



Department of Defense DIRECTIVE

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ASD(FMP)

SUBJECT: Mortuary Affairs Policy

- References:
- (a) Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum of Policy Number 16, "Joint Mortuary Affairs Policy," May 31, 1990
 - (b) Acting Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Executive Agent for Mortuary Affairs," March 15, 1991
 - (c) Joint Publication 4-06, "Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Mortuary Affairs in Joint Operations," August 28, 1996
 - (d) [DoD Instruction 1300.18](#), "Military Personnel Casualty Matters, Policies, and Procedures," December 27, 1991
 - (e) through (i), see enclosure 1

1. PURPOSE

This Directive:

- 1.1. Supersedes policy established by reference (a) and issues policy and assigns responsibility for mortuary affairs within the Department of Defense (DoD).
- 1.2. Incorporates reference (b), which establishes the Secretary of the Army as Executive Agent for mortuary affairs within the Department of Defense.
- 1.3. Establishes the Central Joint Mortuary Affairs Office (CJMAO) for coordinating mortuary affairs policy, procedures, mobilization planning, and recommendations on mortuary services during military operations.

1.4. Provides overarching policy guidance complementing Joint Publication 4-06 (reference (c)), which establishes tactics, techniques, and procedures for mortuary affairs in joint operations.

2. APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

2.1. This Directive applies to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies and all other organizational entities within the Department of Defense (hereafter referred to collectively as "the DoD Components").

2.2. The terms "Military Services" and "military personnel," as used herein, refer to the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard when operating as a Service in the Department of the Navy. Communications to the Commanders of Combatant Commands shall be transmitted through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

2.3. This Directive sets forth policies and guidance for the Combatant Commands and the Military Services by establishing policies and assigning responsibilities for mortuary affairs throughout the Department of Defense.

2.4. The DoD Mortuary Affairs Program provides support across the spectrum of operations for:

2.4.1. Search, recovery, identification, evacuation, and, when required, temporary interment, disinterment, decontamination, and reinterment of deceased U.S. military personnel, U.S. noncombatants, and allied, coalition partner, and enemy personnel.

2.4.2. Operating mortuary affairs processing points during operations (military, peacekeeping, or humanitarian). Mortuary affairs processing points include Mortuary Affairs Collection Points, Theater Mortuary Evacuation Points, Mortuary Affairs Decontamination Collection Points, temporary interment sites, identification laboratories and port mortuaries.

2.4.3. Preparing and coordinating shipment of remains to the place designated by the person authorized to direct disposition of remains.

2.4.4. Maintaining temporary interment sites.

2.4.5. Recording interment and disinterment actions.

2.4.6. Collecting, inventorying, storing, and processing personal effects of deceased and missing U.S. military personnel, U.S. noncombatants (when requested by Department of State), and deceased allied, coalition partner, and enemy personnel.

2.4.7. Developing standards and specifications for the preparation of remains (to include cremation), caskets, and urns.

2.4.8. Developing standard policies and procedures for implementation of the Current Death Program, Concurrent Return Program, and Graves Registration Program.

2.4.9. Compilation of records and other data to support search and recovery of remains operations in the theater.

2.5. Nothing in this Directive precludes the Services from arranging for mortuary affairs support by another Service when mutually agreeable. These arrangements, once established, remain in effect unless canceled by mutual agreement. The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), representing the Secretary of the Army as the DoD Executive Agent, and the Chairman, CJMAO, will be informed of such agreements.

3. DEFINITIONS

Terms used in this Directive are set forth in enclosure 2.

4. POLICY

It is the DoD policy that:

4.1. The remains of all members of the Military Services will be provided permanent disposition to the extent authorized in their appropriate Service regulations or by Federal statutes.

4.2. Remains will be handled with the reverence, care, and dignity befitting them and the circumstances.

4.3. To the extent possible, personal effects will be returned to the person eligible to receive the effects as rapidly as possible. Legal disposition in accordance with the

decedent's will or the laws of the State (or territory, possession, or country) of the decedent's legal residence will be as directed by the eligible recipient.

4.4. Every effort will be made to identify remains and account for unrecovered remains of U.S. military personnel, Government employees, Government contractors, their dependents and others as described in paragraphs 4.9. and 4.10., who die in military operations, training accidents, and other multiple fatality incidents.

