

Historical Time Line with Comments

1983 – Inspector General Investigation of POW/MIA Office at DIA

“The branch was overexposed to external pressures and the present internal organization as well as current management of old voluminous files did not allow for an efficient operation. Morale and intelligence analysis suffered as a result...”

1983 – 1884 – Review of Ken deGraffenried, member of the National Security Council on DIA’s POW/MIA effort - Memorandum for Record - written by Robert Taylor an investigator for the Senate Select Committee, in 1992.

Mr. Taylor reported his interview with Mr. deGraffenried and his involvement with POW/MIA matters this way. “To quote Mr. deGraffenreid precisely, the “people working that issue, could not find a POW, if a POW dropped on their head.” He went on to say that no one working the problem “was willing to suspend their belief that the Vietnamese had no rational reason for holding POWs, in order to do objective analysis.” As a result, he said, “This did not lead to an intellectually honest judgment. He concluded the problem in the intelligence community was deeper than a cover-up, which would be fairly easy to resolve by firing those involved. He termed it a “systemic bias in the process” that inhibited any creative ideas and led to their “trying to explain away anomalies.”

1985 – Inspector General Investigation of POW/MIA Office at DIA

“PW/MIA office did not have a formal set of standard operating procedures... There were misperceptions within the PW/MIA office concerning the mission and functions of the office...There can be no improvement to the worsening situation until a policy and public relations interface is inserted between the DIA and the rest of the world. The situation cannot be remedied from within the Agency.”

1985 - Memorandum written by then Commodore Thomas Brooks, DIA’s Assistant Deputy Director of Collection Management handling POW/MIA matters.

“I was not at all pleased with the situation I found when I took over responsibility for the POW/MIA issue. The deeper I looked, the less professional the operation appeared. It appeared to be particularly sloppy in the late seventies, but it is by no means a squared-away operation today...”

1986 – The Gaines Task Force - The Results

Gaines Task Force found "serious shortcomings in every important area: attitudes, management procedure, organization and leadership." The report cited “17 major issues which derived from these findings....” Heading the list of major issues is the “mindset to debunk.” “Unhealthy attitudes are evident in the deeply defensive mindset which promotes a rigid inflexibility towards criticism and an adversarial approach to those with strong dissenting views. There also tends to be a strong moralistic bias at work, which manifests as a preoccupation with everybody’s motives and unrealistic expectations with regard to source accuracy. This could also be termed the “Mindset to debunk....”

1991 – Resignation Letter of Col. Millard “Mike Peck, Chief of DIA’s Special Office for POW/MIAs

“The mindset to “debunk” is alive and well. It is held at all levels, and continues to pervade the POWMIA Office, which is not necessarily the fault of DIA. Practically all analysis is directed to finding fault with the Source. Rarely has there been any effective, active follow through on any of the sightings, nor is there a responsive “action arm” to routinely and aggressively pursue leads. The latter was a moot point, anyway, since the Office was continuously buried in an avalanche of “ad hoc” taskings from every quarter, all of which required an immediate response. It was impossible to plan ahead or prioritize course of action. Any real effort to pursue live sighting reports or exercise initiative was diminished by the plethora of “busy work” projects, directed by high authority outside of DIA. A number of these grandiose endeavors bordered on the ridiculous, and – quite significantly – there was never an audit trail.

None of these taskings were ever requested formally. There was, and still is refusal by any of the players to follow normal intelligence channels in dealing with the POW-MIA Office.”

1993 – Finding of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs

“The U.S. government process for accounting for American’s missing in Southeast Asia has been flawed by a lack of organization clarity, coordination and consistency.”

1995 – Inspector General Report, Review of DPMO

“Like building a ship while under sail it is not easy to meld disparate organizational entities together while faced with multiple operational demands. However, that is the challenge faced by the DPMO. Our initial research at DPMO led us to conclude that the organization lacked; (1) Well defined missions and tasks, (2) A planning system to see that major goals were accomplished, and (3) A stable organizational structure that supported effective Management.”

“To assist the office in tackling these areas, we outlined methods that we believe will help the organizations define its mission, establish a planning system, and structure its organization. We recognize the difficulty in setting aside time for such process building. However, without the strong leadership that such actions require, the organization will continue to experience difficulty in justifying its resources requirements and completing the assigned mission.”

2005 – General Accounting Office Report August 25

“DOD has not clarified the precise scope of DPMO’s roles and missions. Moreover, the recently issued strategic plan lacks key elements, such as performance metrics and linkages between resources and performance goals. As a result, neither the Secretary of Defense nor the Congress have sufficient knowledge about how DPMO intends to accomplish its current missions or, if it is assigned new missions, how the office intends to apportion its resources. Until a formal needs assessment for DPMO’s workload is conducted, Congress and DOD cannot make informed decisions about what level of

resources to assign to DPMO or encourage it to assume additional responsibilities, nor can the Secretary of Defense fulfill his statutory responsibility to ensure that DPMO has adequate resources.”

2013 – Leak of the Cole Report and Release of GAO Study

2014 – Leak of the draft of the Inspector General Report “Assessment of the Department of Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Community”

Observation 1 - Lack of a Clearly Defined Mission and Supporting Resources

“The DoD POW/MIA accounting community lacks a clearly defined and commonly understood mission to guide focused and unified action, supported by and aligned with the required financial resources.

This occurred because the accounting community is not unified under a single chain of command with one clearly defined and agreed-upon overarching mission, supported by a related mission statement and the necessary resources to address recovery and repatriation efforts.

As a result, DoD could not achieve a sufficiently coordinated and unified effort among accounting community member organizations, which has impeded their effectiveness in making identification of missing personnel.”

Commodore Brooks wrote in 1985, “I am afraid we are in for some troubled times. We have not done our job as well as we should have in days passed and we will not withstand scrutiny very well.” As it was beginning 1983, in 2014 those charged with POW/MIA matters do not “withstand scrutiny very well.”

Yes, we have heard this song before. The question is will this time be different. Will things really change with the reorganization of the POW/MIA accounting effort?

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