



Mr. Kelly K. McKeague
Director, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
241 - 18th Street S, Suite 800
Arlington, VA 22202

Friday December 6, 2024

Dear Mr. McKeague:

I am writing to provide you and your agency with an update on the end-of-year progress and status of “Operation 85”. Over the past year, we have made remarkable strides in our mission to honor the service and sacrifice of the U.S.S. *Arizona* crew members, and I believe these updates below will underscore the potential of what can be achieved with dedication and innovative methods.

1. Significant Progress in DNA Family Reference Samples

As reported to us on December 3, 2024, by the US Navy & US Marine Corps Casualty Offices, there are now **451** U.S.S. *Arizona* crew members with viable DNA Family Reference Samples on file at the Armed Forces DNA Identification Lab (AFDIL) (**423 Navy and 28 Marines**). This marks a monumental increase from the initial **18** FRS samples on file when Operation 85 began last year. Currently, we have another **53** crew member families within the vetting and DNA Kit process, bringing our total located crew members with viable family DNA references to **504**.

This progress directly contradicts previous assertions that such results were impractical or impossible to achieve. It also calls into question the March 2022 “Report to Congress” conducted by the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, which estimated this effort would take 10 years and \$3 million to accomplish. Notably, the Report to Congress itself cost taxpayers \$83,000, yet we have achieved our results for far less than that amount—let alone the \$3 million projected for a 10-year effort.

2. Family Participation

We are proud to report that 1,086 family members of the U.S.S. *Arizona* crew (viable & non-viable DNA) have joined and are actively supporting and participating in Operation 85’s efforts.

3. Comprehensive Crew Database

In the past six months, we have compiled the most comprehensive database of documents related to the U.S.S. *Arizona* crew. This includes, bios, photos, enlistment records, medical records, dental records, original personnel files, and US Army IDPF salvage and recovery files. This data continues to grow and is updated daily as various information continues to come in from multiple sources.

4. **X-Files Collection**

We retain all “unclassified” X-Files related to the U.S.S. *Arizona* unknowns, which provide invaluable details about remains, including dental records, height, weight, age and skeletal information. Additionally, we have collected and begun processing documents from other unknowns at the Punchbowl, incorporating this data into our growing database. We are accumulating data daily from various sources including but not limited to the burial and disinterment records for Halawa and Nuuanu cemeteries.

5. **Advanced AI Technology Integration**

Using AI technology, we are cross-referencing medical examination records, height, weight, age, and dental charts between X-Files and our known enlistment and medical records within the missing crews’ original personnel files. Our proprietary technology allows for image and keyword-based narrowing of similarities, enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of our identification process. Work that might take a staff historian months or years to accomplish, can be done within minutes using cross referencing AI technology.

6. **Evidence of 141 Individual Crew Member Remains**

Our investigation has revealed evidence and documentation verifying the remains of **141** individual U.S.S. *Arizona* crew members located within unknown grave markers throughout all sections of the Punchbowl. We are still adding documentation to our database and continuously updating our search criteria and data; therefore, the number of individuals may continue to increase.

7. **19 Verifiable Names / Identifications**

Through our research and cross-referencing, we believe we have documentation naming the remains of 19 individual U.S.S. *Arizona* crew members (18 Navy and 1 Marine), who are currently buried as unknowns within the Punchbowl.

8. **Direct Family Engagement**

Families of the potentially identified crew members have been, or are currently being presented with our documentation. They are also being invited to collaborate with our experts and team on these findings. Respecting each family’s preferences and wishes, we will provide support individually or collectively to ensure these discoveries are shared with their congressional representatives, the public, and the media at an appropriate time.

9. **Expanding Our Technology Access**

We are exploring ways to extend and open our AI technology and database resources to support other families and private groups who have been searching for their loved ones from other military conflicts beyond Pearl Harbor. Designed for scalability, our systems and processes can be adapted to similar efforts. Hearing from frustrated families weekly, we remain committed to the belief that every unknown case has the potential to be resolved.

10. Supporting FGG DNA Technology

Over the past year, we have invested heavily into understanding the process and capabilities of Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG), compared to the current DNA methods and capabilities of AFDIL. I strongly believe that any current DoD policies preventing the use of modern FGG DNA technology and methodology will tragically continue to perpetuate AFDIL's current deficiencies. I strongly support and encourage the DPAA to remove any barriers and embrace newer and more accurate DNA technology through awarding outside FGG contracts to accredited labs.

As we look ahead, I firmly believe the DPAA's congressionally mandated goal of 200 annual identifications is not just a target to strive for, but a baseline that should be consistently achieved and exceeded year over year.

Over the past decade, your agency has met this mandate only twice, which highlights an opportunity for reflection and improvement within your agency's mindset and leadership. In today's political climate, there is a growing expectation for government agencies to operate with both efficiency and measurable success. An 80% failure rate over 10 years in performing such a critical mission, raises concerns about whether the current approach is meeting the standards taxpayers rightly deserve and expect. This could be an ideal moment to reassess strategies and renew the commitment to the noble mission entrusted to the DPAA.

Time is of the essence.

If the DPAA remains reluctant to adopt modern DNA technology and innovative research methods, it risks perpetuating inefficiencies and continuing to fall short of its identification mandate and its promise to the American people. However, we have always extended a hand in cooperation and remain committed to doing so. Should the DPAA choose to embrace real solutions and cutting-edge advancements in technology, we stand ready to collaborate in driving meaningful improvements in efficiency and results, not just for the U.S.S. *Arizona* unknowns, but potentially thousands of families waiting for answers from other conflicts and wars. Together, we can honor the mission more effectively and deliver the outcomes that the families and our Nation deserve.

Respectfully,



Kevin D. Kline

Executive Director

The U.S.S. Arizona "Operation 85"

(Grand Nephew of GM2c Robert Edwin Kline)

202.329.5432 (mobile/text)

kkline@ussarizona.navy