4.5. Temporary interment is a last resort to protect unit health, safety and sanitation. Temporary interment should be only considered after all other courses of actions have been explored. Authority for temporary interment in a theater resides with the geographic Commander of the Combatant Command as outlined in reference (c). Burial at sea may be authorized by the ship's Captain only when preservation capability is unavailable aboard ship or when transfer to shore is not timely or is operationally inadvisable. The geographic Commander of the Combatant Command should approve temporary interments when remains are contaminated from a nuclear, biological and chemical event and decontamination is not possible without endangering other personnel. Remains will be disinterred as soon as possible based upon operational and safety requirements.

4.6. The recovery, evacuation, preliminary identification, and further disposition of remains and personal effects under the jurisdiction of the Military Services are command responsibilities.

4.7. The preservation of remains will be given the highest priority. Every effort will be made to preserve the condition of the remains including those recovered from past conflicts.

4.8. The CJMAO will advise Department of Defense and senior Service officials within affected Military Departments on all peacetime mass fatality or prominent incidents involving more than one military Service occurring in either the Continental United States (CONUS) or outside the Continental United States (OCONUS).

4.9. The remains of U.S. non-combatant civilians living overseas or U.S. contractor personnel who are fatalities resulting from an incident in support of military operations deserve the same dignity and respect afforded military remains and shall be rendered in accordance with references (c) and (e). In accordance with references (e), (f), and (g), the Department of Defense may provide mortuary support for the disposition of remains and personal effects of all Americans upon the request of the Department of State. The Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) will coordinate this support with the Department of State to include cost reimbursement, where appropriate.

4.10. The disposition of combatant or non-combatant host-nation or third-country remains will likewise be given the same dignity and respect afforded U.S. personnel. Coordination for hand-over to the host nation will reside with the geographic Combatant Commander in coordination with and conjunction with the Department of State through the host-nation embassy or the International Red Cross, as appropriate.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness shall:

5.1.1. Monitor compliance with this Directive.

5.1.2. Serve as the mortuary affairs matters point of contact for the Department of Defense with the designated senior Service official responsible in the aftermath of an incident involving non-DoD Governmental Agencies, and civilian or contractor personnel.

5.1.3. Provide an O-6 level representative to serve on the CJMAO.

5.2. The Secretary of the Army shall:

5.2.1. Serve as the Executive Agent for mortuary affairs for the Department of Defense consistent with the guidance in references (b) and (c).

5.2.2. Maintain a mortuary affairs force structure capable of providing support to Army units and backup general support to the other Military Services, as required. Provide technical assistance to the other Military Services, as required.

5.2.3. Maintain the CJMAO and appoint a Chairman. In peacetime, the CJMAO will meet at least twice annually or at the direction of the Chairman in support of special incidents. During wartime or special incidents, such as those involving mass fatalities, the CJMAO will become the functional body that will provide guidance on mortuary affairs matters.

5.2.4. Administratively process cases considered by the Armed Forces Identification Review Board in coordination with the other Services.

5.2.5. Develop and obtain Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff approval of joint mortuary affairs doctrine and training material to be used by the Military Services.

5.2.6. Establish and maintain a doctrine and training integration center for joint tactics, techniques and procedures.

5.2.7. Operate theater and CONUS personal effects depots in support of all Military Services.

5.2.8. Operate and maintain a central identification laboratory in peacetime and establish other regional identification laboratories when required to support military operations.

5.3. The Secretary of the Air Force shall operate and maintain CONUS east and west coast port-of-entry mortuaries in support of all the Military Services.

5.4. The Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff shall:

5.4.1. Be the approval authority for all joint doctrine concerning mortuary affairs.

5.4.2. Provide guidance to the Combatant Commands on policy and procedures for mortuary affairs.

5.4.3. Appoint an O-6 level representative to serve on the CJMAO.

5.5. The Secretaries of the Military Departments shall:

5.5.1. Maintain an organizational capability to provide for mortuary affairs in support of individual Service needs.

5.5.2. Maintain a staff responsible for mortuary affairs matters.

5.5.3. Operate overseas mortuaries consistent with force demands and needs of the Military Services, ensuring that remains of DoD personnel, their dependents and eligible noncombatants are processed quickly, efficiently and cost effectively.

5.5.4. Appoint an O-6 level representative to serve on the CJMAO.

5.6. The Armed Forces Medical Examiner, in accordance with DoD Directive 5154.24 (reference (h)), shall:

5.6.1. Provide forensic pathology consultative services to the Department of Defense.

5.6.2. Conduct or review medico-legal investigations, which may include autopsy examinations, of the deaths of active duty Service members.

