PROJECT RECOVER

2018 Annual Report


PROJECT
RECOVER

CONTENTS

MISSION

Project Recover is a collaborative effort to enlist 21st century science and technology in a quest to find and repatriate Americans missing in action since World War II, in order to provide recognition and closure for families and the Nation.

Statement of Social Value: Project Recover is dedicated to searching for and locating American MIAs and POWs from conflicts around the world. Project Recover seeks to provide recognition, information and closure to families of these service members who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms. More broadly, Project Recover provides a platform for educating the public about critical historical events, lost heroes who shaped our country and the importance of public service.

Introduction

Project Recover is a partnership among researchers at the University of Delaware, Scripps Institution of Oceanography and Project Recover Inc.

The project blends historical data from many sources to optimize search efforts with scanning sonars, high definition cameras, advanced diving, and unmanned aerial and underwater robotic technologies. These new methods are now being applied globally where service members are still missing. Information on finds by Project Recover are then transmitted to the U.S. Government Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), to assist in the process of recovery, identification and reunification of remains with the service member's family.

In 2012 Project Recover began as a grassroots research effort in Palau, with the team finding three aircraft missing from World War II during field expeditions in 2014 and 2015. Those two years, with support from the Office of Naval Research, set the stage for Project Recover's formalization with substantial financial support from Dan Friedkin in 2015, kicking off a three-year test-bed concept.

As Project Recover in 2016, the team expanded its scope globally, conducting missions in six countries in search of over 115 service members missing in action (MIA), spanning over 14 cases. Five cases associated with at least 19 MIAs were documented and reported to DPAA.

In 2017, Project Recover explored 23 cases spread throughout seven countries, associated with 85 MIAs. Those missions resulted in the discovery and/or full documentation of eight aircraft crash sites to DPAA, associated with 37 MIAs.

Project Recover finished 2018 examining 26 cases in eight countries in the Pacific and European theaters, as well as the Persian Gulf. These cases are associated with 104 MIAs and 22 POWs. The missions conducted by Project Recover resulted in the discovery and documentation of six aircraft crash sites and a section of a U.S. Destroyer associated with 70 MIAs.

Additionally in 2018, Project Recover became an official 501(c)(3) entity, retiring the name The BentProp Project. Dissemination of Project Recover's efforts has elevated the recognition of the group and brand with 469 million+ earned media impressions, and DPAA has a positive response to our efforts for expanding their depth horizon for recoveries, for additional searches and developing their underwater search procedures.

Project Recover is now planning for the next phase of operations (2019–2023) to continue using the best-available science and technology, combined with historic and archival research, to bring American service members home.

Bringing Our Heroes Home

While the U.S. continues to make extensive efforts to recover and repatriate its war dead, more than 82,000 Americans remain missing in action (MIA) from World War II to the present. An estimated 70,000 U.S. servicemen remain missing from World War II alone. Many of the missing were lost in the maritime environment.

The ultimate goal of Project Recover is to provide closure for the families of missing U.S. service members. In 2018, Project Recover was able to facilitate the recovery and repatriation of four U.S. service members, all lost in air combat over Palau and located by Project Recover.

The process from locating a site to full accounting by the Department of Defense can be lengthy. The discovery and relevant documentation for all sites is shared with DPAA, so the proper procedures for official identification, recovery and repatriation can be initiated. Once a family is notified by DPAA, the role of Project Recover is revealed to them.

It is the custom of Project Recover to hold a flag ceremony at all MIA-associated aircraft crash sites discovered or documented by Project Recover. A flag is presented and properly folded for each MIA associated with the find and held by a member of Project Recover until such time it can be presented to the family.

Project Recover is honored to have been invited and to have participated in three interment ceremonies, meet the families of these heroes, share our journey of these discoveries, express our gratitude and impart the importance of their sacrifice to the next generations.

AOM2c Ora H. Sharninghouse

In April, several members of Project Recover traveled to Findlay, Ohio for the funeral of Navy Reserve Aviation Ordnanceman 2nd Class Ora H. Sharninghouse. Ora was a crewmate of Navy Reserve Aviation Radioman 2nd Class Albert P. Rybarczyk, whose funeral the team attended the previous December in St. Joseph, Michigan. Both men were members of a TBM Avenger from the USS *Intrepid,* which was lost in Palau on September 8, 1944.

The Sharninghouse family traveled from across the country (TX, CA, NV, GA and OH) for the funeral in the hometown of his surviving sister, Joan Stough. Relatives shared that they had not seen other relatives in years and the funeral was a renewal for their family. Additionally, they expressed how the story of Ora was being spread in the towns from which they traveled.

The service at a local funeral home was followed by a 100+ motorcade to the cemetery. During the 10 mile journey to the cemetery in Bloom Township, 100s of police and firehouse personnel, veterans and locals from towns along the route lined the street in the windy cold saluting and waving the American flag. What a privilege to be a part of this. It was impressive to see the number of people that had served our nation from this small community, many of them resting in the surrounding plots of the small cemetery where Ora now rests.

Lt. William Q. Punnell

Navy Reserve Lt. William Q. Punnell was lost in the Western Lagoon of Palau when his F6F Hellcat was shot down on July 25, 1944.

In May, the Project Recover team joined the family of Lt. Punnell in Arlington National Cemetery to honor and celebrate his life. The chill of Ohio that we experienced the month prior was traded for the hot sun of the first spring day in the open expanse of Section 60.

Lt. Punnell now rests in hallowed ground alongside thousands of others of our nation's heroes. It is difficult to capture in words what it is like to attend a funeral in Arlington.

We were able to join and spend time with the family, represented by the nephew, Dennis Kelvie, his wife and their son, immediately following the funeral at the Army and Navy Club. There we shared stories of the several years the team spent in Palau searching for William's location. The family also shared additional pictures and stories of his life.

ARM3c Walter Edward Mintus

Two days after Lt. Punnell's plane was shot down in Palau, a TBM Avenger from the USS *San Jacinto*, was leading an attack on shipping when it was shot down in Malakal Harbor. Navy Reserve Aviation Radioman 3rd Class Walter Mintus crashed with his plane and his remains were missing until found by Project Recover and recovered by DPAA in January 2018 (see back cover image of the recovery).

After a rapid identification process by DPAA, members of Project Recover traveled to Pennsylvania in November for the funeral of Walter Mintus, or as his family refers to him, Uncle Bert. Uncle Bert's family has a legacy of service. There were several family members that had served or are actively serving in all of the branches of the military. They all expressed how they had heard stories of Uncle Bert when they were younger and how he was an inspiration to them.

Uncle Bert was buried in the small town of Portage, PA and like many small towns across America where we have attended funerals for these formerly lost Americans, they came out in force to pay their respects. When Uncle Bert's casket was transported from the Pittsburgh airport to Portage, he was accompanied for three hours in driving rain by the Patriot Guard Riders. On arrival in Portage, the entire high school came out to line the streets, they all held their hand over their hearts and saluted.

It is always a privilege for our team to receive invitations to these intimate events and something we do not take for granted. We are often asked to share words with those gathered and the families continuously express their gratitude for the efforts put forth by our team. Most of the time, the family did not know that the team had been looking for their loved one until they were notified of the identification. As is custom, we were able to deliver Uncle Bert's flag that was flown over the crash site in Palau to the family. The flag was immediately guarded by the recipient, in this case Richard Kozak, Mintus' nephew, as though it was a treasure waiting to be scooped up. Each memorial is different, but they are all amazing. Each one of these events drives our team evermore steadfast towards continuing and completing this valuable mission.

ACOM Otis Earl Ingram

U.S. Navy Aviation Chief Ordnanceman Otis Earl Ingram was also identified by DPAA from the same Avenger crew as Walter Mintus. Ingram's brother was also lost in combat three months later over the Himalayas. There has been no contact with/from the family.

Crew of "Heaven Can Wait"

In October 2017, Project Recover found the wreckage of the B-24 bomber "Heaven Can Wait." Unlike previous finds, a family member, Dr. Scott Althaus, of one of the missing (2nd Lt. Thomas Kelly) had reached out prior to the already planned mission and supplied their research and analysis of the loss of the B-24. After submitting documentation of the wreckage to DPAA, Project Recover reached out to this family to share the news on Easter.

In May a press release was issued over Memorial Day weekend, that Project Recover had discovered the B-24 bomber "Heaven Can Wait." An impromptu memorial service was organized by a Boy Scout troop leader in Livermore, CA, the hometown of Thomas Kelly. The family had placed a large headstone in the family plot in the town cemetery to honor their son years ago, and over this marker, the American Legion Post 237 presented a flag to the three family members present, fired a 21-gun salute and played "Taps." The Mayor of Livermore paid his respects and the Collings Foundation B-24 performed a flyover for the Kelly family during the memorial service.

In October, a memorial event organized by the families of the missing crew took place at a high school in Victoria, MN. Sixty-five family members of the crew, who were strangers prior to the Memorial Day announcement, came from all over the country to attend what was called a "family reunion" and jointly celebrated the lives of these servicemen. Project Recover was honored to be a part of this celebration and share the details of the expedition, discovery and possible next steps. Nine families represented at the "Heaven Can Wait" reunion experienced joy and then awe at the miracle of finding the final resting place of their families' MIAs and finding each other through the process.

The sense of community and hope extended beyond individual families and the collective families of the crew. In his talk, Scott Althaus noted how exceptional their situation is. He encouraged all the families there to talk with each other. Through the conversation, more of the collective story will emerge. Time is passing quickly, and he stressed the importance of sharing and recording memories of their relatives' lives. Finally, and most importantly, he urged families to cast a broader net and talk with other families about their MIA stories. What stands out through it all is the awesome significance of each of these young men's lives. There is no way they could have known the profound impact their lives would have, not only on the war, but on their extended family, community and the nation nearly a century later.

As of mid-December, DPAA and U.S. Navy Divers appear to have dived on the B-24 "Heaven Can Wait" to confirm the identification of the aircraft and develop a strategy for a recovery operation in 2019.

ROV documenting wreckage in Bering Sea.

Research, Science & Technology

Project Recover integrates a diverse set of disciplines in its quest to locate MIAs including, but not limited to, marine science; ocean technology (including unmanned robotics, imaging and sonar); unmanned aerial systems; aeronautics; engineering sciences; physical and biological sciences; computer modeling; data management and information technology; geospatial information systems; remote sensing; archaeology and anthropology; history; scientific diving; intelligence gathering and synthesis; statistics, including Bayesian search strategies; global security; retrievable documentation systems; and rapidly responsible logistics.

Research, Science and Technology therefore touches all aspects of Project Recover's activities. Before any field mission, extensive historical research and analyses occurs. Project Recover historians and researchers photographed, processed and analyzed archival documents from libraries and archives around the world.

This process has aided Project Recover in the development of hundreds of potential new cases, and populates the digital cloud-based archive (see pages 12–15). With the archive, Project Recover scientists, volunteers and staff can conduct archival analysis for new and existing cases from anywhere in the world.

Search missions utilize experienced team members selected to manage the integration of state-of-the-art sensor packages in AUVs, multispectral imaging, ROVs and other robotic technologies, novel aerial imaging methods, scuba teams with advanced low light photographic and video equipment, hand-held sonar systems and all other aspects necessary to successfully complete each mission.

The technology assets that are used by Project Recover can be generally described as:

- Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs)
- Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs)
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)
- Side-scan sonars
- Multi-beam sonars
- Magnetometers
- Optical imaging and image processing
- Advanced diver technologies

Upon the return from a mission, image and data processing technologies are used to create data products that add to the full documentation and reporting provided by Project Recover to DPAA. In many cases, those reports and products are also shared with the host countries.

Project Recover's research, science and technology efforts are also being shared with the professional community through peer-reviewed publications and presentations to the scientific community.

Dive sonar locating targets in Kiska Harbor, AK.

Full face mask communications in the Solomon Islands.

Deploying a multi-beam sonar off research vessel.

Retrieving an AUV off the coast of Italy after six hours in the water.

