

CHAPTER XIV

SEARCH AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS IN PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS AND ON THE ASIATIC MAINLAND

Introduction

One of the most important activities undertaken by American Graves Registration Commands overseas involved extensive searches leading to the eventual location of all recoverable World War II deceased. In planning search and recovery operations, Graves Registration officers in the Pacific Theater faced the unusual conditions of an oceanic area which, in contrast, did not exist to any significant degree in Europe or the Middle East. Specifically, these problems were: vast stretches of water separating the chief centers of searching activities, with resultant supply and communications difficulties; tropical climatic conditions; generally substandard living and working facilities; lack of service installations in most of the areas; and unsettled political situations, particularly in China, French Indo-China, and the Dutch East Indies.

During the war, search and recovery activities in the Pacific Theater were carried out on an individual case basis.¹ Graves Registration units, assigned to garrison forces, investigated their areas of responsibility as time and opportunity permitted, but much remained undone, and no region could be regarded as thoroughly combed until search teams, operating in accordance with plans based upon all available casualty records, concluded their investigations. Likewise, during hostilities, most attempts to locate isolated air crash victims throughout the vast Pacific proved inconclusive.²

At the close of the war, available evidence indicates little effort was made to acquaint theater commanders and quartermasters with the magnitude and importance of the task at hand. Even after issuance of General Order No. 125, establishing graves registration commands on a world-wide basis, the attitude of some overseas officers ranged from indifference to downright disapproval of the whole program as a "waste of money."³ Such sentiment retarded progress in graves registration matters.

Early estimates of unrecovered dead in the Pacific Theater fell far short of the actual number, as later operations soon demon-

¹ Hist, AGRS-PATA, p. 3.

² *Ibid.*

³ Rpt, Col James A. Murphey, Hq PHILCOM to CINCFE, 11 Jan 49, sub: Critique of AGRS Activities in PHILCOM Zone.

strated. In May 1946, nine months after V-J Day, the estimated total of unlocated Pacific Theater and Asiatic Mainland war dead had reached slightly over 5,700—still much below the true figure.

After the establishment, under General Order No. 138, 10 May 1946, of American Graves Registration Service, Pacific Theater (AGRS-PATA), with its three subordinate sectors—WESPAC, MIDPAC, and JAP-KOR, the search and recovery phase of the program progressed quite slowly, particularly during the remainder of 1946. A continuous shortage of trained graves registration workers retarded this work in most Pacific and Asiatic Mainland areas. The more pressing demands for immediate attention to the concentration and identification phases of the overall mission indeed relegated search and recovery to third place in priority for assignment of available manpower.⁴

A brief area-by-area survey follows of search and recovery activities and accomplishments, covering the period from V-J Day until the replacement of AGRS-PATA by two AGRS commands—the Far East Zone (FEZ) and the Pacific Zone (PAZ). Accomplishments during this period on the Asiatic mainland are related in the sections devoted to the China and India-Burma Theaters.

AFWESPAC Sector

In this Sector during the postwar period preceding the establishment in April 1947 of the Search and Recovery Section of the later PHILRYCOM Sector, nearly all search operations were planned and executed by the Commanding Officer of the USAF cemeteries nearest to the areas in which searches were conducted. Before April 1947, no definite areas of responsibility existed nor was any co-ordinated plan drawn up for the searching and closing out of areas. After the withdrawal of most wartime American units from AFWESPAC, the lack of manpower and equipment usually limited search and recovery efforts to investigations for specific individuals.⁵

Despite the lack of any co-ordinated search and recovery plan in AFWESPAC, search teams worked almost continuously on the Bataan Peninsula following V-J Day. Its geographic features provided an ideal proving ground for searchers, since the terrain was varied and tropical, consisting of sandy beaches, rice paddies, swamps, rugged mountains, and dense jungles,⁶ where most expeditions proceeded by foot and the men, often using bolos, hacked their way forward through heavy undergrowth. In the foothills of the higher mountains, the searchers encountered primitive tribes of

⁴ Hist, AGRS-PATA, p. 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Incl. 21, p. 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Negritos, who, though suspicious, provided the only available guides. Since the Bataan Peninsula had witnessed a desperate retreat from better supplied and equipped Japanese forces, most interments had occurred under combat conditions, which resulted in the establishment of very few grave plots. Furthermore, many deceased did not receive a decent burial, as they were left either to the mercy of a barbaric foe or found by Filipinos who, fearful of reprisals, failed to provide a proper burial. In addition, during the long Japanese occupation of Bataan, starving natives, looking for gold or other valuables which might be exchanged for food, disturbed many shallow Allied graves. The illiteracy and ignorance of native informers, who had little or no comprehension of dates, circumstances, or distance, constituted still another handicap for Bataan's searchers.⁷ Nevertheless, during search and recovery activities, team members questioned over 95 percent of the Bataan inhabitants and followed up all possible leads. A final sweeping search and recovery effort began on 20 January 1947. In April, the assignment of most of the 609th Graves Registration Company to the project greatly enlarged its scope. At the close of operations in this region, the searchers had recovered 2,264 remains, which included 121 Americans and 139 Philippine Scouts. The large remaining number of deceased belonged to the regular Philippine Army.⁸

The Leyte area in the southern Philippines, like Bataan, had undergone continuous investigation by search units since the close of hostilities. During April 1947, field camps were established at Limon and Dipi, on Leyte, and every unfinished search and recovery case received careful recheck. At this time, all local civilians encountered were questioned through interpreters for additional clues and every lead was pursued.

Another exception to the general pattern of lack of co-ordinated planned searching occurred in the Bismarck Archipelago and in the northern Solomon Islands, where, in July 1945, searching operations began on a rather extensive scale, continuing through the autumn of that year. The first activities took place on Bougainville, where a party consisting of Tech. Sgt. Robert T. Smith and 10 natives, combed the Torokina Bay area, recovering 18 remains. Nearly a year later, in June 1946, a search unit visited Kavieng, New Ireland, and covered the region about Fangalawa Bay. Other graves registration teams probed the Rabaul area on New Britain, which had been covered by Australian War Graves groups.

⁷ SOP, AGRS-FEZ, Zone Search in the Tropics, sub: Bataan Search Operations; KCRC-AGRS-PHILRYCOM, 293.9.

⁸ Hist, AGRS-PATA, Incl. 21, p. 2.

The Cape Gloucester region of New Britain was also investigated. New Georgia Island underwent a rather thorough search during the wartime American occupation, but construction work either covered or wiped out many graves and largely prevented further recoveries. All these operations resulted in the location of 83 remains.⁹ Experiences gained in the Bismarcks and the Solomons provided a source of information which later aided the planners of the first search and recovery expedition in the Pacific Zone.



FIGURE 18. *A searcher discovers a grave on New Georgia Island which had been completely hidden by jungle growth.*

By late 1946, search and recovery operations were in progress throughout WESPAC, despite delaying factors which hampered individual units. Late in November 1946, Col. Lee M. Hester, Commanding Officer, AGRS-PATA, pointed out that poor transportation imposed a formidable obstacle. For example, in the

⁹ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, App. D, Vol. 2, Incl. 20, pp. 1-5.

Philippines under existing conditions, only the islands of Luzon and Leyte lay within reasonable reach of searchers. Everywhere teams were limited to the smallest possible membership in order to avoid the carriage of burdensome supplies and equipment. A second handicap arose from the reluctance of graves registration authorities to permit searches in certain parts of Dutch and Australian New Guinea because of the hostility of the natives. Even in the Philippines, especially in the Visayan Islands, small units occasionally experienced raids from natives who sought supplies and weapons. Still another handicap was the lack of information about air crashes and the fate of the crews. Colonel Hester believed that the Army Air Forces possessed valuable information which might aid in the search for missing airmen. That agency, he maintained, should voluntarily furnish AGRS-PATA with all casualty and recovery information since a large percentage of unlocated remains consisted of missing airmen and much time was lost in obtaining such data from Army Air Forces files.¹⁰ Congressional inquiries, which necessitated special searches, also retarded operations. In such cases, some members of a regular search and recovery expedition were withdrawn and assigned to a project which often took weeks to execute. The information gathered during these special searches frequently proved vague or inaccurate. Colonel Hester therefore recommended that all searches should result only from directions issued through War Department channels.¹¹

Despite all these drawbacks, Colonel Hester indicated that substantial progress had been made in WESPAC. He stated that several important areas had received thorough scrutiny and that future recoveries in them would be sporadic. Among these reportedly completed areas were Australia, the Ryukyu Islands, Luzon and Mindoro in the Philippines, large portions of Dutch and Australian New Guinea, and the Bismarck Archipelago. Colonel Hester's conclusions on this matter proved premature, for several of these regions required further search and recovery efforts.