5.6.3. Serve as the DoD scientific authority for the identification of remains in current deaths and other deceased individuals for whom a death certificate has not been issued. Supervise and provide consultative and analytic DNA identification services through the DoD DNA Registry.

5.6.4. Provide medico-legal opinions and testimony as requested by the Armed Forces.

5.6.5. Provide an O-6 level representative to serve on the CJMAO.

5.7. The Geographic Combatant Commands shall:

5.7.1. Give authoritative direction and guidance on providing mortuary affairs support to all assigned and attached forces within their area of responsibility in accordance with reference (i), the direction outlined in this Directive, and that issued by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

5.7.2. Designate a Service component to provide an executive agent for the theater Mortuary Affairs Support Program and assist Service and executive agency efforts to maintain the best possible estimates of mortuary affairs support requirements.

5.7.3. Assume lead responsibility and coordination for fatalities occurring within the command's area of responsibility and assign tasks, assets, and organizing commands as necessary to execute the mortuary affairs mission.

5.7.4. Establish a Joint Mortuary Affairs Office within their commands to provide oversight of mortuary affairs support within their area of responsibility.

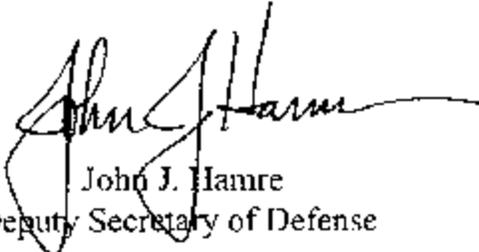
5.7.5. Monitor and ensure compliance with Chapter III, paragraph 3a of reference (c).

5.7.6. Functional Combatant Commands shall receive mortuary affairs support from the supported geographic Commander of the Combatant Command.

5.8. USCINTRANS shall provide strategic airlift to evacuate remains from OCONUS to CONUS port-of-entry mortuaries.

6. EFFECTIVE DATE:

This Directive is effective immediately.



John J. Hamre
Deputy Secretary of Defense

Enclosures - 2

- E1. References, continued
- E2. Definitions

E1. ENCLOSURE 1

REFERENCES, continued

- (e) Sections 5741, 5742 and 8234 of title 5, United States Code
- (f) Sections 1481 through 1490 of title 10, United States Code
- (g) Section 2715 of title 22, United States Code
- (h) [DoD Directive 5154.24](#), "Armed Forces Institute of Pathology," October 28, 1996
- (i) Subsection 164(c) of title 10, United States Code

E2. ENCLOSURE 2

DEFINITIONS

E2.1.1. Casualty Affairs. Involves casualty recording and reporting, next-of-kin notification and assistance, and other casualty matters as directed by DoD Instruction 1300.18 (reference (d)).

E2.1.2. Central Joint Mortuary Affairs Office (CJMAO). A functional coordinating group consisting of representatives from the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), the Military Services, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Armed Forces Medical Examiner.

E2.1.3. Concurrent Return Program. Consists of search, recovery, disinterment when needed, evacuation of remains to a mortuary, identification and preparation of remains in a mortuary, shipment to destination and disposition of personal effects. It is activated when the Current Death Program capabilities are exceeded, such as war or an incident with a large number of fatalities, yet conditions do not require temporary interment.

E2.1.4. Current Death Program. Consists of identification and preparation of remains in a mortuary, shipment to destination and disposition of personal effects. It is operational during peacetime and will continue outside areas of conflict during major military operations. It may also continue in areas of conflict depending on the logistical and tactical situation.

E2.1.5. Graves Registration Program. Provides for search, recovery, tentative identification, and evacuation or temporary burial of deceased personnel. Temporary burial is performed only when authorized by the responsible geographic Combatant Commander during major military operations. Disposition of personal effects is not a part of this program.

E2.1.6. Mortuary Affairs. Encompasses the search and recovery, identification, preparation, and disposition of remains of persons for whom the Services are responsible by statutes and pursuant to Executive Order.

E2.1.7. Noncombatants. For the purposes of this document, noncombatants include dependents of U.S. military members, DoD civilian employees and their dependents, any civilian performing a service directly for the Armed Forces and their dependents, any U.S. contractor personnel employed under contract with the Armed Forces and their dependents, and other civilians not subject to military law.

E2.1.8. Special Incidents. Situations involving mass-fatalities, such as earthquakes and other natural disasters, which in the judgment of the Chairman of the Central Joint Mortuary Affairs Office (CJMAO) require the support and guidance of the CJMAO.