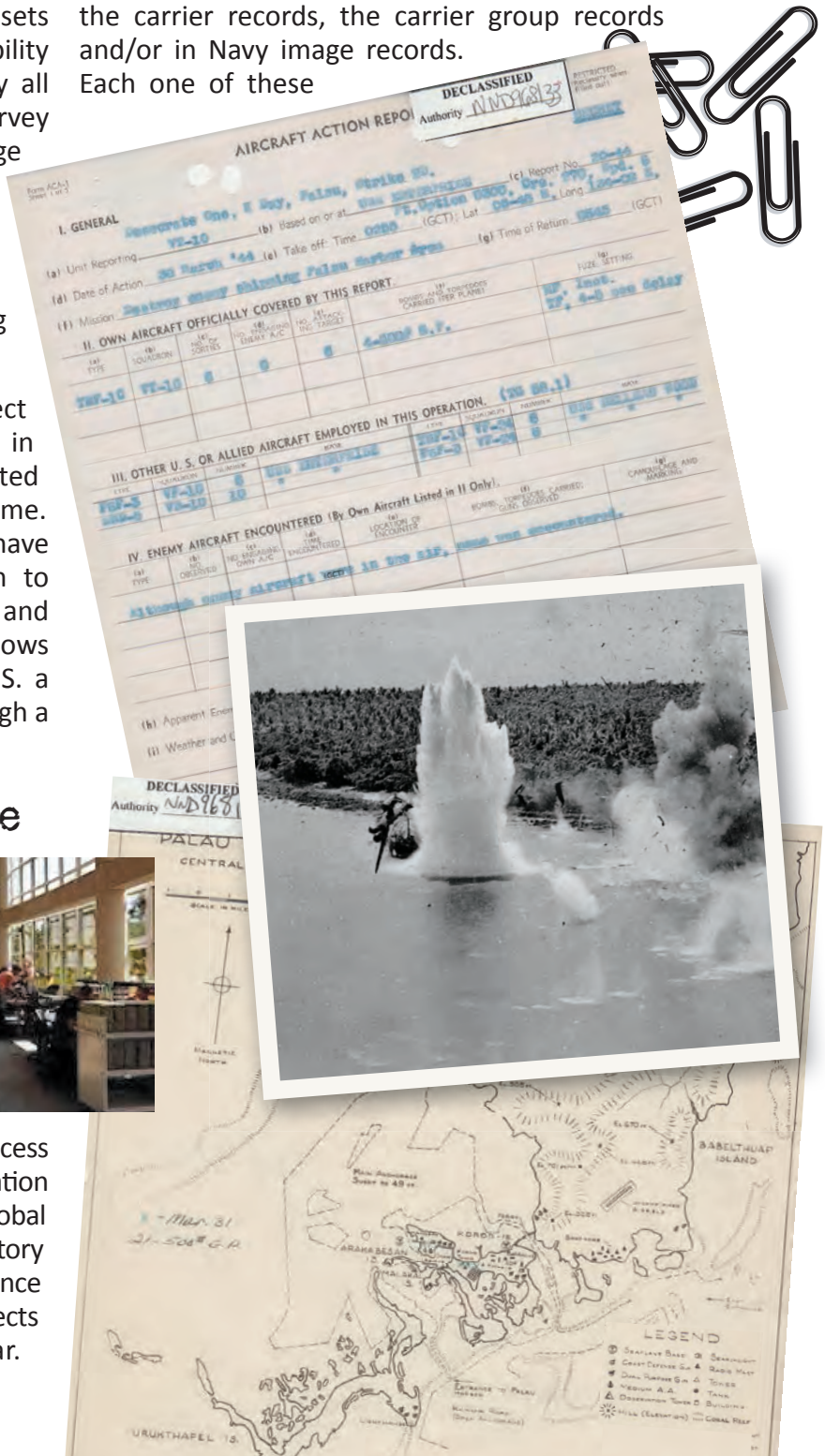
Towed magnetometer and side-scan sonar in Kuwait.

Case File Development & Management

A large part of Project Recover's successful track record of discovering underwater MIA sites over the years can be attributed to two factors: unmatched marine technology and wreck search capabilities, combined with our ability to accurately assess the probability of success for any given case prior to committing field resources. The ability to accurately evaluate a case directly correlates to the quantity and quality of case-specific intelligence available. Historical documents such as Missing Air Crew Reports, crash photos, eye-witness accounts and maps; as well as modern data sets detailing water depths, seafloor composition, mobility of sediments, water clarity and satellite imagery all contribute to an assessment of the required survey size and tools required to find missing wreckage associated with MIAs. Furthermore, logistical issues such as permitting, shipping challenges, entry visas, personnel safety, political stability and suitable weather windows are also evaluated as part of the decision-making process for conducting a field expedition.

Recognized early on in the formation of Project Recover was the challenge we would face in managing and archiving the "Big Data" associated with the thousands of MIAs we seek to return home. Due to the unique aspects of this challenge, we have supported an information technology campaign to develop, refine, and populate a digital archive and Case File Management System (CFMS) that allows Project Recover members working across the U.S. a way to store, explore, search and share data through a password-protected, web-based portal.

Traditional sources of archival information continue to be investigated. These include the National Archives (NARA), the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFRHA), archives on military bases across the country, as well as museum collections. As information was organized and maintained differently based on the branch of service, information sources can be in multiple locations. For example, a photograph that was taken by a Navy fighter might be located in the Aircraft Action Report, the squadron records, the air wing records, the carrier records, the carrier group records and/or in Navy image records. Each one of these



Historical Research & Archive

Project Recover's historical research team assembles information from a host of sources to develop and/or improve MIA/POW case files and informs avenues for additional research. It is also vitally important to the assessment of cases and Project Recover's process for prioritizing cases. Augmentation of the information sources has been particularly helpful in the global footprint Project Recover now enjoys. In 2018, the history team focused on further development of the reference library and both long and short-term research projects for MIA cases related to the missions for the year.

potential sources is in a different location, requires different requests and all need to be individually documented and scanned at high resolution.

With the historical sources digitally captured, the history team assembles all information about the relevant case(s) and then populates the CFMS (see next section). It is at this interface that cases are further developed and prioritized. Related, the team also has spent a significant amount of time and effort to augment prioritized cases. For example, if the group knows they are going to a particular location in Indonesia based on a prioritized case, the team has focused on searching for additional cases from the area to build a cluster of cases. This serves two purposes, the first being that the likelihood of locating a wreck site increases with no additional logistical investment, and the second being that once a wreck is located, having knowledge of more cases in the area can improve our chances of positive identification of a particular wreck.

The team intensively researched and analyzed historic loss information for 217 new cases added to the Project Recover CFMS. Archival and reference library additions for the year comprised over 3 TB of documents, which included 1,483 high resolution photographs, 79 books or manuals and over 100,000 individual pages from 445 folders of 16 record groups at three different archives.

Since the recognition of Project Recover has grown significantly in recent years (see pages 32–33), the number of unsolicited connections with MIA families has increased significantly. A total of 327 family responses were logged and 129 new cases were created as a result of the outreach the historical research team has represented the primary point of contact for these families. Of these cases, about 20 or so would reach Project Recover's threshold to be considered actionable cases. In addition to highlighting an MIA relative, some of these connections have produced new information for Project Recover.

Additionally, data mining of existing sources was started this year. Either from freshly scanned sources, or existing sources in electronic format (i.e. of books and newspapers), new tools are developing to rapidly determine and extract information on particular cases or in general from these sources. This provides a process to rapidly expand the scope of our historical research and the amount of data collected.

Another source of information comes from veteran groups. For WWII, these organizations have largely seen their peak activity come and go. Some have now been passed onto enthusiasts from the follow-on generations, but there are a host of groups who invested time and effort to build online sources of information that have either been taken offline or have shown no activity since the early 2000s. These organizations are a rich source of information and Project Recover has made an effort to reach out for information on particular cases as well as pursuing opportunities to receive other databases. In 2018, Project Recover attended the reunions of the 307th, 345th, 5th and 43rd Bomb Groups, in order to represent Project Recover and to gather more information about losses and MIAs from the veterans and their family members.

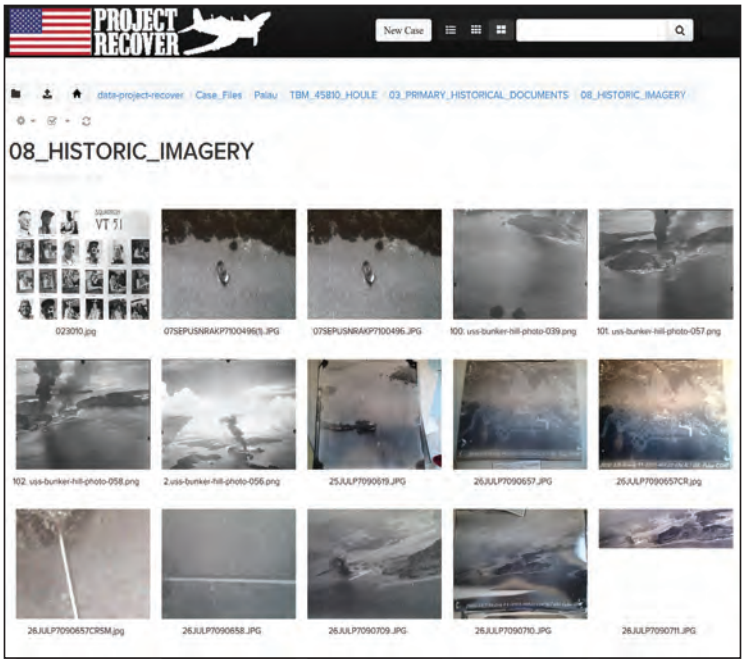
Case File Management System

To best manage and deliver Project Recover's expanding database, the CFMS was developed in two-parts: 1) a scalable data repository integrated with a 2) case database. Unique to the system is the ability to generate a local copy of select cases onto portable storage media as part of a mission "load-out," allowing full utility of the system while the teams are in the field without internet connectivity.

The data repository functions as an online digital filing cabinet housing the entirety of Project Recover's documents and data. It is organized into several areas including a reference library that contains line drawings, parts manuals and exemplar images for over 30 U.S. planes flown during WWII; a historical archive with thousands of primary historical documents scanned by Project Recover historians from various archives across the U.S.; as well as all data associated with the individual MIA cases tracked by Project Recover.

Users access the data files through a web-based system, and can upload and download data, view files online and comment on each file independently. All cases that are entered into our system have been vetted for their viability of conducting a search.

