



Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office

Personnel Accounting in Burma

As of March 2012

Main Points

- **Approximately 730 Americans are unaccounted-for from World War II in Burma.**
- **7 individuals identified.**
- **Last operation conducted November 2004.**

Historic Significance – 1942-1945

- After invading China in 1937, Japanese forces controlled virtually all of China's Pacific coast and large parts of its interior—giving the Japanese Navy command of all ocean approaches. In the spring of 1942, Japanese units overran Burma, cutting off the last significant land routes that supplied the struggling armies of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek in China.
- The United States and its allies needed to keep China in the war because its forces occupied hundreds of thousands of Japanese troops. Holding Chinese turf permitted the Allies to attack Axis powers in the European theater and at the same time build a launch site for an Allied attack on Japan's home islands. However, that strategy depended on a routine supply route for China and its allies.
- In April 1942, Allied pilots, including the China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC), began flying the "Hump," and continued cargo missions until 1945, when the Burma Road reopened. The dangerous 530-mile long passage over the Himalayan Mountains took its toll. Nearly 1,000 men and 600 planes were lost over the Hump by the end of China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater operations.
- Additionally, from April 1942 to July 1945, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Detachment 101 funded and organized more than 3,000 guerillas in northern Burma to assist in ambushing Japanese patrols, rescuing downed American pilots, and clearing landing strips in the jungle.
- From early 1945 to early 1946, American Graves Registration Service (AGRS) teams recovered 191 remains from the India-Burma Zone (IBZ). From August 1946 to April 1947, AGRS teams recovered an additional 1,182 remains from IBZ. Searches terminated in 1949.
- Approximately 1,674 Americans remain unaccounted-for in the CBI Theater. Of those, there are an approximately 730 losses in Burma.

Accounting Milestones

- Late 2001: DPMO initiated discussions with the Burmese government to establish the framework within which the U.S. Government could send teams into Burma to recover the remains of American service members from WWII.
- September 2002: The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs (DASD (POW/MPA)) visited Rangoon to secure an agreement on a timeline for recovery operations.

- October 2002: A three-person Burmese delegation visited the Central Identification Laboratory – Hawaii (CILHI) to learn about U.S. remains recovery techniques and discuss recovery operations in Burma.
- November 2002: DPMO and CILHI conducted negotiations in Burma, which laid the foundation for the first investigation and recovery operations.
- January 2003: A Burmese citizen turned over human remains and identification media from a crash site associated with a C-47A and its seven missing crewmembers (Missing Air Crew Report or MACR 4441) to a U.S. investigation team.
- October 2003: the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) conducted technical discussions for future investigation and recovery operations.
- December 2003: JPAC investigated proposed recovery sites, including the MACR 4441 crash site.
- February - March 2004: JPAC excavated the MACR 4441 crash site, recovering remains and non-biological evidence. In addition, the Government of Burma unilaterally turned over remains to the U.S. team associated with JPAC Incident 90, a case involving the loss of a C-87 cargo aircraft in India.
- June 2004: DASD (POW/MPA) returned to Rangoon to emphasize the need for Burma’s support in arranging for witness interviews and maintaining site integrity at potential recovery locations.
- November 2004: JPAC investigated potential sites for a future recovery operation associated with another C-47A and its seven missing crewmembers (MACR 7346).
- 2005: Burmese authorities suspended U.S. remains recovery operations.
- April 2009: JPAC identified all seven crewmembers recovered from MACR 4441.
- December 2011: U.S. (Secretary of State Clinton) and Government of Burma agreed in principle to resume the search for missing Americans from World War II.
- February 2012: DASD (POW/MPA) visited Burma and secured an agreement on a timeline for resuming operations.