AFMIDPAC Sector

This Sector encompassed the islands of the central, western, and southern Pacific, with the exception of Japan and the WESPAC area. Few significant search and recovery activities occurred in AFMIDPAC until January 1947, long after large-scale activities had begun in WESPAC. In the immediate postwar period, the quest

¹⁰ Ltr, Hq AGRS-PATA to TQMG, 20 Nov 46, sub: Rpt of S&R Activities in AFWESPAC Sector.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

for missing dead was haphazard and piecemeal. Well-organized operations did not begin until the Pacific Zone was established early in 1947. Toward the end of 1945, however, the Navy conducted a search for living servicemen who were missing in action. In the course of this project, the Navy reported, but did not attempt to recover, all discovered isolated remains.¹²

An even earlier search and recovery expedition deserves description. In mid-February 1945, an investigation began in response to distress signals from a B-29 bomber, carrying 11 crew members, which was about to crash in the vicinity of Anatahan, a small, rugged volcanic island some 63 miles north of Saipan. A short time later, a search plane spotted the wreckage of a B-29 bomber on the south slope of a high peak on Anatahan. On 20 February, a rescue party sailed from Saipan, arriving at Anatahan later that day. When the investigators finally reached the destroyed plane on 5 March, they found no survivors, but reported and interred eight remains at the scene. They found nothing to indicate the fate of the other three crew members.

Several months later, in December 1945, the 604th QM Graves Registration Company on Saipan received orders from Hq, AFMIDPAC, directing the exhumation and removal of the eight remains on Anatahan to Army Cemetery No. 1 on Saipan.¹³ Early in the following month, a search group, composed of members of the 604th QM Graves Registration Company, an infantry patrol for security purposes, medical men to assist AGRS technicians, and photographers and communications men from the Signal Corps, proceeded to Anatahan.

A preliminary search for the graves of the eight men interred by the original party located three bodies believed to be those of the men reported missing by the previous expedition. This belief was shattered when further search revealed two more remains. The party discontinued its efforts to find the original grave, combed the surrounding area carefully, and discovered five additional remains. One body never was found, but the fused metal of the plane structure provided grim evidence that the missing individual could easily have been consumed in the raging fire which followed the fatal crash.¹⁴ The searchers positively identified seven of the ten located remains and then transported them by boat to Saipan, where they were buried with full military honors, in Army Cemetery No. 1.

Despite the general dearth of searching activity in AFMIDPAC

¹² Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, p. 42.

¹³ Hist, AGRS-MARBO Sector, FEZ, 1947-48, II, pp. 3-4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

during 1946, those at Sector Headquarters displayed considerable interest in planning future operations, and spent much time in the collection and analysis of information which might later prove useful. They undertook a records audit in the autumn of 1946 and completed it early in 1947. In connection with the audit, the OQMG was requested to furnish any available information about individuals known to have perished in MIDPAC but for whom no records showed the location of remains.¹⁵

In general, therefore, during the early postwar period, AGRS-MIDPAC pursued a policy of careful preparation for the time when fully trained and well-equipped teams could be dispatched. Until then, graves registration activities centered mostly on concentration of located dead into large central cemeteries and on efforts to ascertain their identity.

JAP-KOR Sector

This Sector included the four home islands of Japan and adjacent waters, and Korea south of the 38th Parallel. Graves Registration forces operated mostly in the Japanese islands, although the Korean area reported 11 plane crashes. As elsewhere in the Pacific Theater, graves registration activities suffered from a shortage of qualified workers. In November 1946, graves registration officials still needed additional technicians. At this time, estimates indicated the presence of approximately 421 recoverable remains in Japan. Available to locate and recover these deceased were 3 teams, each consisting of 1 officer and 10 enlisted men; 1 team, composed of 1 officer and 4 enlisted men and another team, composed of 5 enlisted men. It was estimated that completion of search and recovery operations would require at least seven months.¹⁶ As matters developed, achievement of this goal consumed a much longer period.

Search and Recovery in the Far East Zone, 1947-50

PHILRYCOM Sector

With the reorganization of AGRS commands at the beginning of 1947 and the establishment of two new Graves Registration Zones in March, the Far East Zone and the Pacific Zone, search and recovery activities entered a more active phase. A review of the general situation at this time indicated that while considerable searching had been done, even in such remote areas as parts of the

¹⁵ Rpt, Col G. M. Iseley to TQMG, 20 Nov 46, sub: Status of S&R Activities in MIDPAC, 1 Nov 46.

¹⁶ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-PATA, 30 Nov 46.

Solomon Islands and New Guinea, none of these expeditions had been sufficiently thorough to consider any area within PHILRYCOM as completely closed to further area search and recovery efforts.¹⁷

The account of search and recovery operations in the Far East Zone logically begins in PHILRYCOM, the largest and most important Sector, comprising in general the region formerly served by WESPAC. The extent of the search and recovery task in this Sector was indicated by an estimate that perhaps 10,000 remains might finally be recovered within its geographical limits. During MacArthur's losing battle for the Philippines, thousands of American and Allied servicemen fell into enemy hands and scores died in Prisoner-of-War camps. In addition, some 400 air crashes had occurred in PHILRYCOM during the war. The general locality of about 250 of these mishaps was known, but of the others, only the routes were known. Consequently, search and recovery teams faced the task of covering all air routes as well as all areas of ground operations in PHILRYCOM.¹⁸

On 12 March 1947, just one week after the establishment of the Far East Zone, Col. James A. Murphey arrived at Manila and took charge as Commanding Officer. Because of an acute shortage of officers and men, he assumed command of the PHILRYCOM Sector as an additional duty.¹⁹ The Search and Recovery Section, Plans and Operations Branch, organized on 15 April 1947, was composed of those previously assigned to the Casualty and Recovered Personnel Branch of the former AGRS-PATA organization. A review of the situation indicated that, although considerable searching had already been done, no area in the Sector could be completely closed to further investigation. Work began at once on a Standing Operating Procedure for Area Searches, which was transmitted to field units on 31 May 1947. This SOP divided the Sector into four major areas of responsibility and further subdivided it into 82 definite search areas, for purposes of operational and administrative control. Sector Operational Order No. 4, issued on 6 June 1947, designated Commanding Officers for each of the four major areas.²⁰ On 15 May 1947, Zone Operational Order No. 2 authorized the appointment of a Board of Officers to review recommendations for the closing of any region to further sweeping search. These Boards were to review and act upon all identity cases referred

¹⁷ Hist, AGRS-PATA, Incl. 21, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Incl. 15, Tab. I.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Incl. 21.

to the Board by area or zone AGRS headquarters and to determine in all cases, from evidence presented, whether remains were unrecoverable.

The basic unit of search and recovery operations in the field was the Field Operating Detachment (FOD), which consisted of a detachment headquarters and four or more teams of 20 men each. The structure of an FOD varied somewhat, according to the mission. In PHILRYCOM, an FOD carried the number of the operational area in which it functioned, followed by a lettered suffix to differentiate from other FOD's working in the same region.²¹ An FOD might be designated as "FOD No. 5-D." This would indicate that it operated in Area No. 5 (Netherlands New Guinea Area) and that it was the fourth FOD to function there.

An important step in the preparation of a search expedition was the issuance of a Search and Recovery Operations Directive, which covered the following points:

- (a) Official designation of Field Operating Detachment.
- (b) Assignment of Commanding Officer.
- (c) Directions for clearance with proper civil authorities and location of base of operations.
- (d) Assignment and outline of mission.
- (e) List of special equipment to be taken.
- (f) Any special instructions pertinent to the accomplishment of the mission.²²

After the Commanding Officer of an FOD had received final orientation and instructions, the unit proceeded to its assigned base of operation and established a camp for quartering the men. Detachment members installed a radio communications system promptly in order to contact AGRS field headquarters. FOD Officers soon visited local civilian and military authorities, informed them about the nature of the mission, solicited their aid, and used every available means of publicity to inform the populace of their presence and purpose. They noted and studied all information received from local sources and then proceeded to the task of recovering remains and recording the results, whether positive or negative.