Case file information is tracked by loss incident (i.e. aircraft crash) rather than by each individual service

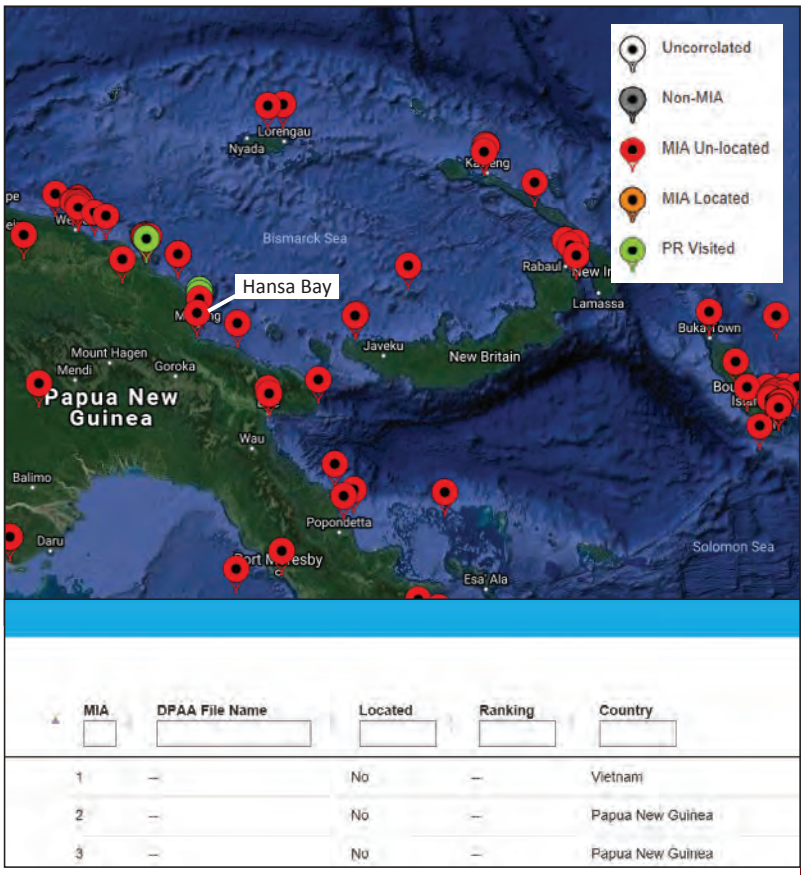


member missing in action, meaning an individual case can have multiple MIAs associated with it. Case files are named using the aircraft type, aircraft serial number and pilot's last name. Each case file is organized with a pre-set series of folders and subfolders to ensure consistency between cases and users over time. The folder-based repository includes space for quad charts, analysis briefs, historical documents, data collected in the field from AUVs, imagery, logistics and planning,

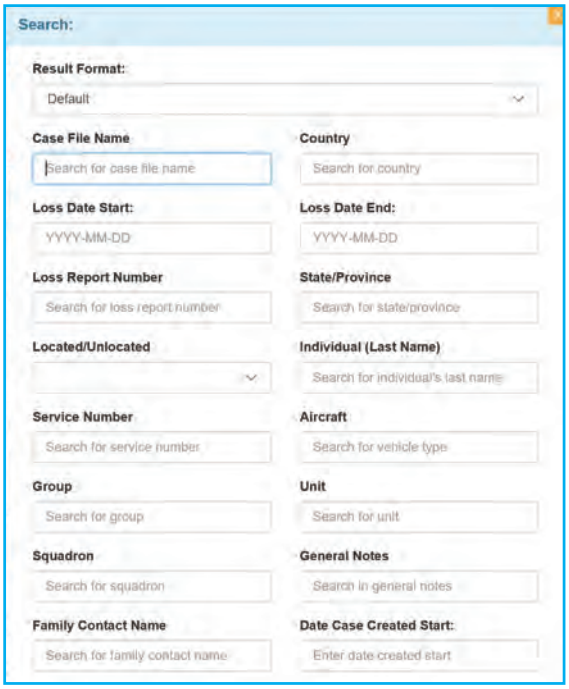
post-mission findings, external communications and many other types of data. With a consistent structure of online data storage, researchers can easily locate data associated with an MIA case and can immediately determine if data files are available within each subfolder since the number of files inside of each folder are displayed on screen. This function also lets researchers quickly assess what data is missing for any given case, so it can be targeted for future archival research.

Select information associated with individual cases are part of a second, interconnected system. The case file management system functions as a searchable metadata repository for key pieces of information about a given MIA case. Users can view cases either displayed on a map or in list form.

The map display is critical to planning our field projects as it allows researchers to readily identify clusters of MIA losses in a small geographic area. Such was the case in the 2017 expedition to Hansa Bay, Papua New Guinea, which resulted in the discovery and documentation of three separate MIA sites, including the B-24 "Heaven Can Wait." Combining the search for multiple MIA crash sites into a single field project results in a higher probability of success while driving down mission costs associated with logistics in remote areas of the world.



Case data is added through an online form that includes over 40 fields of information organized under six headings: *General,* which includes information such as the case file name, conflict, date of loss, service branch and number of MIA associated with the loss incident; *Location,* that includes country, province, estimated geocoordinates and depth; *Vehicle,* such as aircraft type, call sign, serial number and unit; *Individuals,* that contains the name, rank, serial number and status of all service members associated with a given case; *Family Contact,* that tracks information about living relatives associated with a service member that have contacted Project Recover; and *Ranking*, a user-generated score assigned by Project Recover researchers that grades how promising a case is for discovery.



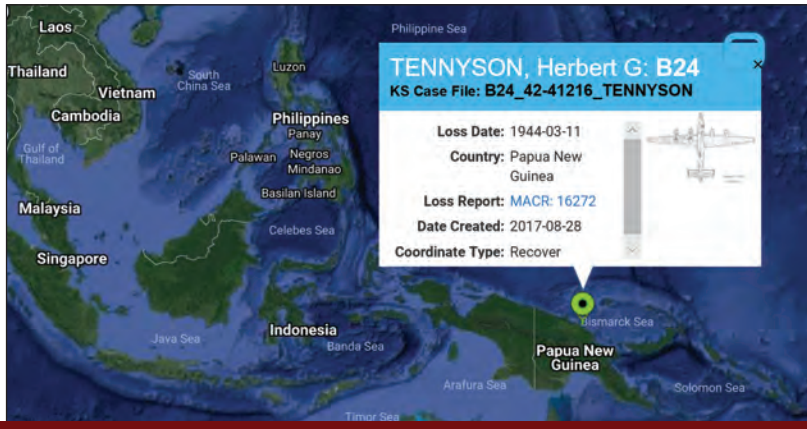
Users can apply filters and perform a variety of queries on the case information in the system. For example, a researcher provided information about an unknown B-24 recently discovered in Palau can sort the Project Recover cases by country or aircraft type to see which cases in our dataset align with the provided information. Similarly, if a family contacts us about a lost relative, a quick query using the service member's name will alert us as to whether they are already in our database.

The CFMS is also used to track whether key primary documents such as the MACR or IDPF have been obtained by Project Recover and uploaded to the data repository part of the system. And since the two systems are linked, users can open the location of a loss report or go directly to the web interface for the case data repository for access to a digital copy of all documents filed under the associated case file in the data repository.

The Project Recover data repository contains more than 51,000 data files associated with 510 MIA cases representing over 2,200 individuals missing in action across 50 countries. The system in its current configuration can scale up to storing well over 100 TB of data and can be further expanded as required.

Data security and backup was critical in the design of the system. Within the data repository, user permissions/access can be set at varying levels such as country, individual case, specific folder, or even a single file, depending on "need to know" for each field effort. This allows for the same system to be utilized by participants in all roles within Project Recover from principal investigator to first-time volunteer. The CFMS is secured by individual users and passwords, backups are regularly performed and several levels of security are deployed by IT professionals at Scripps Institution of Oceanography's IT department. Data for both systems are mirrored on-site at the University of California Super Computer Center and are backed up daily—the system has had zero loss of data since inception.

The functionality of the system provides Project Recover with a way to capture data about an MIA loss, to search this data and to quickly find any data files associated with the loss. Having a common, organized repository for all data gives the entire team equal access to all information and facilitates collaboration and decision making. The system is cloud based, designed to be expandable, and is accessible to Project Recover researchers in the field across the globe. All data remains with Project Recover, even as team members vary over time, and a consistent record is maintained of field efforts, data collected and analysis results for use in the future. Having data tools to support this effort gives the team a specialized ability to meet the goals of Project Recover, to find and repatriate American MIAs in order to provide recognition and closure for families and the nation. In fact, DPAA has expressed interest in reviewing the CFMS as a model to update their own databases.



Federated States of Micronesia

2 to 9 February
11 to 24 April
22 to 30 June

Region: Chuuk
Cases: 2 (B-24, P-47 - 23 other leads)
Missing in Action: 11 (97 other leads)
Team Size: 7
Equipment:
2 REMUS 100
Shark Marine Navigator

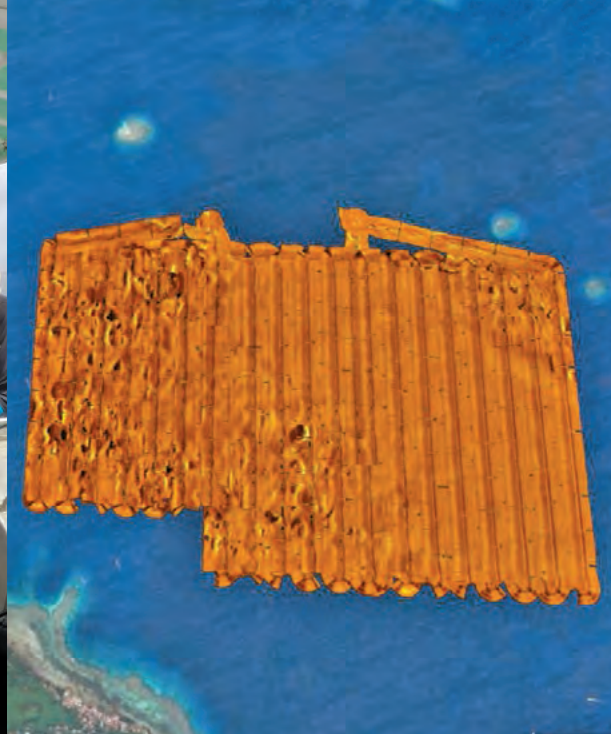
Summary of Results:

- Area surveyed: ~22 km²
- Multiple leads on POWs
- Return mission planned

Project Recover began to investigate American MIAs in Chuuk in 2018, known as Truk Lagoon in World War II. Archival research into MIAs lost in Chuuk revealed large numbers of aircraft in the lagoon, but also potential execution sites of American POWs on land. In February, Project Recover traveled to Chuuk in order to begin the investigation and assess the future possibilities of work there. Through historical research and local intelligence, Project Recover has established 25 cases representing 108 MIAs in the vicinity of Chuuk Lagoon. There are also potentially up to 30 POWs who were executed on land in Chuuk, focused in the area of Dublon (now Tonoas).

With the relationships established and intelligence gathered in February, Project Recover returned in April for a dual land and underwater search for American MIAs. The underwater effort focused on two search areas that were prioritized with most significant historical crash information. These two sites included a P-47 and a B-24. The P-47 was shot down while strafing the airfield to the north of Moen Island. Coral heads presented a challenge to the search with AUVs and presented a complex background relative to the expected size of the wreckage. The B-24 was shot down on a night bombing raid, with a large search area based on the historic map from eyewitnesses. The bottom of this large search area was featureless, however, after searching ~16 km², there was a potential anomaly (unknown if related to aviation) that would require follow-up and additional search.

The land team began conducting oral history interviews with the help of Mason Fritz, a local leader. Mason led the Project Recover team to his village, which was in the vicinity of the Japanese 4th Fleet Naval Hospital during World War II. It was in this area that we believe most of the POWs were executed. The land team also investigated Faleu Island, a small islet near the south pass of the lagoon. It was on this island that USAAF airmen believed a B-24 crashed in 1944. The investigation team scanned the island for aircraft debris from a boat, but did not go ashore due to water and weather conditions.



The team also investigated an aircraft known to locals as an "SBD" that is frequented as a memorial by U.S. dignitaries, which was near the northeast pass. Upon investigation and documentation, the Project Recover team was able to identify the aircraft as a Japanese Zero and it was communicated to the local government.

The land team returned to Chuuk in June due to the success of the oral histories and potential of locating at least one of the execution sites on Dublon. As the team conducted more oral histories on Dublon, there was finally a break in that a local man, who was a young boy at the time, had been shown one of the execution sites by an eyewitness. The elder took our team to the exact spot where it is believed that two U.S. airmen were executed, either by dynamite or stabbing. We conducted a cursory metal detection at the site and made sure to document its location in order to return with an archaeologist. The investigation team continued to search across the island and conduct interviews in order to establish a better understanding of the layout of the old hospital and the potential areas where executions were known to take place.

The team also returned to Faleu Island, this time to search the entire islet to make sure that there was no aircraft debris hidden by foliage. We also used metal detection along the beach in order to see if anything had been buried. Local divers conducted a shallow water swim search around the island to see if any debris could be located. No wreckage was located in our search, but this B-24 certainly crashed somewhere near this islet or another close to it. Further investigations will be necessary to narrow the search area.

