

Carl Levin and Howard P. 'Buck' McKeon National Defense Authorization
Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (Public Law 113-291) – Language Relevant to
POW/MIA Remains Recovery Operations

TITLE IX—DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

Subtitle B—Other Matters

**SEC. 916. MODIFICATIONS TO REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCOUNTING FOR
MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES LISTED AS MISSING.**

(a) DESIGNATION OF AGENCY AND DIRECTOR.—Subsection (a) of section 1501 of title 10, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“(a) RESPONSIBILITY FOR MISSING PERSONS.—(1)(A) The Secretary of Defense shall designate a single organization within the Department of Defense to have responsibility for Department matters relating to missing persons, including accounting for missing persons and persons whose remains have not been recovered from the conflict in which they were lost.

“(B) The organization designated under this paragraph shall be a Defense Agency or other entity of the Department of Defense outside the military departments and is referred to in this chapter as the ‘designated Defense Agency’.

“(C) The head of the organization designated under this paragraph is referred to in this chapter as the ‘designated Agency Director’.

“(2) Subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense, the responsibilities of the designated Agency Director shall include the following:

“(A) Policy, control, and oversight within the Department of Defense of the entire process for investigation and recovery related to missing persons, including matters related to search, rescue, escape, and evasion.

“(B) Policy, control, and oversight of the program established under section 1509 of this title.

“(C) Responsibility for accounting for missing persons, including locating, recovering, and identifying missing persons or their remains after hostilities have ceased.

“(D) Coordination for the Department of Defense with other departments and agencies of the United States on all matters concerning missing persons.

“(E) Dissemination of appropriate information on the status of missing persons to authorized family members.

“(F) Establishment of a means for communication between officials of the designated Defense Agency and family members of missing persons, veterans service organizations, concerned citizens, and the public on the Department’s efforts to account for missing persons, including a readily available means for communication of their views and recommendations to the designated Agency Director.

“(3) In carrying out the responsibilities established under this subsection, the designated Agency Director shall be responsible for the coordination for such purposes within the Department of Defense among the military departments, the Joint Staff, and the commanders of the combatant commands.

“(4) The designated Agency Director shall establish policies, which shall apply uniformly throughout the Department of Defense, for personnel recovery (including search, rescue, escape, and evasion) and for personnel accounting (including locating, recovering, and identifying missing persons or their remains after hostilities have ceased).

“(5) The designated Agency Director shall establish procedures to be followed by Department of Defense boards of inquiry, and by officials reviewing the reports of such boards, under this chapter.”.

(b) PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT.—Chapter 76 of such title is amended by inserting after section 1501 the following new section:

“§ 1501a. Public-private partnerships; other forms of support

“(a) PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.—The Secretary of Defense may enter into arrangements known as public-private partnerships with appropriate entities outside the Government for the purposes of facilitating the activities of the designated Defense Agency. The Secretary may only partner with foreign governments or foreign entities with the concurrence of the Secretary of State. Any such arrangement shall be entered into in accordance with authorities provided under this section or any other authority otherwise available to the Secretary. Regulations prescribed under subsection (e)(1) shall include provisions for the establishment and implementation of such partnerships.

“(b) ACCEPTANCE OF VOLUNTARY PERSONAL SERVICES.—The Secretary of Defense may accept voluntary services to facilitate accounting for missing persons in the same manner as the Secretary of a military department may accept such services under section 1588(a)(9) of this title.

“(c) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS AND GRANTS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense may enter into a cooperative agreement with, or make a grant to, a private entity for purposes related to support of the activities of the designated Defense Agency.

“(2) INAPPLICABILITY OF CERTAIN CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS.—Notwithstanding section 2304(k) of this title, the Secretary may enter such cooperative agreements or grants on a sole-source basis pursuant to section 2304(c)(5) of this title.

“(d) USE OF DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PERSONAL PROPERTY.—The Secretary may allow a private entity to use, at no cost, personal property of the Department of Defense to assist the entity in supporting the activities of the designated Defense Agency.

“(e) REGULATIONS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall prescribe regulations to implement this section.

“(2) LIMITATION.—Such regulations shall provide that acceptance of a gift (including a gift of services) or use of a gift under this section may not occur if the nature or circumstances of the acceptance or use would compromise the integrity, or the appearance of integrity, of any program of

the Department of Defense or any individual involved in such program.

“(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT.—The term ‘cooperative agreement’ means an authorized cooperative agreement as described in section 6305 of title 31.

“(2) GRANT.—The term ‘grant’ means an authorized grant as described in section 6304 of title 31.”.

(c) SECTION 1505 CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 1505(c) of such title is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking “the office established under section 1501 of this title” and inserting “the designated Agency Director”; and

(2) in paragraphs (2) and (3), by striking “head of the office established under section 1501 of this title” and inserting “designated Agency Director”.

(d) SECTION 1509 AMENDMENTS.—Section 1509 of such title is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)—

(A) in the subsection heading, by striking “PROCESS”;

(B) in paragraph (1), by striking “POW/MIA accounting community” and inserting “through the designated Agency Director”;

(C) by striking paragraph (2) and inserting the following new paragraph (2):

“(2)(A) The Secretary shall assign or detail to the designated Defense Agency on a full-time basis a senior medical examiner from the personnel of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System. The primary duties of the medical examiner so assigned or detailed shall include the identification of remains in support of the function of the designated Agency Director to account for unaccounted for persons covered by subsection (a).

“(B) In carrying out functions under this chapter, the medical examiner so assigned or detailed shall report to the designated Agency Director.

“(C) The medical examiner so assigned or detailed shall—

“(i) exercise scientific identification authority;

“(ii) establish identification and laboratory policy consistent with the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System; and

“(iii) advise the designated Agency Director on forensic science disciplines.

“(D) Nothing in this chapter shall be interpreted as affecting the authority of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner under section 1471 of this title.”;

(2) in subsection (d)—

(A) in the subsection heading, by inserting “; CENTRALIZED DATABASE” after “FILES”; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(4) The Secretary of Defense shall establish and maintain a single centralized database and case management system containing information on all missing persons for whom a file has been established under this subsection. The database and case management system shall be accessible to all elements of the Department of Defense involved in the search, recovery, identification, and communications phases of the program established by this section.”; and

(3) in subsection (f)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by striking “establishing and”; and

(ii) by striking “Secretary of Defense shall coordinate” and inserting “designated Agency Director shall ensure coordination”;

(B) in paragraph (2)—

(i) by inserting “staff” after “National Security Council”; and

(ii) by striking “POW/MIA accounting community”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(3) In carrying out the program, the designated Agency Director shall coordinate all external communications and events associated with the program.”

(e) REPORT ON POW/MIA POLICIES.—

(1) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on policies and proposals for providing access to information and documents to the next of kin of missing service personnel, including under chapter 76 of title 10, United States Code, as amended by this section.

(2) ELEMENTS OF REPORT.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following elements:

(A) A description of information and documents to be provided to the next of kin, including the status of recovery efforts and service records.

(B) A description of the Department’s plans, if any, to review the classification status of records related to past covered conflicts and missing service personnel.

(C) An assessment of whether it is feasible and advisable to develop a public interface for any database of missing personnel being developed.

(f) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(1) SECTION HEADING.—The heading of section 1509 of such title is amended to read as follows:

“§ 1509. Program to resolve missing person cases”.

(2) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 76 of such title is amended—

(A) by inserting after the item relating to section 1501 the following new item:

“1501a. Public-private partnerships; other forms of support.”; and

(B) by striking the item relating to section 1509 and inserting the following new item:

“1509. Program to resolve missing person cases.”