Members of the Detachment exercised great care in the actual removal of the deceased and explored graves to a depth of about one foot below the remains, where they thoroughly sifted dirt for additional portions of bodies or clues to their identity. In cases involving unburied dead, the FOD conducted a complete search of

²¹ Hist, AGRS-FEZ, 1 Oct 47-31 Mar 48, Incl. 23, p. 8.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

the area around the remains. The men had instructions to wrap individual or inseparable groups of remains in a mattress cover and to fasten search and recovery tags securely on the inside and outside of the package.²³ On the 15th and last day of each month, the Commanding Officer of each FOD prepared and submitted a semi-monthly Operations Report to the Search and Recovery Section, PHILRYCOM Sector, AGRS-FEZ. After all recoverable dead were found in a given area, the Detachment made a complete report to the Commanding Officer, AGRS-PHILRYCOM, including all pertinent information about the search project. In this manner the Field Operating Detachments carried out their duties in PHILRYCOM and in other sectors of the Far East Zone.

In the spring of 1947, several organized search projects in PHILRYCOM either had begun or had at least reached the planning phase, with intensive investigations of Samar, Cebu, Panay, Negros, and Mindanao scheduled for the period from May through September 1947. During May and June 1947, a search group dispatched from PHILRYCOM Headquarters conducted final sweeping operations in the Palau Islands. The team covered this region by aerial reconnaissance, used a power launch for search of surrounding reefs and shallow waters, conducted land searches, and questioned natives and Armed Forces personnel. In the Palaus, they faced the hazards of artillery and mortar duds, live grenades, and booby traps. Only scant returns rewarded their efforts.

Despite many problems encountered by searchers, the July 1947 Graves Registration report for PHILRYCOM reflected considerable progress. The northwest portion of the Leyte peninsula was considered completely cleared of World War II deceased. Two search teams currently worked in the remaining portion of Leyte and one team on Mindanao. In addition, the northern and southern tips of Okinawa in the Ryukyu Islands were undergoing close scrutiny.

By 1 October 1947, sufficient progress had taken place to justify the closing of seven search areas, pending action by the Zone Board of Review. These regions were:²⁴

- (1) Pampagna, P. I.
- (2) Bataan, P. I.
- (3) Leyte, P. I.
- (4) Palawan, P. I.
- (5) Ryukyus—Search Area No. 64.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-12.

²⁴ Hist, AGRS-PATA, p. 15.

- (6) Ryukyus—Search Area No. 68, except mined areas in Okinawa.
- (7) Ryukyus—Search Area No. 69.

At this time, search teams covered the following eight areas:²⁵

- (1) Zambales, P. I.
- (2) Cavite, P. I.
- (3) Corregidor, P. I.
- (4) Agusan, P. I.
- (5) Okinawa, Ryukyus.
- (6) Halmahera Islands.
- (7) Makimi, Dragon Neck, New Guinea.
- (8) Hollandia, Hidden Valley, New Guinea.

During the period between July and September 1947, search units had recovered over 300 remains in PHILRYCOM. More than 200 of these recoveries occurred along the so-called "Death March" route from Bataan to Camp O'Donnell.

Sufficient manpower began arriving in October 1947 to warrant the formation, at last, of fully self-contained Field Operating Detachments. As concentration operations neared completion, search and recovery gradually assumed first priority in graves registration activities. Additional FOD's were formed at Nichols Field, then trained and sent to the field as rapidly as men could be assigned to AGRS or released from concentration duties. The growth of the search and recovery phase of the repatriation program was evidenced by the fact that by 31 March 1948, 29 FOD's operated in 34 PHILRYCOM search areas.²⁶

The noteworthy progress achieved during late 1947 received official commendation from Gen. A. D. Hopping, Chief Quartermaster, Far East Command. In a letter to Gen. George A. Horkan, Chief, Memorial Division, OQMG, he praised Colonel Murphey for his aggressive attack on the search and recovery problem in PHILRYCOM and declared that he expected 30 to 40 search teams soon would function in that Sector.²⁷

Search and recovery activities continued at a high pitch into the early months of 1948. Particular success had rewarded efforts to close out areas in the Philippine Islands. Farther south, teams operated in the Halmaharas and in several New Guinea regions. The southern Ryukyus had received thorough investigation, except for the dangerous mined areas of Okinawa, while recovery efforts still continued at the northern end of that island chain. The most urgent need of the teams at the beginning of 1948 concerned the

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁶ Hist, AGRS-FEZ, 1 Oct 47-31 Mar 48, I, p. 42.

²⁷ Ltr, Hopping to Horkan, 24 Oct 47; KCRC-AGRS-FEZ, 293.

acquisition, if possible, of aircraft to support operations in remote island and inaccessible inland regions.²⁸

The so-called Hidden Valley project constituted one of the most difficult missions planned in PHILRYCOM and involved the recovery of some 21 deceased from an Army transport plane which crashed during May 1945 in an extremely remote and mountainous portion of Dutch New Guinea, some 130 miles west and slightly south of Hollandia. This suggested project received long and careful consideration, but finally General Headquarters, Far East Command, together with high officials at the OQMG, decided late in January 1948 to abandon the expedition, since the necessity of using air transportation for landing in and leaving this valley, surrounded by high mountains and impossible to reach except by air, entailed too much risk to justify the effort. Consequently, no additional funds were allocated for the Hidden Valley project and the matter was dropped.²⁹

When the general graves registration conference, held in Tokyo during February 1948, discussed search and recovery operations in PHILRYCOM, Colonel Murphey reported that 32 teams then operated out of Headquarters and expressed his belief that these activities would terminate by the close of 1948. He seemed certain that the Philippine Islands would be completely covered by that time.³⁰

The March 1948 graves registration report for PHILRYCOM furnished additional evidence of fruitful results from search and recovery efforts. In the Philippines, the islands of Leyte and Negros, most of central Luzon, and the northern portion of Mindanao had received complete investigation. Twenty FOD's still functioned in other Philippine Island areas, while six worked in New Guinea and vicinity. A radio engineer had been dispatched to New Guinea to supervise the installation of a radio network between the FOD's there and PHILRYCOM Headquarters. This move greatly facilitated communications and insured a firmer control over units working in remote sections.³¹

After establishment of the American Graves Registration Service Command, Far East Area (AGRC-FEA), by GO No. 26, 16 April 1948, search and recovery activities continued in PHILRYCOM on a gradually waning scale. The June graves registration report included a recapitulation of recoveries which had occurred in PHILRYCOM during the period from 1 January 1947 until the end of

²⁸ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-FEZ, 31 Dec 47.

²⁹ (1) Rad, GHQ, FEC to CINCFE, 31 Jan 48; KGRS-AGRS-FEC, 687, Hidden Valley Deceased. (2) Interv, Carl Allbee, Mem Div, Registration Br, 4 May 56.

³⁰ Min, Conf on AGRS Matters in FEC, Tokyo, 16-19 Feb 48.

³¹ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-FEA, 31 Mar 48, pp. 8-9.

June 1948—an 18-month span. The following table reveals these accomplishments statistically:

TABLE 15—*Recoveries Accomplished in Far East Zone*

Month & Year	Identified	Unidentified	Total
January 1947.....	13	21	34
February 1947.....	5	36	41
March 1947.....	6	17	23
April 1947.....	4	17	21
May 1947.....	78	63	141
June 1947.....	37	44	81
July 1947.....	1	11	12
August 1947.....	15	91	106
September 1947.....	4	234	238
October 1947.....	2	37	39
November 1947.....	21	45	66
December 1947.....	27	35	62
January 1948.....	2	23	25
February 1948.....	1	8	9
March 1948.....	2	18	20
April 1948.....	7	24	31
May 1948.....	34	86	120
June 1948.....	37	38	75
Total American Dead.....	296	848	1,144
Buried in Civilian Cemeteries (Filipino).....			467
Recovered Allied Dead.....			2,087
Communal Burial in Australian Cemetery.....			10
TOTAL ALL RECOVERIES.....			3,708
Average monthly recoveries—206 remains.			