Guatemala

1 to 10 March

Region: Puerto Quetzal

Cases: B-24

Missing in Action: 6

Team Size: 4

Equipment:

REMUS 100

Shark Marine Navigator

Summary of Results:

- Documented: B-24 fragments
- Surveyed: ~4 km²
- No return based on site condition

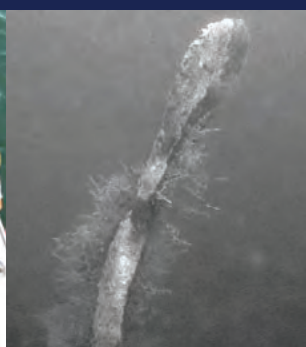
In March 2018, members of Project Recover conducted a remote-sensing hydrographic survey and diver investigation of targets off Puerto San Jose, Guatemala. The research objective was to locate an aircraft crash site associated with the loss of a U.S. B-24 that crashed during gunnery training approximately one mile southeast of Puerto San Jose, Guatemala. The plane was seen passing over the Puerto San Jose pier at low altitude heading east. It circled around and was coming back, still at a low altitude, when the right wing suddenly dipped and hit the water. As the wing hit, the nose rose and the tail dragged, causing the whole plane to plow into the water. Witnesses noted the plane (or parts of it) floated for several minutes prior to sinking. Crash boats on the scene found one survivor and one deceased member of the crew.

The survey area investigated in 2018 focused on a very specific loss description provided in the Missing Air Crew Report and an accompanying historic image showing crash boats at the scene of the crash with the beach and Puerto San Jose pier in the background.

Approximately 4 km² was surveyed over the course of two days. There were more than 100 anomalies in the data; however, the majority of these did not exhibit characteristics consistent with aircraft wreckage and did not warrant further investigation.

The team dove on seven targets, two of which are believed to be associated with the lost B-24. One target was determined to be a 3-blade aircraft propeller, the shape and size of which is consistent with the Hamilton Standard propeller blade 6477A-0 used on U.S. B-24D aircraft. Another target is believed to be a portion of an aircraft wing; however, the exact identity could not be determined due to limited visibility.

Neither target is believed to indicate the historic crash scene and likely deposited in their current position sometime after the crash took place by some other means (i.e. trawling or shoreline construction). Additionally, the construction of the large breakwater at the entrance of the port of Quetzal has significantly altered the local natural longshore current. As a result, there is large-scale sediment deposition taking place including the survey area and the historic loss location and has likely buried historic wreckage. Because the site has likely been disturbed and any remnants buried, no follow-on survey is planned.



Hungary

6 to 12 May

Region: Lake Balaton
Case: B-24
Missing in Action: 2
Team Size: 2

Summary of Results:

- Recon of Area
- Multiple leads on 6 cases (27 MIA)

Last contacted by radio over Lake Balaton

Project Recover conducted a preliminary investigation into potential MIAs in Europe's second largest lake, Lake Balaton. A former DPAA forensic anthropologist and Hungarian national, Dr. Ivett Kovari, acted as translator and guide. She had conducted in-depth research into the loss of American aircraft in Hungary while she was at DPAA. While several American airplanes were known to have crashed into Lake Balaton, it is believed that there is only one aircraft, a B-24, in the lake that is likely to have MIAs still on board.

In Budapest and around Lake Balaton, we interviewed numerous Hungarian historians and other local experts. They were not comfortable stating unequivocally that this B-24 crashed into the lake (although Dr. Kovari said they have been more certain in past). Records also exist that witnesses on both sides of the lake claim to have seen a bomber crash in this vicinity at the right time.

Project Recover believes the evidence to date supports that the B-24 indeed crashed into the lake, rather than on land. The best evidence that perhaps the plane crashed into the lake's ice is that we know the lake was iced over at the time, and the remains of the crew members were not recovered until months later, once the ice melted. The fact that the south side of the lake was occupied by the Soviets also, in our opinion, leads to our conclusion that the bomber most likely did not crash somewhere farther south.

This particular B-24 took off from Italy for German refineries in December 1944, however the aircraft diverted to a secondary target due to overcast weather conditions. The B-24 developed mechanical problems in one port engine and the second port engine was hit by flak. There may also have been a third engine problem (not uncommon after losing two), though it is unclear. The USAAF's rescue plan by December 1944 was to make for the south side of Lake Balaton and into Soviet hands for repatriation—many aircrews did so successfully. Of the 10 crew, four bailed out and were taken POW, four washed ashore in the months following the aircraft incident and two remain MIA.

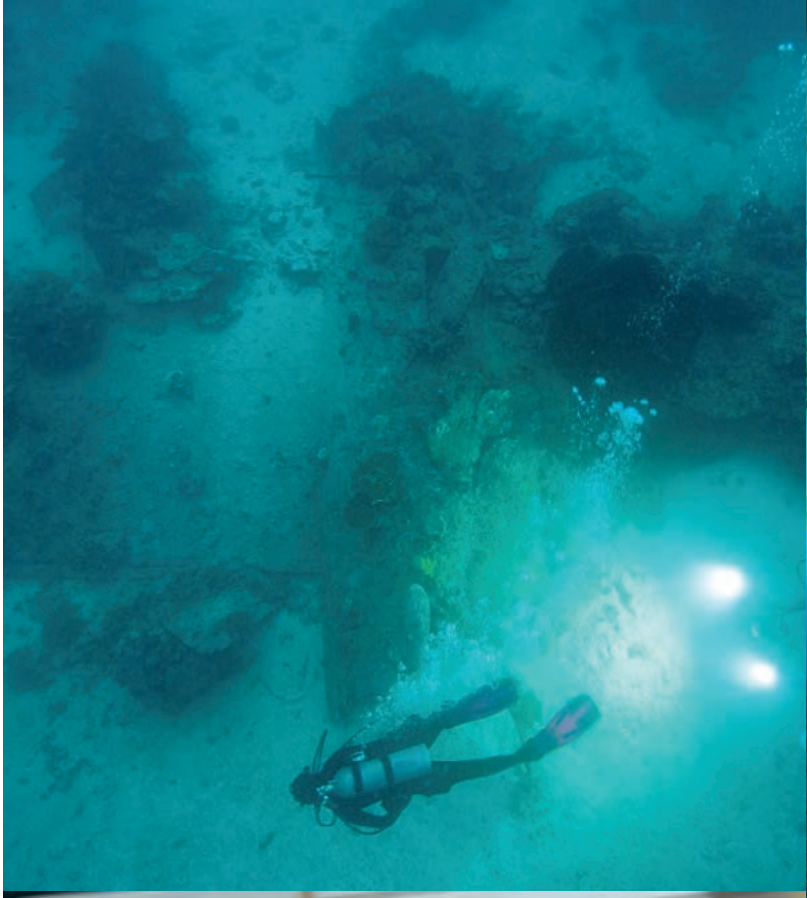
While the primary mission in Hungary was to investigate this B-24, at least two more potential cases for investigation developed from this effort. The team became aware of a P-51D (piloted by an ace) which crashed in a field near a village between Lake Balaton and Budapest, which has a very good map and he has apparently not been found. We also became aware very late of a possible unmarked grave containing supposedly one to three Americans possibly near some aircraft debris on north side of lake—with a reasonable history. Given the strong possibility for MIAs in this area follow-up missions to this area are recommended.

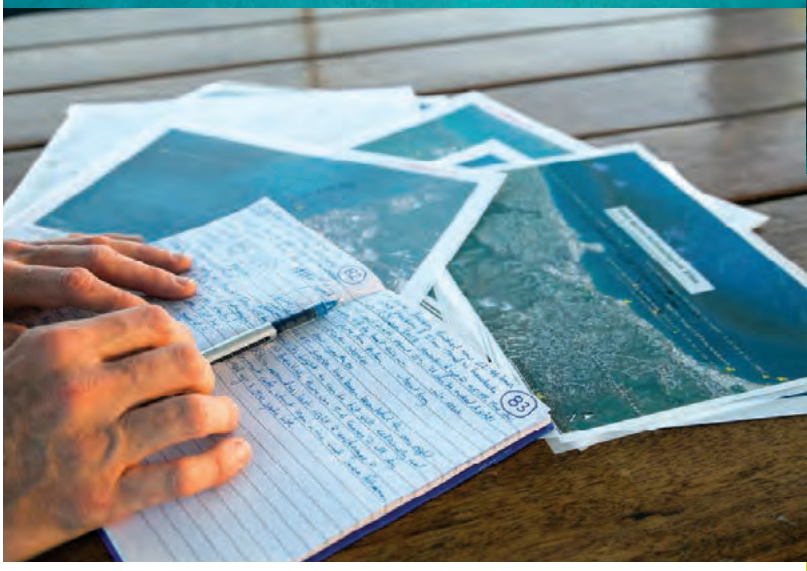
Solomon Islands

1 to 14 June

Region: Florida Islands
Cases: 3 (B-24, 2 F4F)
Missing in Action: 7
Team Size: 7
Equipment:
- Shark Marine Navigator
- OTS Masks w/Aquacom Radios
- UW Camera Systems

Summary of Results:
- Documented : B-24 (7 MIA)
- Confirmed 2 F4F were ditchings





On 1 March 1944, a B-24D took off from Guadalcanal on a training mission, during which it "spun into the sea" north of the Florida Island Group. Three out of 10 crew members were recovered, two deceased and the third unfortunately died of his injuries a month later. This B-24 has been known to the U.S. Government, locals and recreational divers since the 1960s.

Project Recover team members met up with Ewan Stevenson, a New Zealand historian and aircraft enthusiast, who was brought up on the Solomon Islands and had researched wreck sites there extensively throughout his life. Ewan's expertise proved highly beneficial to us on this mission, not only with aircraft, but also with local customs. We traveled to the Florida Island Group on a live-aboard dive vessel, and after securing the goodwill and permission to dive from the local villagers at a nearby village, our team visited the wreck site under 90 ft. of water. The fuselage and wings are lying upright at the bottom of a 40 degree slope, and is incomplete but in otherwise good condition, missing the cockpit and tail sections. Pair dives on the B-24 site spanned four-and-a-half days with an archaeology team, a Navigator team and a photomosaic team. The majority of the site was recorded by video and still photos. Archaeologists measured the forward fuselage section and queried some detached pieces of wreckage. We also completed a photogrammetrical image of the site (right).

We conducted unsuccessful navigator and diver searches for the tail section in water up to 51 m deep around the known wreckage, the sloped sides and coral ridge area. We mapped the potential location of two known crew members and made recommendations for the site excavation. Special thanks to the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force EOD unit and the U.S. DOD Humanitarian Demining Training Center for their assistance.

After we left the B-24 site we traveled to Tulagi to confirm the status of two Wildcats in 140 ft. of water. It was determined that both were ditchings. Future missions are planned to the Solomon Islands working with Ewan Stevenson.

Photogrammetrical image of the wreckage site.

Palau

1 to 18 July

Region: Ngatpang State (Police Hill) & Aimeliik State

Missing in Action: 13-21

Team Size: 7

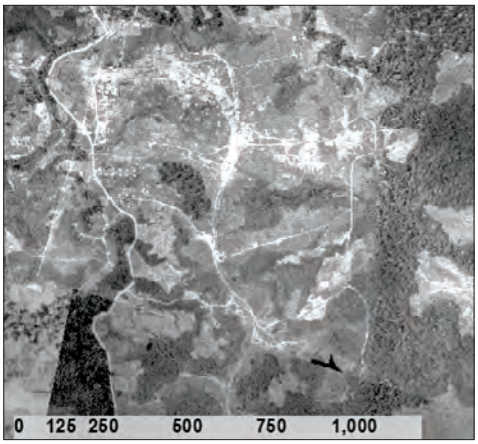
Equipment:
Land Survey Gear

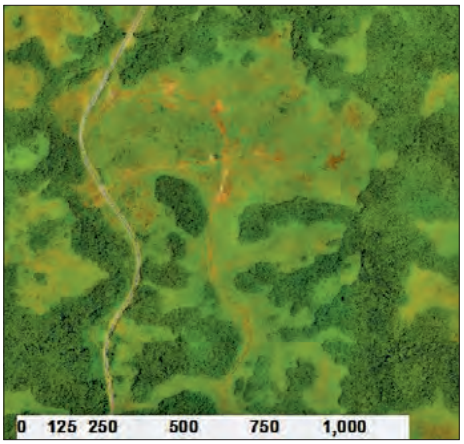
Summary of Results:

- Return mission planned for 2019

In 1944, in the state of Ngatpang (Gasupan) on the island of Babeldaob, Palau, at least 21 POWs were executed by the Armed Forces of the Empire of Japan and the Kempeitai, an independent military police branch of the Japanese Army. Those known to be executed included seven USAAF B-24 airmen, three USN members of Underwater Demolition Team-10 (predecessors to Navy SEALs), six Jesuit priests and five civilians. It is reported that up to 14 of the executed were exhumed, cremated and reburied in September 1945.

