



GLOBAL SECURITY
AFFAIRS

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**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DoD) POLICY:
UNDERWATER REMAINS RECOVERY OPERATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH
UNACCOUNTED-FOR U.S. SERVICE PERSONNEL**

Recovering the remains of U.S. military personnel, DoD civilians, and DoD contractors lost in or over water presents unique challenges. Logistical, technical, environmental, safety, and resource factors can make it difficult to collect evidence on underwater losses, often due to the imprecise locations of the loss. Even if the loss site is located, these same factors generally complicate underwater operations. Though we have successfully recovered remains from underwater loss sites, the decision to conduct underwater operations shall be made following an analysis of all available information, including available technologies, funding, and safety considerations.

The Department keeps abreast of emerging search and recovery technology and, as opportunities arise, exploits every chance to expand its capabilities to conduct underwater operations. Nevertheless, before the Department considers initiating underwater recovery operations, sufficient evidence must be available to correlate the site to a known loss incident involving unaccounted-for personnel.

Once evidence of a known loss incident site is detected, initial reporting is directed to the relevant combatant command and Military Department. The combatant command and the Military Department, along with relevant operational elements (e.g., U.S. Pacific Command's Joint Prisoner of War (POW)/Missing in Action Accounting Command), will assess the level of effort and resources required to conduct a safe and efficient recovery. If recovery of remains is determined not to be feasible or desired, the relevant Military Department will consider designating the site as a maritime gravesite or performing other services to pay proper respects, if not previously accomplished.

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