All geographical areas in PHILRYCOM, except Australian New Guinea, where an estimated 43 remains still were unlocated, had been searched by September 1948. AGRS officials then believed that a total of about 14,772 unrecovered dead still lay in the widespread areas encompassed by PHILRYCOM, but only three search teams continued to operate in that Sector and all such activities were scheduled for completion by the close of November 1948.³²

Approximately 91 recoveries resulted from efforts made in the period from October through December.³³ By the end of January 1949, Headquarters, AGRC-FEA, had received numerous reports recommending the close-out of all PHILRYCOM search areas. In the spring of 1949, AGRS officials determined that no further extensive or sweeping searches in PHILRYCOM were warranted.

³² Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, PHILCOM Zone, 30 Sep 48.

³³ Hist, AGRS-PZ, 1 Oct-31 Dec 48; KCRC-AGRS-PZ, 314.7, p. 3.

Specific searches continued, nevertheless, throughout 1949 and into 1950, resulting in a few scattered recoveries.

The situation was aptly summarized by H. H. Beck, Chief, Investigation Section, Adjutant General Records Depository, Philippines Command, in a letter of 28 July 1949 to Capt. D. N. Sproul, Chief, Investigation Branch, wherein he remarked that:

AGRS will remain in operation—as near as is now known—until next March. It may still be designated to continue to function thereafter. Time will tell . . . the recovery operation is limitless. . . It is my understanding, however, that their general field retrieving program is over. They are not combing the hills and valleys any longer. Their field staff is negligible. They will, however, make individual recoveries at anytime—anywhere—upon our specific request.

In October 1949, the total estimated number of unrecoverables in PHILRYCOM stood at 14,306. By November 1950, this figure had dropped to 14,108, representing a total of 198 recoveries during a 13-month period. Even though a few scattered remains were located on specific missions after November 1950, search and recovery activities ceased in PHILRYCOM, for all practical purposes, by late 1950.

MARBO Sector

Planners of search and recovery operations in the Mariana-Bonin Islands (MARBO) faced problems which varied considerably from those encountered in PHILRYCOM. With the exception of Guam, where brief but futile resistance to superior Japanese forces occurred at the war's outbreak, fighting in this Sector occurred relatively late in the conflict, when graves registration support had become more highly developed. Combat zones were restricted to small islands and atolls, rather than great archipelagoes, such as the Philippine Islands, where entire regions had been fought over twice, with resultant heavy casualties and numerous war prisoners, who later died by the thousands in captivity. Similarly, the burden of searching in remote mountains or in tropical jungles was generally less acute in MARBO since the burial of combat dead on Saipan, Guam, Iwo Jima, Tinian, and elsewhere took place quite promptly after death and as close to beach landings as the terrain permitted.³⁴

On the other hand, crashes of B-29 bombers, en route or returning from raids of Japan late in the war, added a considerable number of unrecoverable dead. Since the crews of these bombers went

³⁴ Hist, AGRS-MARBO Sector, FEZ, 1947-48, I, pp. 5-6.

down in the vast, trackless stretches of ocean between Saipan and the Japanese mainland, they were usually considered irretrievably lost.

Despite an acute need for additional technicians, plans proceeded at MARBO Headquarters for the establishment and operation of at least two search and recovery teams by 1 May 1947, each composed of 1 officer and 25 enlisted men.³⁵ In April, following the addition of the Volcano Islands to the Sector's jurisdiction, the MARBO Chief of Staff ordered the immediate initiation of search and recovery operations. He further directed reduction of Headquarters Company, "D" Battery, and one platoon of the 864th AAA AW Battalion to 4 officers and 50 men for use in the search mission. Capt. John T. Mullarkey, QMC, became the officer in charge of this unit.³⁶

The first organized search and recovery effort in MARBO occurred on Guam and actually amounted to little more than in-the-field training. The officers possessed scant knowledge of required equipment and lacked any definite course of action. Since the activity was a new one without precedents, the few recoveries resulted from a combination of ingenuity and common sense on the part of the searchers. The natives shed practically no light on the situation, since most of them had been confined to isolated camps during hostilities. Despite their lack of experience, the searchers recovered 15 remains during their first six weeks on Guam. Throughout this period, the men received extensive training in map reading and in identification methods.³⁷ Information gathered during this project aided in later operations. On 15 May 1947, the searchers moved northward to Saipan, and activities on Guam halted, not to be resumed until February 1948.

Some of the war's bloodiest fighting had occurred on Saipan and the location and identification of remains required considerable effort. In some cases, the searchers hacked out dense jungle undergrowth in order to reach isolated dead, while on other occasions, they toiled in the rugged coral of the island. The following remarks were quite commonplace in the daily reports: "Very rough terrain and heavy underbrush was encountered . . . coral rocks and steep cliffs along the coast forced the men to swim part of the time . . . the area searched was entirely coral rock and steep cliffs and several men were swept into the sea during the search."³⁸

³⁵ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-FEZ, 31 Mar 47, p. 13; KCRC-AGRS-FEZ, 319.1.

³⁶ Hist, AGRS-MARBO, FEZ, 1947-48, I, pp. 28-29.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Sometimes information regarding the location of isolated remains came from members of the Armed Services or from civilians who, while hiking or riding through the hills, had uncovered what they thought constituted possible landmarks. As on Guam, the natives could give little aid. False "leads" were, of course, inevitable. In one case, searchers spent several hours hacking through thick undergrowth, only to recover the remains of a dog with a tag labelled "Brownie." In another instance, a wooden cross was reported high in the hills. The men, following up this information, crawled at times on hands and knees over jagged coral and through tangling creepers up the hillside, reached their destination and found the cross with the inscription, "Latrine, Closed 1944."³⁹

Because of savage hand-to-hand combat in many areas of Saipan, mixed skeletal remains proved very difficult to segregate. The searchers were not qualified to make an official analysis, although they had been trained to observe major differentiations of the Japanese skeleton from that of the American. Except for isolated cases, however, American dead had already been removed to temporary burial places shortly after the fighting. The six remains recovered received a proper burial on Saipan.⁴⁰

During the summer of 1947, AGRS Headquarters, MARBO, moved to Saipan, for this island afforded plenty of available warehouse and office space, adequate living quarters for both military and civilian personnel, facilities for a Central Identification Point, and a good port. Guam had proved unsatisfactory in these respects, and as the AGRS program was constantly expanding, such a step seemed necessary and prudent. On 11 July, the transfer took place under Movement Order No. 4.⁴¹

Meanwhile, two LSM's, (Landing Ship, Mechanized) which were expected in the spring of 1947 for use in search and recovery operations, did not arrive on schedule. After numerous delays, LSM 463 finally reached Saipan in October. During this long period of waiting for water transportation, Maj. James A. Wilson, Chief of the Search and Recovery Section, received instructions to search the island of Rota as a testing ground where AGRS observers might note the progress in training, and also iron out difficulties in formulating plans and procedures for the search of other islands in the MARBO chain.⁴²

On Rota, Tinian, and the smaller islands of the Sector, search units met the familiar obstacles imposed by rugged terrain, coral

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

rocks, heat, and insect pests. Only scant results rewarded their arduous efforts. The poor condition of the ships was another handicap, especially during the Rota expedition.⁴³ In a later critique of AGRS Activities, 8 January 1949, addressed to the Commander in Chief, Far East, Brig. Gen. R. E. Hardy, Commanding General, MARBO, bluntly stated that "poorly conditioned vessels have delayed the Search and Recovery operation in this zone as much as five months." He recommended the assignment to AGRS of vessels "in excellent condition and with qualified crews, inspected and approved by the command. . . ."

Search and recovery efforts were resumed on Guam early in 1948, only to be interrupted again, on 25 February, because Landing Ship, Tank (LST) 1047 was loaned on a 30-day basis to AGRS for the purpose of investigating the Bonin and Volcano Islands, considerably to the north of Guam. A portion of this search team returned to Guam late in April and once again recommenced activities, which continued until termination on 27 August 1948. Despite the numerous obstacles so familiar in MARBO, the searchers recovered 14 unidentified dead and one unidentified group burial, which were turned over to the Central Identification Point for verification. After 27 August 1948, search efforts were limited to specific cases only, based on clues offering a reasonable chance for success.⁴⁴

In the Bonin and Volcano Islands, Iwo Jima served as the base for search and recovery operations. Unlike most MARBO islands, it was honeycombed with thousands of caves, many of which had remained sealed since the exceedingly bloody battle fought there. General opinion held that American dead lay within some of these caves. But officials realized that opening them would require an enormous amount of labor, time, and specialized equipment and would run the hazard of booby traps and other dangerous explosives.⁴⁵ Realizing the formidability of their task, a search team of 4 officers and 28 enlisted men departed on 6 March 1948 from Saipan with supplies for a 90-day mission.⁴⁶ After ten days, approximately half of this group left Iwo Jima to undertake searches of other Bonin and Volcano Islands, including Chi Chi Jima, Ha Ha Jima, and Muko Jima. These operations ended in April with no recoveries.