There is substantial testimony from the Singapore War Crime Trials, the Navy War Crime Tribunal and local oral histories alluding to additional murders of conscripted laborers, civilians and at least 11 additional U.S. military personnel by the Japanese on Babeldaob. One of these stories documents a parachute that was seen descending from a crashing TBM-1C Avenger off the northwest side of Aimeliik by a Palauan elder on 8 September 1944. The daughter of the elder states her father saw the airman swim to shore where he was immediately executed by the Japanese.



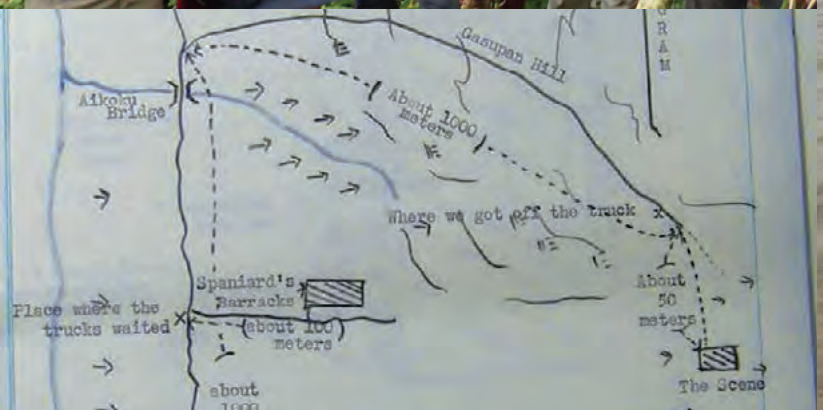


To date, despite two decades of archaeological fieldwork, analysis of U.S. and Japanese archival documents, geospatial analysis and collection of oral histories by Professor Don Shuster (University of Guam), the Joint POW/MIA Command (JPAC, predecessor to DPAA) and members of The BentProp Project and Project Recover, none of the gravesites or remains of the POWs on Babeldaob have been found.

Relying on the previously collected information, a Project Recover team journeyed to Babeldaob to continue the search in July 2018. The 2018 fieldwork narrowed down the most likely location of the Ngatpang executions to two of the 18 areas examined over the years, with the intention of additional intense archaeological work.

The 2018 Palau mission also began the search for the missing TBM pilot in Aimeliik using the detailed recollections of the wartime experience of the father of a Palauan informant. From a boat, the daughter had pointed out the exact location of the execution site on the rocky shoreline to the Project Recover team in 2017. The 2018 team examined a portion of the area with the remainder still to be surveyed. Planning is underway to return to Palau during 2019 to follow-up on both sets of findings.


PROJECT
RECOVER


Gasupan Hill
Aikoku Bridge
About 1000 meters
Where we got off the truck
Spaniard's Barracks
Place where the trucks waited
(about 100 meters
About 50 meters
The Scene
about

Kiska Island, AK

10 to 29 June

Region: Aleutian Islands

Cases of Interest: 11 (B-26, B-17, P-39, P-38, B-25, B-24, SOC-1, DD-526)

Missing in Action: 117

Team Size: 11

Equipment:

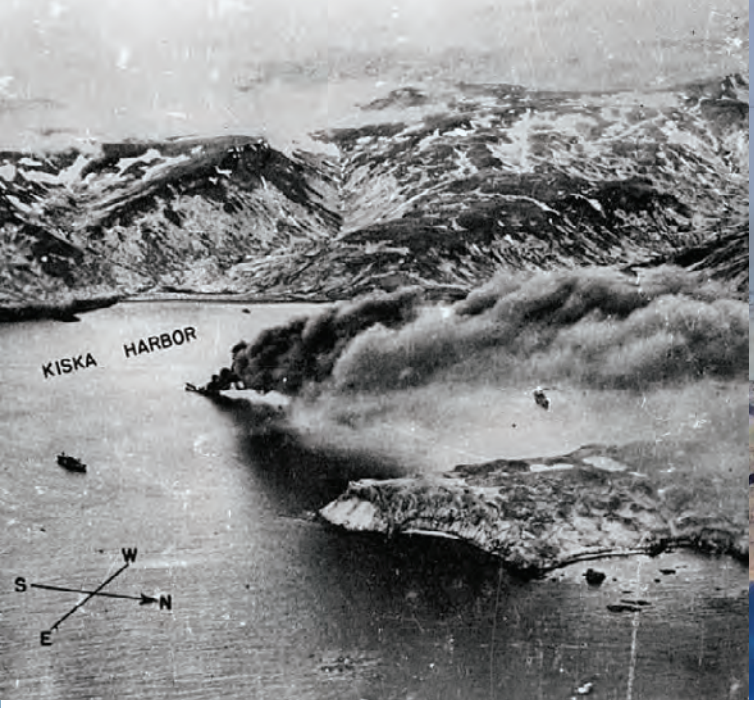
- 4 REMUS 100
- Shark Marine Barracuda 300 m ROV
- Outland 1000 ROV
- T-50 Multi-beam Sonar
- Shark Marine Navigator
- Prototype Magnetometer for REMUS
- Bauer Air Compressor and Dry Suits

Summary of Results:

- Found and documented stern of USS *Abner Read* (71 MIA)
- Found and documented partial unidentified B-24
- Found and documented Japanese submarine I-7 and Midget Submarine
- Found and documented multiple U.S. and Japanese landing craft
- Documented Japanese submarine RO-65
- Documented multiple Japanese ships
- Surveyed: +50 km^2

In July members of Project Recover spent two weeks conducting an exploratory remote-sensing survey to locate and document WWII-era submerged archaeological sites in the waters off Kiska Island, Alaska, one of the last and most remote islands in the Aleutian chain. The project was partially funded by a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Ocean Exploration and Research grant. The grant is the largest dollar amount ever awarded by NOAA OER for an archaeological project.

The often-forgotten Aleutian campaign was the sole WWII campaign fought on North American soil and Kiska Island is one of the few U.S. territories occupied by foreign forces in the last 200 years. Kiska remains one of the best-preserved historic battlefields from WWII, being one of only two worldwide where neither previous nor later settlement obscure military developments. In recognition of its pivotal role in the Allied forces–Japanese campaigns of 1942–43, Kiska Island was designated as a National Historic

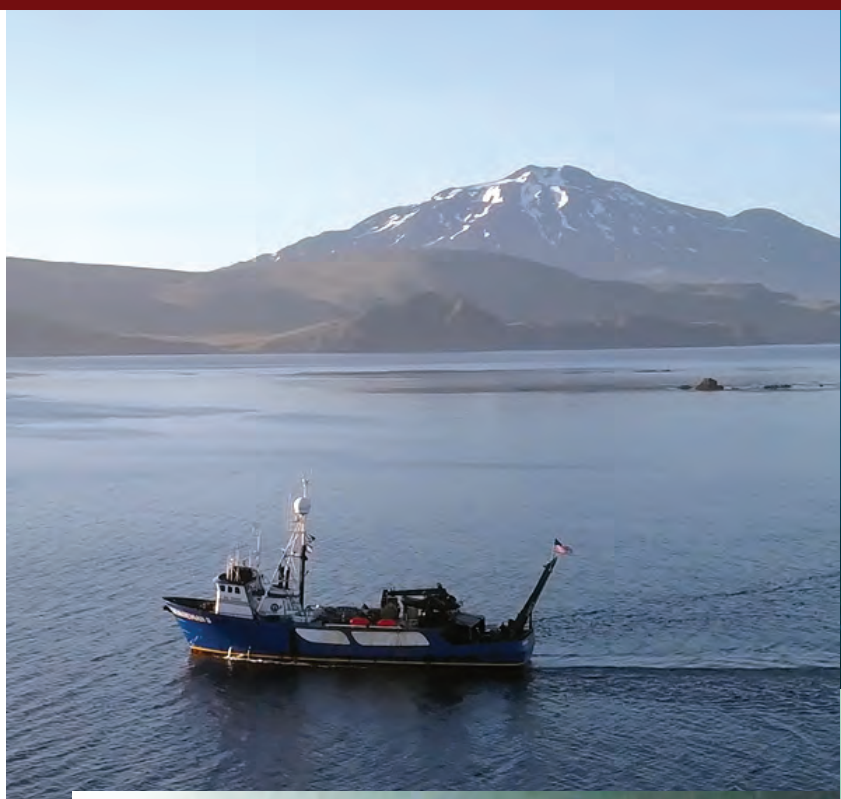


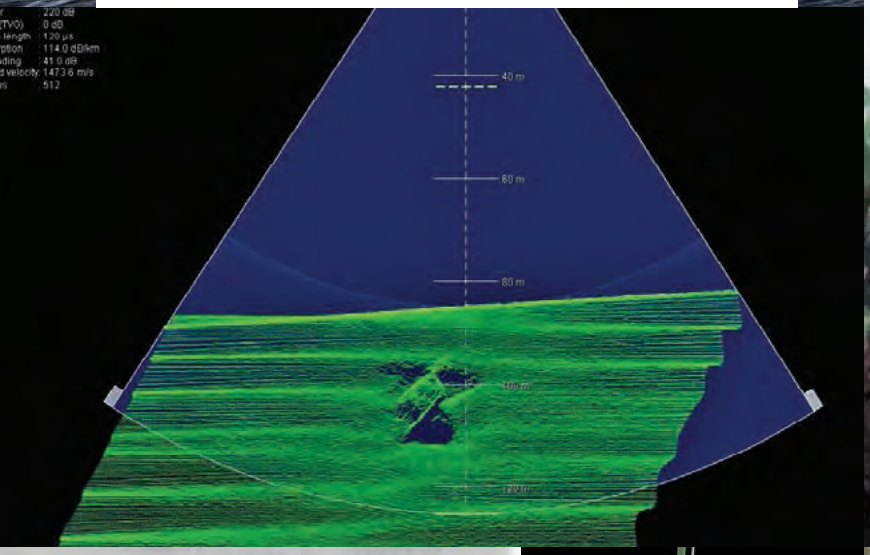
Landmark in 1985. While the terrestrial component is well documented, the maritime component remained largely unexplored until the Project Recover/NOAA expedition. The project's goals were to: 1) Provide an inventory of submerged archaeological sites and baseline environmental/benthic data. 2) Provide site interpretation and contextualization within the greater maritime landscape and archaeological frameworks. 3) Develop innovative search capabilities that enhance archaeological exploration. 4) Promote an increased awareness of maritime cultural heritage and site preservation. 5) Foster integration of education and outreach opportunities that bridge STEM-related fields and the social sciences. 6) Document and honor the final resting place of U.S. and Japanese service members who lost their lives in the waters surrounding Kiska Island.

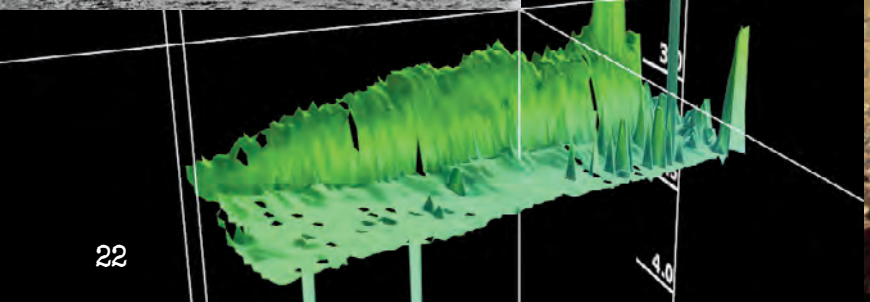
The survey focused on four distinct search areas, each relevant to a unique aspect of the battlefield's maritime cultural landscape. Area 1 is Kiska Harbor. Home to the Japanese naval installation, this area was the most frequent target of the U.S. bombing campaign and historical records indicate a large number of Japanese ships and aircraft, and U.S. aircraft lost within. Area 2, east of Twin Rocks, encompasses the final resting place of the Japanese submarine I-7 lost while assisting in the Japanese planned evacuation. Area 3 is Gertrude Cove located on the island's south shore. The Imperial Army garrisoned over 3,500 men here and it is the site of several U.S. bomber losses and Japanese ships. Area 4 lies off the island's west coast and is associated with the U.S. effort to retake Kiska. On August 18, 1943 the USS *Abner Read* struck a Japanese mine while patrolling off the northwest landing beach causing the stern to break off and sink with 71 men trapped inside.

