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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD OF
REAR ADMIRAL DONNA L. CRISP
COMMANDER, JOINT POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

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Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. I am pleased to provide an update on the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), after my first year as the Commander and nine months following my last appearance before your committee. First, on behalf of the men and women of JPAC, I want to again express my sincere appreciation for your continued support to our personnel accounting efforts.

You heard from family members, veterans, and concerned citizens in the first panel, each with very diverse backgrounds and perspectives. All are important to us and we are appreciative of their support to our humanitarian mission. Delegation visits like Ms. Ann Mills-Griffiths just returned from and those the Veteran Service Organizations undertake each year serve to reinforce the United States Government's commitment on the POW/MIA issue and demonstrate the importance of our issue to the families of those who remain unaccounted-for as well as the veterans who served with these men. As I meet with officials from the governments of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, I regularly hear how much they appreciate these delegation visits.

As Ambassador Ray noted, our goal is to provide equitable treatment toward all conflicts; and application of our resources across all conflicts from World War II through the Vietnam War has been one of my priorities since taking command of JPAC. In addition to our field operations, much of my focus over the past nine months has been on ensuring JPAC is structured to effectively and efficiently accomplish our mission, to provide a quality work environment for the men and women of JPAC, and establish processes which will sustain and improve the organization and mission into the future.

JPAC currently has 348 assigned military and civilian personnel, 86 percent of our total authorization. Our personnel maintain a very high operational tempo (OPTEMPO), conducting on average 72 research/investigation and excavation missions per year and deploying approximately 113 days per year. While maintaining this high mission OPTEMPO, JPAC identifies on average 70 Americans per year, providing long awaited answers to families, fellow Veterans, and the American people.

In 2008 we worked in 15 countries and completed 72 missions. We conducted 21 World War II missions to include the first ever operations in the Republic of India. We continued our emphasis in the Kingdom of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam accomplishing a total of 45 investigation and recovery missions. And, we remained active on Korean War accounting having conducted five missions in the Republic of Korea while we also completed one Cold War mission in Laos.

We were successful in identifying 80 Americans who lost their lives in service to our Nation during past conflicts; this is a 14% increase over the 2004 – 2007 average. Of these, 26 were from the Vietnam War, 24 from the Korean War, 27 from World War II and three from World War I. Of note, this represents very close to equal distribution

across the three major conflicts; an achievement I am pleased to report and one that is in keeping with the guidance JPAC receives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD).

This year, we are working in 12 countries, conducting 62 missions to account for those missing from World War II, Korean War, and the Vietnam War. Our FY09 Operations Plan includes 40 Vietnam War missions in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam; six Korean War missions in South Korea and China; and 16 World War II investigation and recovery missions in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Suriname, India, China, Hungary, Germany, and the Netherlands. In addition to our field operations in South Korea, we also continue emphasis in our Laboratory and J2 Research & Analysis section analyzing information associated with Korean War “unknowns” buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, also known as the Punchbowl. JPAC, in collaboration with the Defense Prisoner of War / Missing Personnel Office and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory has on-going research activities and scientific research programs to advance our abilities to identify America’s heroes buried as unknowns in the Punchbowl.

Over the past nine months, JPAC conducted extensive bilateral discussions to advance the accounting mission, not only with our traditional counterparts in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos, but also with our constant supporters in South Korea, Papua New Guinea, and Palau. We signed a tri-lateral agreement between Hungary, Russia and the U.S. which will allow us to conduct an exhumation in a Russian Cemetery in Hungary believed to contain the remains of an American soldier missing from World War II. In 6 short months we held negotiations and reached agreement on operations in India and remained focused on resuming operations in the People’s Republic of China. We are joint partners with our host nations in this humanitarian mission.