A thorough search ensued on Iwo Jima. Team members explained their mission to local military and naval officials who gave

⁴³ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-FEZ, 30 Nov 47.

⁴⁴ Ltr, S&R Sec to CO, AGRS-MARBO, 19 Oct 48; KCRC-AGRS-MARBO, 370.22.

⁴⁵ Ltr, Hq MARBO Sector to CG, MARBO, 20 Jan 48; KCRC-AGRS-MARBO, 370.22.

⁴⁶ Hist, AGRS-MARBO Zone, FEZ, Mar 48-Feb 49, p. 1.

full co-operation. Articles concerning the project appeared in the Army Daily Bulletins, while requests for information which might lead to the recovery of remains were frequently made.⁴⁷ The searchers on Iwo Jima worked in many caves, where they found numerous Japanese remains but no American dead. Several caves belched sulphuric flames, precluding any attempts at investigation, while others had great depth and elaborate construction. In many instances, the men could not remain in these caverns for more than half an hour at one time, since the interior air was hot, stifling, and malodorous.⁴⁸ When the Iwo Jima operation ended in April 1948, only three remains had been recovered, two of which were identified.

By 25 August 1948, all geographical areas in MARBO had undergone thorough investigation, including the Minor Mariana Islands, where results were entirely negative. It is readily apparent that far fewer recoveries occurred in this Sector than in PHILRYCOM. Two main factors contributed to this situation—fewer fatalities in MARBO and the more prompt burial of battle dead in quickly established cemeteries.

The following shows the approximate number of recoveries accomplished in MARBO during the entire period of search and recovery operations:

Island

Guam.....	31	
Saipan.....	6	
Iwo Jima.....	3	
Rota.....	1	
Bonin Islands.....	1	
Anatahan (Minor Marianas).....	10	(Recovered in 1946, interred on Saipan.)
Total.....	52	

Despite this small number, the efforts and hardships experienced by search teams in MARBO certainly equalled those of other such units elsewhere in the vast Pacific and on the Asiatic mainland. The latest available report, dated November 1950, estimated that a total of 2,137 unlocated and unrecovered remains in MARBO would probably never be found.

JAP-KOR Sector

Recovery of war dead in the JAP-KOR Sector posed problems which differed in many respects from those encountered elsewhere in the Pacific. In the first place, the deceased fell into only two main

⁴⁷ Ltr, S&R Sec to CO, AGRS-MARBO, 24 May 48, sub: Termination of GR S&R Opns, Island of Iwo Jima, Volcano Islands; KCRC-AGRS-MARBO. 370.22.

⁴⁸ Hist, AGRS-MARBO Zone, Mar 48 to Feb 49, p. 11.

categories—prisoners of war, who died in rather large numbers from maltreatment, disease, or starvation; and fliers, who perished in plane crashes over Japan and Korea or in the adjoining seas. In the next place, since the Japanese people had been recent enemies, their initial attitude generally was one of sullen hostility and non-co-operation, as contrasted to the usual willingness of natives elsewhere to help recover Allied dead. Search activity in thickly populated regions, rather than in remote jungles and mountains or on desolate islands, constituted another distinctive feature in this area.

Quartermaster graves registration units, activated in the Philippines and attached to the divisions of the occupying armies, bore responsibility for the maintenance of cemeteries in each troop concentration area. In May 1946, the 108th QM GR Platoon, activated under the Eighth Army, absorbed the personnel of those graves registration units which had served formerly under the Sixth Army, thus becoming the major graves registration organization in Japan. Although based at Yokohama, it had detachments at Sapporo, Nagoya, Osaka, and Fukuoka.⁴⁹

Recovery of prisoner dead, which occupied the first few months after V-J Day, comprised, in general, the initial phase of the search program. A lack of information concerning war prisoners posed one of the major obstacles to graves registration forces in JAP-KOR. Pertinent records, which had escaped burning before arrival of the occupation forces, usually proved incomplete, and the Japanese Imperial Government furnished data only upon demand. One of the terms of the surrender nevertheless stipulated that comprehensive maps showing the location of the seven central camps and numerous branch camps be made available to the Supreme Command Allied Forces (SCAP). When living prisoners were liberated, officials soon discovered that the Japanese had failed to segregate them by nationality and had developed no standard procedure for handling remains of the deceased. Policies in each camp depended upon the personal inclinations of the local commander.⁵⁰

The camps fell into three classifications, based upon circumstances found in each. In localities where conditions approached some standard of decency, the senior POW received cremated remains for safekeeping and maintained records, showing the prisoners' date of death. Upon liberation of the camps, the lacquer boxes and urns were segregated according to nationality and delivered to the proper Graves Registration officials. In the second category were those

⁴⁹ Hist, AGRS-JAP-KOR Zone, 1945-48, pp. 5-6; (2) Memo, Hq 108th QM GR Platoon to CG, 8th Army, sub: Unit Historical Summary, 29 Jun 46.

⁵⁰ Hist, AGRS-JAP-KOR Zone, 1945-48, pp. 7-8.

camps in which remains had been stored in nearby Japanese cemeteries or temples. In such cases, AGRS authorities questioned liberated prisoners as well as Japanese officials. Eventually, most of the remains in such camps were recovered, segregated by nationality when possible, and turned over to AGRS control. The third classification included camps where the Japanese buried or cremated remains and did not allow POW's to participate or keep records. They treated prisoners harshly and made no effort to separate the dead, either as individuals or according to nationality. In such localities, the Japanese nearly always destroyed their own records to avoid incriminating evidence before Allied troops arrived, thus rendering search units dependent upon whatever scant data they could obtain from native citizens and upon fragmentary information from survivors.⁵¹

Nearly all prisoner dead had been recovered in the early postwar period, with the exception of victims of atrocities, whose remains the Japanese carefully concealed. After liberation, living prisoners in many camps removed the ashes and delivered them to the mausoleum at Yokohama. In a few cases, freed prisoners took the ashes of their friends with them, despite orders to leave all remains in camps until recovery teams arrived. In these instances, instinct evidently proved stronger than instructions.⁵²

No accurate figure is available for the number of war prisoners held in Japan nor for the total number of deaths in prison camps. Japanese records tended to underestimate the total, and Allied figures probably ran somewhat too high. Statistics compiled from the records of the Japanese Prisoner of War Information Bureau indicated a total of approximately 34,000 prisoners of war, including some 4,000 deceased.⁵³ As the occupation of Japan continued, more sources of information became available. Japanese Army demobilization officers, prefectural Government officials, local police, and fire wardens became more inclined to talk. Some clues originated from censorship of Japanese mail, or from an occasional "tip" sent anonymously to Allied officials or to the SCAP Legal Section.⁵⁴

Recovery of plane crew remains constituted, in general, the second major phase of search and recovery operations in JAP-KOR. According to Army Air Forces records, a total of some 1,934 deaths resulted from air attacks over the Japan-Korea area and adjacent

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

waters during hostilities.⁵⁵ In searching for plane crew deceased, graves registration investigators depended quite heavily upon clues received from the local populace. Fear of reprisals again silenced many of those questioned, for many airmen had fallen victims to atrocities. Until the SCAP Legal Section closed in on the guilty, the fate of many air crews remained a mystery. In cases which involved the Japanese custom of cremating the dead, no recoveries could be attempted until criminal investigations revealed the facts concerning disposition of the ashes.⁵⁶

Because of the wide dispersal of plane crashes throughout the Sector, searchers consumed more time in tracking them down than on investigations of war prisoner deaths in established camps. Information furnished by the Japanese Imperial Government received careful scrutiny, since it supposedly included the exact locations of plane crashes, dates, and dispositions of crews. Recovery results by 1 January 1947, however, indicated that the data lacked both accuracy and thoroughness. Consequently, AGRS Headquarters instructed all prefectural governments to conduct another study of all Allied plane crash sites and isolated graves, the results of which would be embodied in a fresh report, including records of crematoriums, temples, churches, cemeteries, town offices, police and civilian officials, and observations of long-time residents of a given area. Local police chiefs or other key officials would submit the results of these efforts to the Eighth Army Memorial Division and to the 108th Graves Registration Platoon.⁵⁷

Graves Registration officials allowed ten days for completion of the reports. Newspapers, radio, and town bulletin boards furnished necessary publicity. Upon reaching AGRS Headquarters, the new information was checked against the files of the Memorial Division and the SCAP Legal Section. This information, consolidated with previous data and case histories, constituted an informal record for the use of recovery teams then searching in several areas.