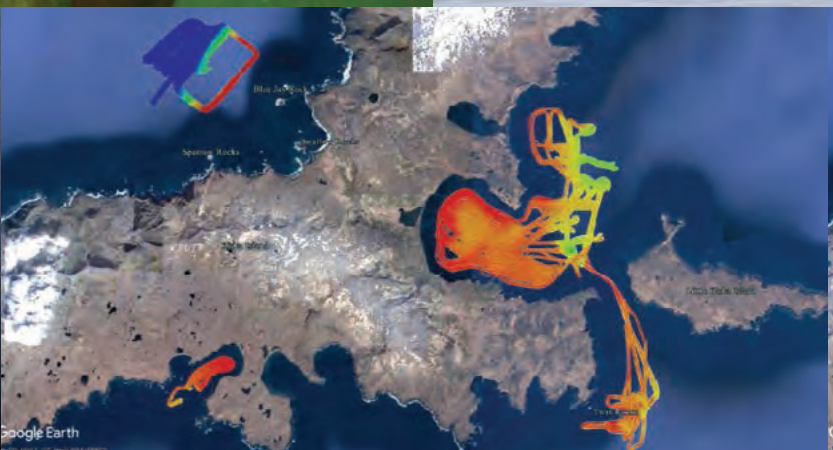
Project Recover employed a wide spectrum of state-of-the-art marine technology to complete the survey. The primary tool employed was compact autonomous AUVs (REMUS 100) equipped with side-scan sonar, magnetometers, multi-beam sonar and low-light imaging capabilities. Additional coverage and high-resolution acoustic imaging were provided by a hull-mounted multi-beam sonar system. Investigation and documentation of archaeological discoveries was accomplished via AUV, ROV and SCUBA divers. Select discoveries were recorded using low-light still cameras and video systems to produce geo-referenced high-resolution 2D photomosaics and 3D renderings. Some larger sites were documented with high-resolution multi-beam sonar.

The team conducted 40 cold water SCUBA dives, 35 km^2 were surveyed with side-scan sonar and 46 km^2 were surveyed during the multi-beam survey. The project generated over 4.5 TB of raw data. Analysis is ongoing, but several significant finds are already confirmed including the stern of the USS *Abner Read,* three Japanese submarines (I-7, RO-65 and a midget submarine), portions of a U.S. B-24 aircraft and the remains of multiple Japanese and American landing craft.








Google Earth


Google Earth

Italy

16 September to 5 October

Region: Grosseto Province

Cases of Interest: 5 (A-20, B-25, B-26, B-24)

Missing in Action: 17

Team Size: 10

Equipment:

- 2 REMUS 100
- 2 Shark Marine Navigators
- OTS full face and Aquacom units
- 2 DJI Mavic Drones

Summary of Results:

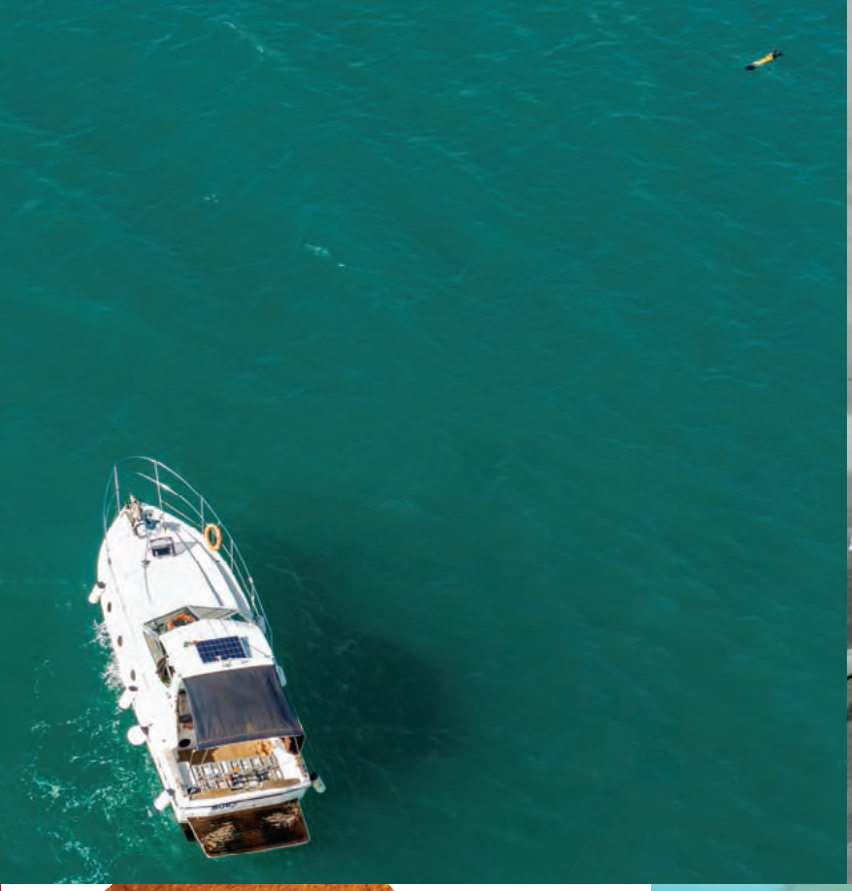
- Documented A-20 Site as Ju 88
- 2 Sites Positive Targets with Further Investigation Needed
- 1 Site with Negative Results
- Surveyed Area: +30 km^2

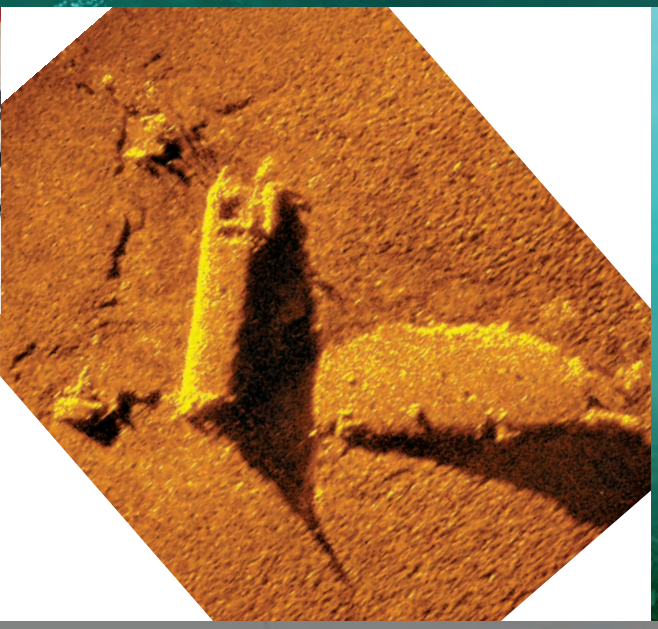
A Project Recover team, under contract with DPAA, conducted dive and remote sensing surveys for four aircraft along the coastlines of Marina di Grosseto, Porto Ercole and Porto Santo Stefano. Our primary goal was to locate and positively identify the wreck of an A-20 (a wreck site discovered during a previous year's DPAA remote sensing survey) and locate and characterize three other wrecks associated respectively with a B-25, B-26 and B-24.

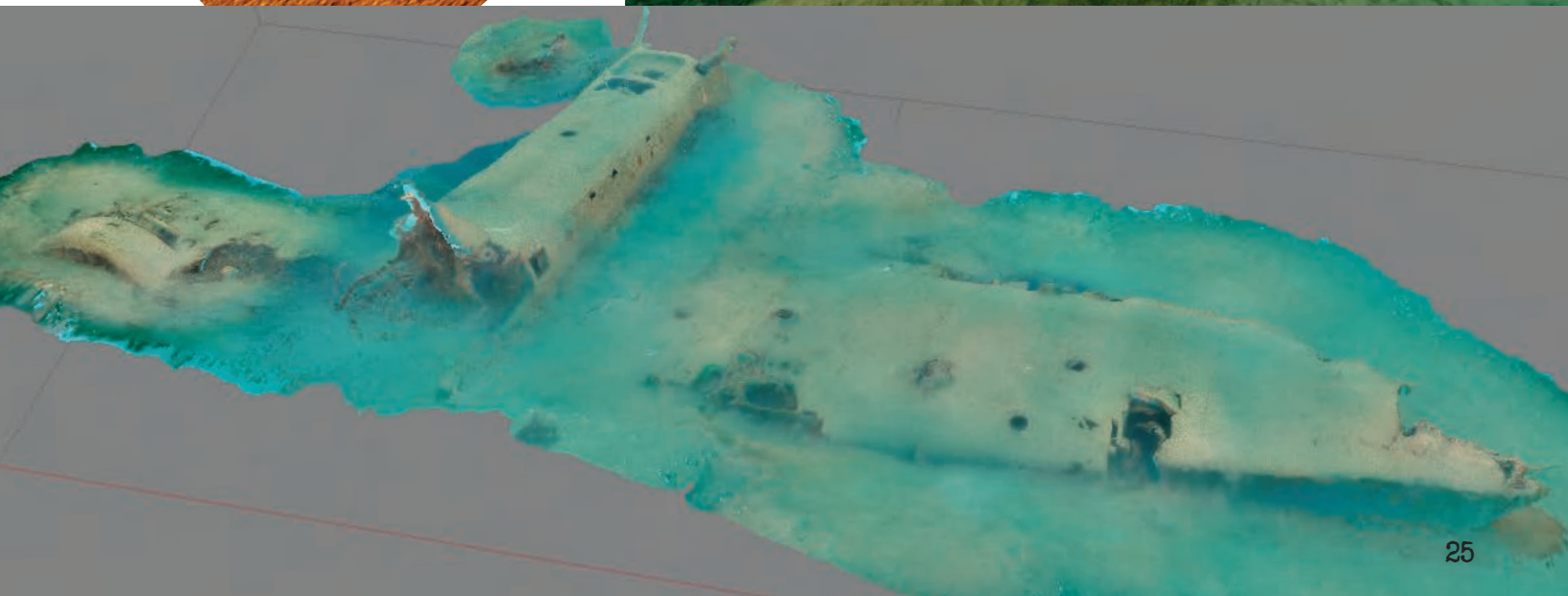
In addition to receiving approvals from the federal, provincial and local governments for conducting the work in this region of Italy, Project Recover provided an information session to the local public (above). With the help of colleagues (Giulia Napolitano and Aldo Costigliolo) as translators and facilitators, the team was able to communicate intentions in the area, as well as garner any information from the local population on wreckage that they may know about. This process was captured in the local papers and facilitated our work in the area.

In the case of the A-20, we first surveyed the area with a dual-frequency chirp side-scan sonar (600–1200 kHz) on an AUV and then deployed diver teams to document and identify the wreck site.

Paired dives on the site spanned three days with archaeology teams and a photomosaic team. The majority of the site was recorded by video and still photos. Archaeologists measured the forward fuselage section and queried some detached pieces of wreckage, while also completing a photogrammetrical map of the site (right) under very low visibility conditions. Although initially identified as a wreck of an A-20, (one was known to have crashed into the ocean in the same area in 1945), after imaging and documentation, the wreckage was identified by Project Recover as that of a German Junkers Ju 88 aircraft, missing the cockpit and tail sections. The team was also able to locate documentation confirming that there was in fact a Ju 88 that went down in this same area off Grosseto.







