

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE 2000 DEFENSE PENTAGON WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2000

OCT 2 6 2013

The Honorable Claire McCaskill
Chairman, Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman McCaskill:

Thank you for your September 13, 2013, letter to Secretary Hagel regarding the August 1, 2013, Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight hearing entitled, "Mismanagement of POW/MIA Accounting." Policy, control, and oversight in this area are under my cognizance, and I have been asked to respond on Secretary Hagel's behalf.

As the witnesses mentioned during the hearing, at my request the Deputy Secretary of Defense has directed the Director, Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE), to conduct an organizational review of the entire personnel accounting community, and to provide recommendations for alternative organizational structures and processes to conduct this mission more effectively. We expect this review will be completed early next year, at which time we will have a recommendation for the Deputy Secretary on how to proceed to address these challenges. Once CAPE's review is complete, we will use the findings and recommendations to finalize our plan to increase the capability and capacity of the Department to account for our missing personnel. At that time, I will be pleased to meet with you to discuss the review and the Department's plan.

The mission of recovering and identifying remains is exceedingly important, and the Department also focuses on keeping the families of our missing informed. To this end, the Department is continuously updating families in person, and/or via letter, telephone, or e-mail about our efforts to account for their loved ones. We contact more than 5,000 family members per year to provide them detailed information about our efforts and to provide all available information concerning their missing family members. We reach more than 1,800 of these family members in person annually through our family update program. These communications are open, honest, and two-way, in which we endeavor to address all aspects of a missing service member's case including the feasibility of recovery. As we strive to meet the goal of increasing the Department's capability and capacity to make 200 identifications a year, we recognize that we may never be able to recover all our missing, but we can help the families better understand the circumstances surrounding the loss of their missing loved ones and our efforts to account for them.

I fully embraced the recent findings in the Government Accountability Office report about the longstanding challenges in accounting for missing persons. I agreed in full with eight



of their recommendations, and in part with the ninth. I recently asked the Joint Staff for assistance in implementing three of the recommendations: developing a memorandum of agreement between the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory and the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC); formalizing communication procedures between JPAC and the Services' casualty offices; and developing and implementing a coordination mechanism between the United States Pacific Command and other commands where JPAC is likely to operate. My office will lead the implementation of the other six recommendations; currently, five of these recommendations are planned to be completed by mid- to late-2014, while one recommendation (i.e., developing personnel files for all unaccounted for persons) will take considerably longer due to the scope it entails.

I too, take seriously allegations of retaliation and discrimination against employees who report problems in the workplace. Retaliation and discrimination are not tolerated; all such allegations are completely and thoroughly investigated, and appropriate action taken.

I greatly appreciate your strong support on this issue and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

James N. Miller

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