considered is software such as IBM Watson.