The other three aircraft targeted by Project Recover on this mission were American bomber losses from early 1944, part of an intense campaign to strategically bomb the harbors of Porto Santo Stefano and Marina di Grosseto and other infrastructure to gain a stronghold in the area. In 1944, a B-25H participated in a mission to attack shipping in the area of Porto Santo Stefano. Heavy flak was encountered, and they are believed to have been directly hit. The aircraft was last spotted in an inverted position with no crew in sight. The bodies of three of the crew were later recovered and identified, but three crew remain missing.

In 1944, a B-26 participated in a bombing mission on the port facilities at Porto Santo Stefano. The aircraft encountered heavy flak, and according to witness statements, a "burst of flak exploded in the right engine" of the aircraft, resulting in its engine detaching and the aircraft spinning and going down. Three crew members returned to duty, but four crew were never recovered.

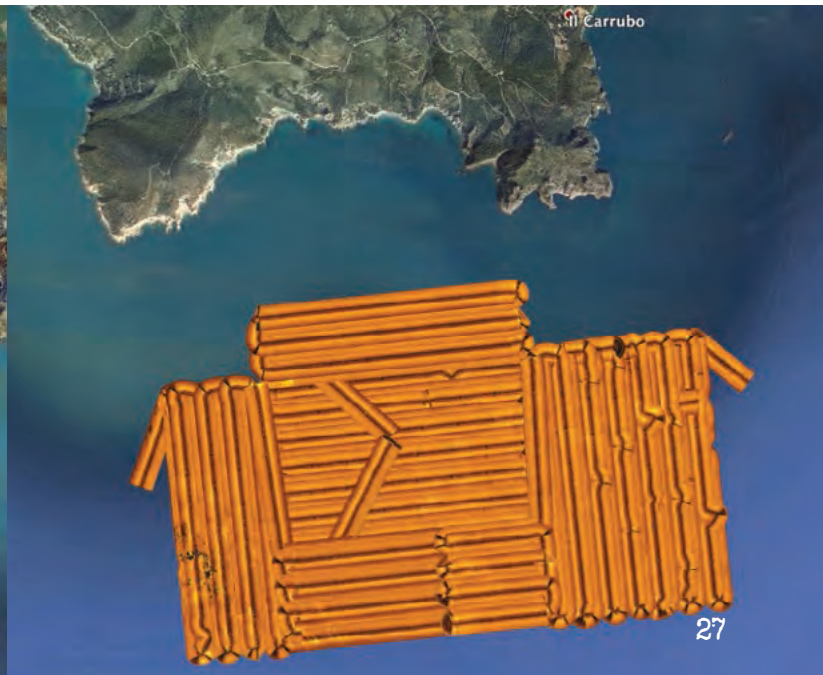
In 1944, a B-24 was on a bombing mission to Port San Stefano, Italy when it was struck (as a result of flak damage) by another B-24 over the water. Two witnesses who saw the collision reported seeing one B-24 losing its tail and going into a steep dive with no observed parachutes. Two of the B-24 crew were reported washed ashore several days later by the Germans. They were buried in a local cemetery in Italy. The remaining eight personnel remain unaccounted for.

The Project Recover team conducted large area searches with AUVs in the areas from historical documentation and analysis. Some information regarding these cases was provided by local fishermen after hearing about Project Recover's efforts. After surveying ~30 km^2 in the designated areas, we were not able to locate

any wreckage in the area of the B-25. This was after repeated dives on suspected targets confirmed they were not aviation related.

We were able to locate debris fields in the search box for the B-26 (below) and the B-24 (below right). These are promising targets as they are clearly anthropogenic with size and shapes consistent with aircraft parts. One of the debris fields was in fact only 100 m from the location reported by one of the fishermen. All the surveys revealed that the entire coastline in this area has received and is receiving intense fishing pressure from trawlers. These debris fields are known to the fishermen as the trawling scar marks on the seafloor, and imply avoidance.

The depth of the two sites (70 m and 90 m) prevented the Project Recover dive teams from further investigation. Cameras on the AUVs were also not useful in these cases as there was a thick layer of suspended sediments extending 3 to 5 m off the bottom masking any debris. These two sites are promising and warrant further investigation.



Kuwait

28 October to 11 November

Region: Persian Gulf

Cases of Interest: 1 (A-6E)

Missing in Action: 1

Team Size: 5

Equipment:

- EdgeTech Side-Scan Sonar (600/1800kHz)
- Geometrics G-882 Magentometer
- StrataBox HD Sub Bottom Profiler

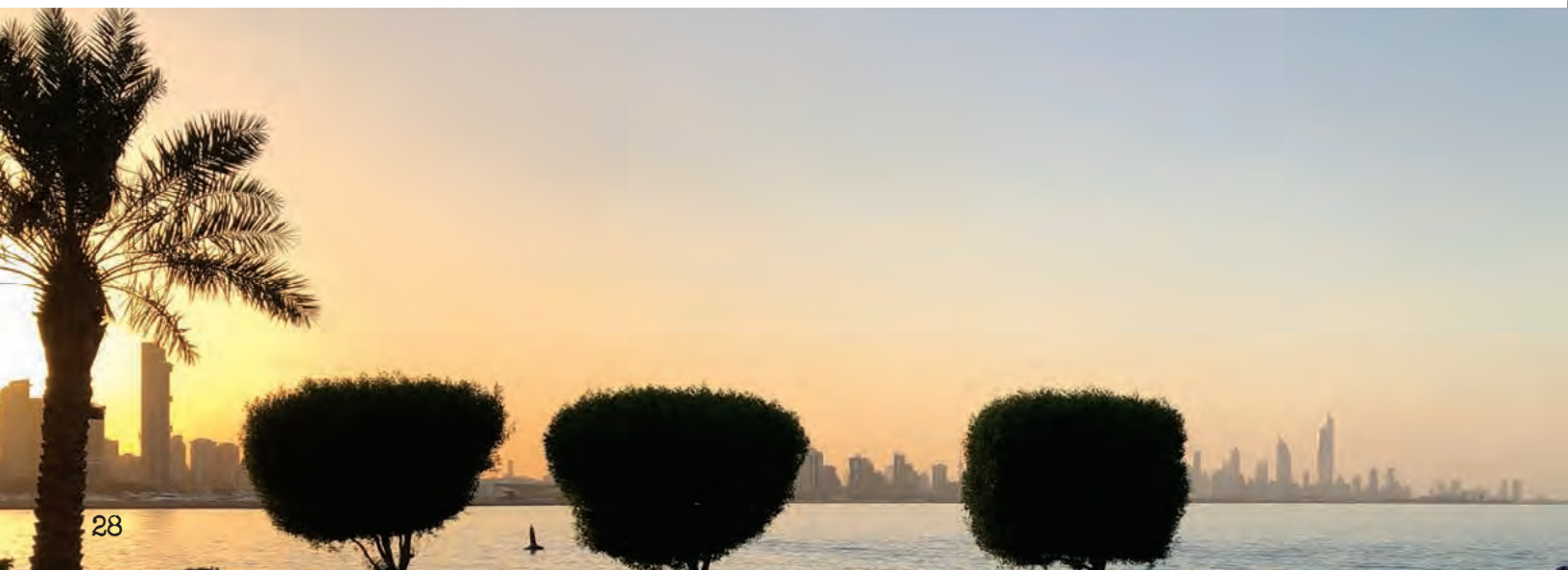
Summary of Results:

- Proposed Search Area Completed

In 1991 as part of Desert Storm, an A-6E suffered a direct hit from what is believed to be a surface to air missile during combat off Failaka Island, Kuwait. There were no eyewitnesses to the crash and one crew member is one of two U.S. servicemen still MIA from that conflict.

While there have been some exploratory missions in the area, none have produced actionable results. Project Recover was approached by DPAA to evaluate the case and consider a mission to the Persian Gulf. Project Recover was able to interview three pilots who were involved in the action who were able to provide new detailed information that narrowed the large potential search area.

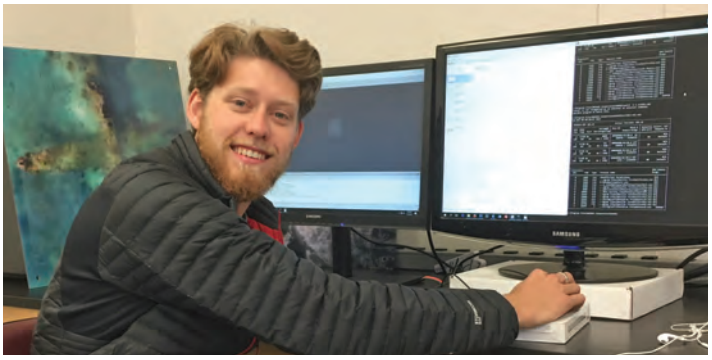
In October 2018, a team of five deployed to Kuwait to conduct a mission of a 4 sq. mile area off Failaka Island. Using a small chartered vessel out of Kuwait City, the team trekked daily to and from the site. Because the depth of the survey area was shallow, it was necessary to use towed and vessel-mounted instrumentation. In addition to side-scan sonar to identify any potential wreckage on the sea floor, a magnetometer and sub bottom profiler were deployed to confirm ferrous metal sources, as well as identify the depth of these sources in the seabed.



The team was able to complete the planned survey area and found an area of scattered ferrous debris with significant magnetic signatures. There were also a number of objects detectable on the seafloor. In coordination with the Kuwaiti Coast Guard and the U.S. Army's 86th Dive Detachment stationed in Kuwait, we conducted some preliminary dives. With zero visibility, results were inconclusive, but this site remains of interest for follow-up work. Project Recover is working with DPAA to consider another mission to follow-up this site, as well as additional surveys in the area.

Hands-on Education

Project Recover provides formal and informal educational opportunities by including students, post-doctoral researchers and professional staff in our efforts, in both field and laboratory settings.



Gannon Gesiriech is a M.S. student in electrical engineering at the University of California, San Diego. Gannon has provided underwater photogrammetry for 3D rendering of crash sites for missions since 2018.

Tarice Taylor, a former NGA staff officer, is a M.S. student in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation at Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Tarice's capstone work was developing a geodatabase in support of the Kiska mission.

Eric Gallimore is a Ph.D. candidate in applied ocean sciences at Scripps Institution of Oceanography whose research focuses on unmanned underwater vehicle autonomy, sensors and acoustic communications. His thesis work with a magnetic sensor system mapping undersea debris was used this year around Kiska, AK. Eric has accompanied the teams every year since 2015.

Carter DuVal is a Ph.D. candidate in oceanography at the University of Delaware with a specific focus on unexploded ordnance detection using acoustic and non-acoustic sensors on autonomous underwater vehicles. He supported a Project Recover mission in 2017 and this year in Kuwait.

Dr. Colin Colburn, a former DPAA historian, completed his Ph.D. in history this year from the University of Southern Mississippi. Colin serves as Project Recover's lead historian tasked with coordinating historical research, analysis, investigations and case file management. This year, Colin participated in missions to Hungary and Chuuk.

Jason McHale is a Project Recover historian tasked with conducting archival research, historical analysis, investigations, family member updates and case development. Jason has a M.S. in military history.

Dr. Megan Lickliter-Mundon recently received her Ph.D. from the Nautical Archaeology Program at Texas A&M University. Megan specializes in deepwater and aviation archaeology, conservation studies, museum studies and heritage preservation. This year, Megan was lead archaeologist for Project Recover in Italy and the Solomon Islands.

Dr. Jolie Liston was the lead archaeologist on the mission to Palau and has been working with Project Recover members since 2006. Participation with Project Recover continues her archaeology and oral history research projects and encourages education capacity building between Micronesian and Hawaiian communities.

Dr. Megan Cimino is a postdoctoral researcher in Oceanography at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, with expertise in unmanned underwater vehicles. Megan began her work with Project Recover as a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Delaware. She has supported Project Recover missions since 2014 and this year participated in the mission to Guatemala.

Dr. Andrew Pietruska is a research associate at Scripps Institution of Oceanography and serves as Project Recover's lead underwater archaeologist tasked with coordinating field efforts, case file management, professional publications for Project Recover and reporting findings to DPAA. This year, Drew participated in missions to Guatemala, Chuuk, Kiska and Kuwait.