In addition to continuing our operational focus, we have also concentrated on process and fiscal improvements both in our partnerships with foreign countries as well as internal to JPAC. We conducted a 20-year assessment with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, reviewing lessons learned, areas of mutual interest, and discussing the “way ahead” for the future. We have also realized very positive progress in Laos in how we conduct our Joint Field Activities. After many years of negotiations we achieved success in securing agreement for our teams to redeploy from airports closer to our excavation sites. This not only will allow us to save money but maximizes our team’s time on the sites. While this may seem like a small matter, it took years to achieve and represents greater flexibility and a continuing support from the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. The Kingdom of Cambodia has been and continues to be extremely cooperative and supportive our humanitarian mission.

Family Reference Samples (FRS) is an important component to assist in establishing identifications. JPAC continues to work with the Joint Staff, OSD, the Services and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory to improve the percentage of FRS collection across all conflicts.

Recruiting and retention of our scientific staff has been a focus of mine over the past year. We have implemented several programs such as student loan repayment, creation of developmental positions leading to senior positions, and relocation and recruitment bonuses to name of few. We are already realizing results from these initiatives. Our laboratory is currently at 78% of our authorized federal staffing and I have reallocated five billets from within the command to recruit additional anthropologists. In addition to federal government employees, the laboratory has 15 full time fellows which when added to the federal employees equates to 110% of the laboratory work year requirement.

One of our improvements in the past year has been the establishment of a Forensic Science Academy at JPAC. Our Academy, in partnership with Universities in Hawaii and abroad, provides in-depth knowledge and hands on experience in forensic anthropology, archaeology, and human osteology in the laboratory and the field. In addition to tremendous support from the University of Hawaii, we also signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Khon Kaen University in Thailand to permit JPAC scientists to further their technical expertise in the study of skeletal remains. This is particularly important for our work in Vietnam era cases to assist in distinguishing Mongoloid from Caucasoid skeletons. The Forensic Science Academy has been a win-win enterprise, increasing the knowledge skills and abilities of our JPAC scientific staff while attracting a new generation of PhD candidates from Universities throughout the United States. The preliminary results from the first class show that 50% of the students desire to work at JPAC upon graduation.

Our scientists continue to excel in research and development of innovative forensic identification tools and techniques. Over the past two years their focus has been on the study of cranial suture patterns, video superimposition and clavicle bone patterns which, once validated, published, and accepted in the forensic science community, should increase our identification rates. This new identification technique is a significant capability applicable to our Korean War unknowns.

Innovative technologies such as Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, are also being developed within JPAC. This technology assists in case development, research, field investigation, excavation, and the identification process. GIS allows us to view, understand, question, interpret, and visualize data in many ways that reveal relationships, patterns, and trends in the form of maps, globes, reports, and charts. GIS helps our scientists and analysts answer questions and solve problems by looking at data in a way that is quickly understood and easily shared. We are sharing this deployable technical capability with the accounting community, helping to provide a bridge to information, developing a common architecture and further enhancing our efforts toward the fullest possible accounting of American's missing from past conflicts.

Since my last opportunity to speak with you, we have more than doubled our total laboratory analytical space. This was accomplished by adding a 2,000 square foot extension on to our existing laboratory. When I departed Hawaii last week the remains

of more than 80 American servicemen were under analysis; this is almost twice the number under analysis this time last year. We are also finalizing the renovation of approximately 7,000 square feet of space in a building on Pearl Harbor. By this summer, I expect 50 to 60 more remains, unilaterally turned over by the North Koreans in the early nineties and often referred to as the "K-208", to be completely moved to the facility at Pearl Harbor. This will triple our analytical table space and for the first time in 19 years, our scientists will be able to analyze these remains in detail without interruption of other cases.

In addition to improvements in our laboratory, we have also improved the work space and environment for many of our JPAC staff. We replaced condemned trailers with modular buildings and continue to renovate several other trailers. While not ideal to have our staff and laboratory space divided on three military installations, we are quite pleased to have the additional space and look forward to the completion of our MILCON project when our entire Hawaii based organization will be in the same location.

This gives you a brief update on JPAC. I believe we are poised for the future, we are in the right location, and we have the full support of the U.S. Pacific Command.

Madam Chairwoman and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to address you. I am prepared to respond to any questions you may have.