Armed with additional knowledge, detachments of the 108th QM GR Company then went into the field. Since the regions under scrutiny had undergone an earlier, but incomplete search, AGRS officials decided to recheck old clues as well as new leads.⁵⁸ This activity, known as "Operation Searching," began in mid-April 1947, and preceded the final sweeping search which later comprised the third phase of the recovery operation.

⁵⁵ AAF Files, Personnel Statistics Div, Reserve and Casualty Br, Rm 1D124, The Pentagon, Army Battle Casualties & Non-Battle Deaths in WWII, Final Rpt, 7 Dec 41-31 Dec 46, p. 78.

⁵⁶ Hist, AGRS-JAP-KOR Zone, 1945-48, p. 30.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

During "Operation Searching" on the island of Kyushu, those areas surrounding former Japanese Army and Navy installations received special attention. Inquiry revealed that these military and naval bases had been "off limits" to Japanese police and civilian authorities during the war. Consequently, former Japanese officers and men stationed at these bases were brought to AGRS Headquarters for interrogation, and the interviews revealed the location of several crash sites and graves which had not previously been known.⁵⁹

As already indicated, the third phase of search and recovery operations in JAP-KOR included a sweeping investigation, which was instituted under instructions contained in a circular issued by the Commanding General, Hq, Eighth Army, 10 July 1947. Field grade officers from major tactical units in Japan and Korea received full briefing on 28 July concerning the project. They were warned especially against attempting any recoveries, since their mission consisted only of searching for remains. Later, trained graves registration teams would recover and attempt to identify any remains discovered during this sweeping operation.⁶⁰

Officers and enlisted men were chosen carefully. As the project developed, all publicity mediums were fully utilized. As in other search missions, fire wardens usually proved excellent sources of information, since many planes burned after crashing. In general, the Japanese civilians furnished clues only after they had been convinced that information they revealed would not later be used against them. In cases where all other efforts failed, the investigators sometimes located a Japanese police official who kept a "little black book," which usually contained the date and area of plane crashes. When pressure was exerted, such officials often recalled the location of this book and produced the desired information.⁶¹

At the peak of the sweeping search, approximately 100 teams, each composed of 1 officer and 3 enlisted men, operated throughout Japan in a supreme effort to secure all data which would aid in the later recovery of American dead by ten trained recovery teams of the 108th QM GR Platoon. By the end of 1947, reports from all areas indicated that the sweeping search by tactical units of the Eighth Army had been completed. The searchers uncovered 20 previously undiscovered sites and marked them for subsequent recovery by trained graves registration units.⁶²

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

⁶⁰ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-JAP-KOR, 31 Jul 47, p. 5.

⁶¹ Hist, AGRS-JAP-KOR, 1945-48, pp. 42-43.

⁶² Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-JAP-KOR, 31 Dec 47.

Despite rough and difficult field work, teams from both the tactical and graves registration units usually displayed genuine interest in their assignments. They committed some blunders, resulting mostly from inexperience; on the other hand, they often employed sound deductive reasoning. Their accomplishments were the more noteworthy since no precedents nor background of experience pointed the way for them. Furthermore, the teams generally submitted well-written reports, which demonstrated careful attention to detail.⁶³

Throughout search and recovery activities in JAP-KOR, the close liaison between the Criminal Registry Division of the SCAP Legal Section and AGRS often proved vital to success. At times, nevertheless, this close relationship became a stumbling block rather than an advantage, since fear of prosecution for war crimes silenced many Japanese whom graves registration officials questioned. In the long run, the excellent detective work of the Criminal Registry Division more than offset this handicap. Facts or leads were exchanged, and in several instances, graves registration units exhumed remains on order from the Criminal Registry Division for evidence in criminal cases. Throughout all operations, AGRS officials constantly sought to impress upon the Japanese that no reprisals would result from the disclosure of information which aided in recovery of Allied deceased.⁶⁴

In Korea, officials at Headquarters, XXIV Corps, stressed the importance of graves registration activities to the police and civil populace as well as to occupation troops. Korean police received instructions to scrutinize their records carefully for reports of plane crashes, shootings, deaths, and recoveries of American or Allied remains and to forward such data through channels to Hq, XXIV Corps.⁶⁵

Early in 1946, estimates indicated that 74 Allied deceased lay in the United States Army Forces in Korea (USAFIK) Consolidated Cemetery in Seoul. Elements of the 3063d QM GR Company and later, those of the 107th QM GR Platoon, carried out searching operations in the areas south of the 38th Parallel. By the end of April 1946, the number of remains in the Seoul Cemetery had increased to 119, attesting to the efficiency of search efforts. Somewhat more than a year later, AGRS officials believed that all areas south of the 38th Parallel had received a complete investigation with all possible recoveries accomplished. By this time, 156 Allied remains rested in Seoul Cemetery, awaiting subsequent removal to

⁶³ Hist, AGRS-JAP-KOR, 1945-48, p. 49.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁵ Ltr, Hq XXIV Corps, 7 Dec 45, sub: Information Concerning Deaths and Burials of Prisoners of War, Recovery of Remains, and Missing Persons.

Yokohama, while some 119 deceased were considered unrecoverable. All later search and recovery activities in Korea resulted from specific and fresh information.⁶⁶

In Japan, too, search operations entered the final, close-out phase. During the spring of 1948, reports from the Board of Review in various Japanese prefectures, recommending the closing of these areas to further search, reached the Commanding Officer, AGRS-FEZ. At the same time the task of translating Japanese reports submitted during the sweeping operation was completed, and the information contained therein compared with previous recovery records. As a result of the widespread search, officials could compile figures in 17 prefectures for the Board of Review.⁶⁷

During the summer, AGRS forces conducted final rechecks at air crash sites. Still remaining were investigations in the shallow waters off Japan, where several fatal plane accidents had occurred. Information furnished by tactical units in their earlier sweeping search and by constant progress in the recovery of remains enabled Hq, AGRS-JAP-KOR, at the close of August 1948, to request an end to search operations in all but two prefectures. Officials also hoped that all water crash site investigations could be finished before the advent of winter.⁶⁸

By March 1949, officials expressed doubt concerning the justification for continuance of search and recovery activities.⁶⁹ Although some 130 planes still were unlocated in the coastal waters of Japan, the cost of raising them, if they could be located at all, precluded any great efforts in this direction. Searching in water areas continued, nevertheless, on a diminishing scale throughout 1949.

Finally, on 2 May 1950, the Commanding General, Eighth Army, requested authority to terminate all search and recovery operations in Japan, with the single exception of specific investigations based on excellent clues. Approval of this request during June 1950 ended, for all practical purposes, the story of search and recovery in the JAP-KOR Sector.

The following figures indicate the approximate number of remains (excluding some 3,382 cremated dead) located throughout the Sector during the period of available reports on AGRS activities:

⁶⁶ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-FEZ, 31 May 47.

⁶⁷ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-JAP-KOR, 30 Apr 48.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 31 Aug 48.

⁶⁹ Ltr, Col L. R. Wolfe, Eighth Army QM to Brig Gen Kester L. Hastings, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG, 25 Mar 49.