Dr. Matthew Breece is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Delaware in oceanography, with expertise in megafauna and unmanned underwater vehicles. Matt holds a M.S. degree in Natural Resources and a Ph.D. in Oceanography. Matt supported missions this year in Chuuk, Kiska and Italy.

Anthony Burgess is a Ph.D. student at the University of Malta working on the status and relevance of WWII underwater aviation heritage in the Maltese Islands. This year, Tony joined Project Recover on missions to the Solomon Islands and Italy.

Communications & Media Impact

Executive Summary

ENDEAVOR

THE FRIEDKIN GROUP

- Endeavor and Project Recover, together with the coordinated efforts of NOAA, DPAA, media offices of UD and SIO, and surviving relatives of the MIA crew families, participated in national and local media opportunities making seven different announcements in the past year to drive awareness for Project Recover's role in locating missing WWII aircraft and assistance in repatriating four heroes after more than seven decades.
- Endeavor developed and implemented strategic communications approaches that leveraged Project Recover's involvement with each of the MIA families, including interviews with the organization's co-founders, the pitching of media materials and creative assets that promoted the mission of the organization and Dan Friedkin's involvement.
- Outreach efforts generated a total of over 469 million earned media impressions via 650+ earned placements across print, online and broadcast outlets from December 2017 through November 2018.
- This past year's public relations efforts led by Eric Terrill, Pat Scannon and Mark Moline, from the Project Recover team, garnered the following media highlights.

PROJECT RECOVER

2018 AT-A-GLANCE

DEC. 11
ARM2c Albert "Bud" Rybarczyk returned home to Stevensville, MI

APR. 7
AOM2c Ora H. Sharninghouse returned home to Findlay, OH

MAY 2
Lt. William Q. Punnell laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery

MAY 28
Project Recover remembers lost crew of B-24 "Heaven Can Wait"

The Herald-Palladium
The long journey home
WWII veteran Bud Rybarczyk is buried next to parents

THE BLADE
WWII veteran laid to rest in Findlay after 73 years as MIA

Detroit Free Press
Remains of Michigan WWII veteran to be laid to rest

NavyTimes
WWII sailor's sister holds funeral for brother more than 70 years after his death

STARS AND STRIPES
WWII pilot to get Arlington burial 74 years after he went MIA

The New York Times
A World War II Mystery Is Solved, and Emotions Flood In

wood TV 8
'A miracle': WWII radioman's remains returned to family

13 abc THIS IS HOME
Local sailor killed during WWII to be laid to rest in Findlay

CBS 19 NEWS
South Dakota WWII pilot honored at Arlington National Cemetery

MENTAL FLOSS
A World War II Bomber Lost with 11 Service-members Has Been Found After 74 Years

16 WNDU
UPDATE: Family of WWII Navy radioman presented with flag

The Courier
Remains of WWII serviceman finally return to Findlay today

Military.com
WWII Pilot Gets Arlington Burial 74 Years After Going MIA

FOX NEWS .com
Wreckage of WWII B-24 bomber discovered 74 years after it was shot down

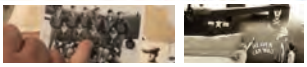
The New York Times

"Project Recover, a six-year-old nonprofit that collaborates with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, or D.P.A.A., the arm of the Pentagon tasked with finding and returning fallen military personnel.

The group says its recoveries show how new sonar and robotics technologies make it far easier to find planes that crashed at sea, and that were once thought lost for good."

SDPB Radio
Bringing Lt. William Q. Punnell Home

MORNING EXPRESS WITH ROBIN MEADE HLN



MISSING WWII PLANE FOUND
Pilot's family gets answers 74 years later

The Washington Post

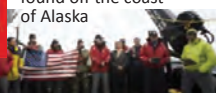
Searchers find the sunken stern of a doomed World War II destroyer off the coast of Alaska

The Times

Coming home remains of World War II veteran returned to family after 74 years

CNN

WWII destroyer remains found off the coast of Alaska



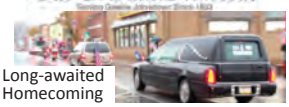
BUSINESS INSIDER

Researchers just found a WWII shipwreck that was lost for over 75 years off the coast of an Alaskan island

HISTORY

Hunk of World War II US Destroyer Discovered Off Alaskan Island

The Tribune-Democrat



Long-awaited Homecoming

WARBIRD DIGEST

Project Recover – Bringing the MIAs Home

WARBIRDS NEWS

Support Aviation History This **#GivingTuesday**

AUG. 15

NOAA-funded Project Recover finds stern of USS Abner Read

NOV. 10

ARM3c Walter E. "Bert" Mintus returned home to Portage, PA

NOV. 27

Project Recover is highlighted on Giving Tuesday by Warbirds News

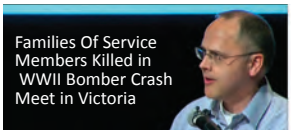
OCT. 13

Project Recover attends "family reunion" of "Heaven Can Wait" crew in Victoria, MN

OCT. 25

BentProp Project fully merges under Project Recover

CBS Minnesota



Families Of Service Members Killed in WWII Bomber Crash Meet in Victoria

DailyMail.com

'It brought closure:' Families of the crew members onboard the WWII-era plane that plunged into the Pacific Ocean after it was shot down by the Japanese celebrate recovery of the aircraft

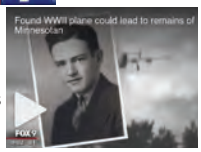
The Victoria GAZETTE

They Shall Not Grow Old

"Heaven Can Wait" is the name of the B-24 U.S. bomber plane that was shot down by the enemy...

FOX 9

WWII plane wreckage discovery could bring back remains of missing Minnesotan



Consolidation

Endeavor worked with Project Recover to secure brand coverage on the organization's recent consolidation of its public and private partners, including The BentProp Project, under one operation. **PROJECT RECOVER, INC.** now operates as a 501(c)(3) with the logo trademarked. The website has also been consolidated and is still being developed to capture the current activities and encapsulate the history of the effort since 1993.

Earned Coverage Breakdown

Timing	Milestone	Earned Media Impressions Total	Total # of Earned Media Placements
December 10-11, 2017	Repatriation of ARM2c Albert "Bud" Rybarczyk	11.3 Million	76
April 5-7, 2018	Repatriation of AOM2c Ora H. Sharninghouse, Jr.	540,856	10
May 2, 2018	Repatriation of Lt. William Q. Punnell	2.2 Million	15
May 25-28, 2018	B-24 "Heaven Can Wait"	268 Million	300+
August 15, 2018	USS Abner Read	185 Million	381
October 25, 2018	Project Recover Merger + Giving Tuesday	14,000	2
November 9-10, 2018	Repatriation of ARM3c Walter E. Mintus	2 Million	48

The Project Recover team thanks the following individuals from The Friedkin Group for their leadership and guidance with communications, marketing, branding and media related activities: Katie Scallan, Laird Doran, Brian Reynolds, Amanda Huges and Eric Williamson. Additionally, we thank Bates Grainger and Kristen McMahon from Endeavor for their work to support Project Recover in communications and coordination in 2018.

The Team

Principals

Dr. Mark Moline, University of Delaware
Dr. Patrick Scannon, President, Project Recover, Inc.
Dr. Eric Terrill, Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Staff

Dr. Colin Colbourn, Historian
Dr. Andrew Pietruszka, Archaeologist
Daniel O'Brien, Administrator

Affiliated Scientists & Volunteers

Derek Abbey, Heidi Batchelor, Dave Bavencoff, Blake Boteler, Dr. Matthew Breece, Charlie Brown, Warren Bruce, Tony Burgess, Dr. Megan Cimino, Flip Colmer, Casey Doyle, Carter DuVal, Glenn Frano, Eric Gallimore, Bert Garrison, Gannon Gesiriech, Dave Gianakos, Bob Hess, George Jicha, Sarah Johnson, Dr. Mickaila Johnston, Brian Kim, Dr. Megan Lickliter-Mundon, Dr. Jolie Liston, Jeff Lynett, Joe Maldangesang, Kyle McBurnie, Andrew Nager, Harry Parker, Dr. Tim Quast, Dr. Laura Regan, Bob Richards, Sean Richardson, Nell Scannon, Dr. Travis Schramek, Jim Slocum, Val Thal-Slocum, Ewan Stevenson, Mark Swank, Tarice Taylor, Lauren Trecosta, Dr. Arthur Trembanis, Bill Utley, Brian Von Herbulis, Erik White.

Project Recover operations were formalized in 2016 through the generous support of Dan Friedkin. The substantial gift allowed Project Recover to expand operations globally, increase the tempo of operations and recoveries, provide communications services for the first three years of the partnership and assist in establishing Project Recover as a non-profit entity.

Dan Friedkin (below) is Chairman and CEO of The Friedkin Group, a privately held consortium of businesses and investments in the automotive, hospitality, entertainment, golf and adventure industries. In addition to the leadership positions he holds within the business community, Dan remains highly active in wildlife conservation initiatives and various aviation and education philanthropies. He's also a Project Recover team member.

Statistics Summary

Investments by team member Dan Friedkin has permitted a three-year (2016–Jan. 2019) global effort to search, locate, identify and document MIA and POW sites. This has leveraged additional support and resulted in numerous additional MIA and POW-related findings, which have been reported to the DPAA. Here is a summary of Project Recover's accomplishments in the field to date.

- 30 Intelligence gathering, search and documentation missions in 14 countries involving 71 individual U.S. Aircraft associated with at least 599 MIAs or POWs. Progress has included:
  - 23 U.S. aircraft located (22 Underwater/1 Land, of which 10 are new finds) associated with at least 83 MIAs;
  - 21 Site Survey Forms completed to U.S. government standards and submitted to DPAA and 23 reports of other findings filed or in progress to date;
  - 4 recovery missions conducted by the DPAA have been carried out at sites reported by Project Recover. 1 B-24 (Hansa Bay, PNG with up to 11 MIAs) is under active DPAA investigation as of late November 2018;
  - 5 Service members identified and returned by DPAA to families since December 2017, based on Project Recover findings.
- 1 USN Destroyer Located: 71 sailors final resting place (Burial at Sea).
- 4 USAAF and U.S. Navy related POW sites actively under investigation.
- 7 Non-U.S. Aircraft Located: 1 British, 5 Japanese, 1 German.
- German Submarine (Berwick, England) and 3 Japanese Submarines (Kiska, Alaska) located.
- Some firsts for Project Recover:
  - Investigation by DPAA of a Project Recover-located crash site at depths beyond their normal operating depth range (Hansa Bay B-24);
  - Sponsoring of Project Recover teams by the Pentagon's Office of Science Directorate to develop a technology test bed for characterizing lost WWII aircraft in Palau;
  - Project Recover teams funded for two missions by DPAA;
  - Project Recover team funded by NOAA to conduct a battlefield survey in Kiska, Alaska;
  - Search of loss in conflict other than WWII MIA/POW (1991, Desert Storm) off Kuwait.

Looking Ahead

The success of Project Recover's three years of operation has led to efficient and effective efforts in the field, leveraging additional partnerships and resource opportunities. With both continued private and public funding, we are continuing our strategic planning to move the organization from this recent three-year pilot to sustained operations.

In 2019, Project Recover will be conducting a mission in Palau (Jan–Feb) under a technology innovation grant from The Department of Defense. Additionally, we plan to continue partnering with DPAA focused on cases in both the EuroMed and IndoPacific Directorates. An Advisory Council was formed to assist in securing long-term funding to continue addressing the prioritized list of new and follow-up cases we have spent the last three years developing. Our list of planned and high-priority cases are in the following countries: Palau, Solomon Islands, Indonesia, Greece, Latvia, Italy and Croatia.

U.S. Navy TBM-1C Avenger from VT-51 off the USS *San Jacinto*.

"At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them."

– Laurence Binyon

PROJECT RECOVER

www.projectrecover.org

Recovery of MIAs from the TBM-1C Avenger found by Project Recover from the same squadron pictured above. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Tyler Thompson.