TABLE 16—*Recoveries Made in JAP-KOR Sector*

Month & Year	Remains Recovered
June 1946	42
July 1946—No report	
August 1946	39
September 1946	45
October 1946	31
November 1946	2
December 1946—No report	
January 1947	10
February 1947	19
March 1947	21
April 1947	3
May 1947	14
June 1947	13
July 1947	3
August 1947	16
September 1947	9
October 1947	17
November 1947	16
December 1947	4
January 1948	2
February 1948	1
March 1948	4
April 1948	6
May 1948	14
June 1948	47
July 1948	44
August 1948	25
September 1948	11
October 1948—No report	
November 1948	1
December 1948	12
January 1949	1
February 1949	1
March 1949	1
April 1949	2
May 1949—No report	
June 1949	9
July 1949—No report	
August 1949—No report	
September 1949	2
October 1949	1
May 1950	4
Total recovered	492

Finally, the report of November 1950 for JAP-KOR showed an estimate of 1,616 unlocated remains, including 1,613 classed as totally unrecoverable.

Operations in the Pacific Zone (PAZ)

Need for Records Survey

Organized search and recovery in the Pacific Zone began very late. Such activity prior to 1947 was at best haphazard and somewhat piecemeal, since various local island commanders of separate branches of the service carried out search operations for isolated burials.

In January 1947, the Operations Officer of AGRS-MIDPAC (predecessor of AGRS-PAZ) attempted to ascertain the amount of work necessary to search for and recover missing members of the Armed Forces. The extremely muddled and fragmentary state of records pertaining to missing servicemen underlined the urgency for such a project. The unreliability of information in the AGRS-MIDPAC files was painfully evidenced by the estimate that only 79 deceased remained unlocated within that command, when, as a matter of fact, several thousand unrecovered dead lay scattered throughout the Pacific Zone (PAZ). Hundreds of Navy servicemen were missing from the Pearl Harbor disaster alone.⁷⁰

In conducting this records survey, AGRS workers at Hq, MIDPAC (later AGRS-PAZ), gathered data concerning previous searches from several sources, including the Quartermaster, Memorial Branch, AFMIDPAC; the local Air Forces, Navy, and Marine Corps files; and the AFMIDPAC Adjutant General's Records Division.⁷¹ This laborious mission was still in progress during the autumn of 1947. According to an AGRS-PAZ report for September 1947, missing persons file cases had been established for 4,303 unlocated remains, as compared to only 79 such cases in December 1946.⁷²

During this survey, the close-out report of island bases probably provided the best sources of available information, especially in New Caledonia and in parts of the Guadalcanal Command. Correspondence from the OQMG provided another fruitful wellspring of information. In addition, AGRS "arm chair" detectives sometimes discovered names of missing persons, boats, and aircraft in books or magazine articles, which were not listed in graves registration files. Similarly, press releases and reports of AGRS activities in the Pacific caused individuals, who possessed pertinent knowledge, to

⁷⁰ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, 1946-49, I, pp. 43-44.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, App. C, Vol. 2, Incl. 21, sub: History, Search and Recovery Branch.

⁷² *Ibid.*, I, p. 44.

contact the proper officials. Ex-servicemen proved particularly helpful in furnishing new clues. Finally, the next of kin and other relatives sometimes volunteered data by letter regarding missing persons.⁷³

While the survey progressed, Captain Isensmith, Commanding Officer, 604th GR Company, conducted the first organized search and recovery activity in the mid-Pacific, under supervision of the newly established AGRS-Pacific Zone (AGRS-PAZ). He led an effort to recover isolated burials in the Marshall Islands group and on several Hawaiian islands. Only a few recoveries rewarded the searchers during this project.⁷⁴

First Expedition

By May 1947, the collection and survey of Pacific records had uncovered sufficient data to warrant the formation of an extensive search and recovery expedition, the plans for which had been built up rather gradually. The decision to carry out such an undertaking resulted from careful thought on the matter.⁷⁵ The formulation of an AGFPAC plan, entitled "The Operations Plan for Search and Recovery of Isolated Burials, AGFPAC Area," dated 8 March 1947, marked an important step in the preparations preceding the expedition.⁷⁶ The itinerary included the New Hebrides, Solomon, Caroline, and Marshall Islands, covering a period extending from mid-May to mid-August 1947. The tentative scheme envisaged search teams, each composed of one officer and four enlisted men, which would be organized when the 604th GR Company returned from concentration activities and after the arrival in Hawaii of the graves registration group from the China Theater. Further plans called for the use of 1 LST, 2 LCVP's (Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel), and 6 DUKW's. The LST would act as mother ship to the others.⁷⁷

Records originating in an exhumation and concentration project during November 1946, proved a valuable source of data to organizers of this expedition. The earlier undertaking had covered only the Marshall-Gilberts Group, plus Midway and Wake Islands, but the experience gained provided helpful information concerning equipment, supplies, and procedures needed on any similar voyage.⁷⁸ Before the expedition departed from Honolulu, AGRS officials de-

⁷³ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 45-46.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, App. C, Vol. 2, Incl. 21, sub: Hist, S&R Br, p. 3.

⁷⁵ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, p. 49.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, App. D, Vol. 1, Incl. 1.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

cided to have two voyages—the first to encompass a general area search, and the second, a more detailed and wider investigation. Eight officers and fifty-six enlisted men from the 604th QM Graves Registration Company, and one civilian technician comprised the technical personnel of the first expedition.⁷⁹

The LST 711 finally departed from Oahu on 15 July 1947, after a delay of several weeks caused by mechanical difficulties. This first extensive search and recovery effort encountered innumerable obstacles for which technical manuals and standard operating procedures made no provision. Plans drawn up at Hq, AGRS-PAZ, proved inadequate in actual practice, since the organizers of the expedition did not, and probably could not, anticipate the broad scale upon which they were to operate nor the continuous receipt of information which would necessitate backtracking and duplication of effort.

Although fraught with hardship and discouragement, the journey provided some interesting incidents. A search unit, arriving at Rennel Island, in the Solomons, met the first natives who proved untrustworthy. They would steal anything not nailed down. They were even forbidden aboard the ship. In addition, they seemed obsessed with the notion of driving a hard bargain. One chief of a local village wanted some \$30.00 in gold to accommodate four men for one night in an old shack. Since the weather was windy and rainy, the searchers had little choice in the matter.⁸⁰

Most of the trip, which covered the Marshall-Gilbert group, the Solomon, New Hebrides, Loyalty and Caroline Islands, proved relatively uneventful. The most successful operations occurred in the Solomon Islands, with 39 recoveries, and in the Carolines, with 17. On the entire expedition, the search units recovered a total of 69 remains, including 13 "knowns" and 56 "unknowns."⁸¹

The failure to recover more remains stemmed from three principal causes. In the first place, many reported burial sites actually contained no remains. In such cases, the deceased probably had been found previously and then interred as unknowns in a cemetery, but with no written report giving the places of recovery or burial. Secondly, inaccurate maps and inadequate information often thwarted the searchers' efforts to locate reported burial sites. Lastly, plane

⁷⁹ (1) *Ibid.*, I, p. 52. (2) HAGFPAC Movement Order No. 1, 19 May 47, App. D, Vol. 1, Incl. 11, Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I.

⁸⁰ Summary of Cruise of the LST 711, 15 Jul 47-17 Feb 48, p. 10, App. D, Vol. 2, Incl. 27, Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I.

⁸¹ Rpt, S&R Expedition No. 1, App. D, Vol. 1, Incl. 3, Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I.

crashes in deep water rather than on land, as reported, often rendered impossible the recovery of remains.⁸²

Numerous suggestions for improved methods and additional equipment resulted from this initial effort. Among items of equipment recommended for future use were: Folding-handle trench shovels, a machete for each man, two canteens per man, one complete shallow-water diving outfit, two double-ended five-oared surf boats with a detachable outboard motor and replacement of one of the Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel (LCVP) by a Landing Craft, Personnel and Reconnaissance (LCPR).⁸³

The arrangement which placed members of the 604th Graves Registration Company and the crew of the LST 711 under separate authority proved to be one of the most unsatisfactory aspects of the entire expedition. The Commander of the 604th GR Company believed that his men should not be subject to duties aboard ship and should have better quarters and food than they were provided. The Captain of the LST 711, who held supreme authority aboard ship, felt that the graves registration unit members failed to display a proper attitude toward their obligations while aboard. Neither group acknowledged responsibility for keeping the LST 711 in top shape and conditions continued poor throughout the voyage. This situation might well have been avoided by the simple expedient of reaching an understanding before departure.

Second Expedition

The months which elapsed between the two major search and recovery expeditions were spent in refitting the ship and planning for the second trip, including the incorporation of new ideas and methods acquired from experiences on the initial mission.⁸⁴ During this interim, the monthly AGRS-PAZ graves registration activity report for April 1948 provided a detailed account of the status of search and recovery operations. The following data shows the estimated recoverable and unrecoverable remains in each of the five large areas into which AGRS-PAZ had been divided in order to facilitate reporting:

Group A (includes sub-areas 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 25)
21 Recoverable Remains
<u>1,708 Unrecoverable Remains</u>
1,729 Total

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Hist. AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 74-75.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

Group B (includes sub-areas 2, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12)

10 Recoverable Remains
 2,643 Unrecoverable Remains
 2,653 Total

Group C (includes sub-areas 13, 14, 19, 23)

43 Recoverable Remains
 430 Unrecoverable Remains
 473 Total

Group D (includes sub-area 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24)

0 Recoverable Remains
 35 Unrecoverable Remains
 35 Total

Group E (includes sub-area 7, 18)

454 Recoverable Remains
 3,108 Unrecoverable Remains
 3,562 Total

This same report also listed the completely searched areas in the Pacific Zone and the date of approval by The Adjutant General:

- (a) Sub-Area 17, Tuamotu Archipelago sub-area. 10 September 1947
- (b) Sub-Area 16, Society Island sub-area. 11 September 1947
- (c) Sub-Area 21, Cook Island sub-area. 24 September 1947
- (d) Sub-Area 22, Austral Island sub-area. 24 September 1947
- (e) Sub-Area 11, Tongareva Island sub-area. 1 October 1947
- (f) Sub-Area 12, Marquesas Islands sub-area. 6 October 1947
- (g) Sub-Area 10, Union Islands sub-area. 20 October 1947
- (h) Sub-Area 24, Kermadec Island sub-area. 16 December 1947.

Also listed in the report were those geographical areas which were considered not completely searched, as follows:

	Search completed %
(a) Sub-area 1—Wake Island sub-area	50
(b) Sub-area 2—Hawaiian Island sub-area	24
(c) Sub-area 3—Marshall Island sub-area	22
(d) Sub-area 4—Phoenix Island sub-area	18
(e) Sub-area 5—Line Island sub-area	75
(f) Sub-area 6—Gilbert Island sub-area	32
(g) Sub-area 7—Solomon Island sub-area	35
(h) Sub-area 8—Santa Cruz Island sub-area	0
(i) Sub-area 9—Ellice Island sub-area	85
(j) Sub-area 13—New Hebrides Island sub-area	21
(k) Sub-area 14—Fiji Island sub-area	(*)

	Search completed %
(l) Sub-area 15—Samoan Island sub-area	50
(m) Sub-area 18—Australian sub-area	(*)
(n) Sub-area 19—Loyalty Island sub-area	15
(o) Sub-area 20—Tonga Island sub-area	0
(p) Sub-area 23—New Zealand Island sub-area	(*)
(q) Sub-area 25—Caroline Island sub-area	50

* Figures not furnished.

Although originally scheduled to depart in April 1948 from Hawaii on the second extensive search and recovery mission, the LST 711 actually sailed on the afternoon of 10 June. The expedition included 5 AGRS officers, 1 medical officer, 47 enlisted men and 1 civilian embalmer from the 604th QM Graves Registration Company, and 1 officer and 11 enlisted men from the 561st Engineer Diving Detachment, who were to be used in recovering deceased from planes which had plunged into shallow waters off island shore lines.⁸⁵

The Line Island Group, lying nearly 1,000 miles south of Hawaii, provided the first scheduled stop on the itinerary. No recoveries rewarded efforts in this area, and the expedition proceeded to the Phoenix Island Group, reaching Canton Island on 25 June. Because of a reported plane crash near the end of the air strip, AGRS officers had expected to employ the diving detachment on Canton Island, but soundings revealed no bottom at a depth suitable for diving operations.⁸⁶

After fruitless searches in the Phoenix and Samoan Islands, the expedition moved on to the Fiji Islands in mid-July. During the war, Army troops had occupied this British-governed region. The searchers studied numerous reports of plane crashes, many of which had occurred off shore. In most cases, landing craft could not anchor because of reefs or deep water, and divers, consequently, could not make any recovery attempts. Nevertheless, they salvaged bits of a B-25 off Nandi Bay, Viti Levu Island, and photographed one identifying serial number. Because of the constant presence of troops during the war, no unresolved land cases existed in the Fijis.⁸⁷

After routine activities for the next several weeks in the New Hebrides Islands, where only two remains were found, the searchers proceeded to New Zealand, where they removed two bodies from

⁸⁵ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-PAZ, 30 Apr 48.

⁸⁶ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, p. 82.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

the Karori Cemetery at Wellington.⁸⁸ From New Zealand, the LST 711 sailed to Australia, arriving at Melbourne on 24 September 1948.

Plans were drawn up almost immediately in conferences with Australian War Graves Section officials at Victoria Barracks. These plans called for a special overland team which would survey areas along the eastern coast north to Townsville, where, in approximately 40 days, it would rejoin the LST 711. That ship meanwhile would proceed westward around the Australian continent to the same destination, examining burial places along its route. The major problem facing the proposed overland expedition was the identification and differentiation of mixed American and Australian air crews. The Australian Air Force flew many American-made planes without changing the serial numbers and often mixed crews occupied the same plane. When fatal crashes occurred under such circumstances, it was almost impossible to distinguish between American and Australian remains. In cases of inseparable and unidentifiable groups of mixed remains, the Australian War Graves officials were unwilling to release them to the American Graves Registration Service, even though most of the dead might be Americans.⁸⁹ Separable remains would be turned over to AGRS authorities only when they could be positively identified as American.

As preparations for the overland trip neared completion, Squadron Leader K. E. Rundle of the Australian Air Force Casualty Division determined to accompany the team—a fortunate development, since his familiarity with earlier Australian searches would prevent duplication of effort. In addition, Rundle had some cases of his own which he wished to clarify. On 4 October, everything was in readiness and the overland search and recovery team, consisting of 2 officers, 13 enlisted men, Rundle, and 2 Australian Warrant Officers, departed for Townsville. Vehicles and equipment included one 1½-ton truck, 2 weapons carriers, 2 trailers, 1 jeep, and a 30-day supply of rations.⁹⁰ The team was instructed to maintain radio contact with the LST 711 whenever possible. The ship, meanwhile, had also departed on 4 October with the remainder of the expedition for the voyage around the Australian continent.

The overland unit faced conditions quite unlike those experienced in previous island operations. Graves registration activities closely resembled those conducted in Europe, and early in the war,

⁸⁸ Rpt, CO, 604th QM GR Co, to Chief, AGRS-PAZ, no date, sub: Summary of Cruise, Expedition No. 2; App. D, Vol. 3, pp. 74-76, Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I.

⁸⁹ Memo, Hq AGRS-PHILCOM to CO, AGRS-PHILCOM, Sep 48, sub: Liaison with Australian Govt in Connection with GR Activities.

⁹⁰ (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 87-88. (2) *Ibid.*, App. D, Vol. 3, pp. 85, 87.

the United States had established its own cemetery system in Australia. The search team enjoyed the benefits of extensive publicity from the Australian press and radio services, but the constabulary proved to be the best source of information, with its semi-military organization, in which a central office controlled all districts, each of which in turn was divided into sub-districts. Any report from even the smallest village constable reached the central office.⁹¹ The overland team, looking almost exclusively for plane crash victims, actually recovered only two remains, a result which attested to the thoroughness of previous Australian searches.

The LST 711, meanwhile, reached Fremantle, where the searchers removed five American remains from the Fremantle cemetery. The next stop was made at Darwin on the northern coast to disinter one body from the cemetery. In mid-November, the ship rejoined the overland unit at Townsville. Searchers recovered only 11 remains during the entire Australian operation, and 9 of these came from established cemeteries, again reflecting credit on the earlier Australian search efforts.

From Australia, the searchers moved to the Bismarck Archipelago, which had not been included in previous itineraries. Search in this area, particularly on New Britain, proved quite successful. Thirty-nine bodies were recovered between 2 December 1948 and 16 January 1949. After combing the Caroline Islands and the New Georgia Group, the expedition proceeded to Guadalcanal, arriving there on 7 February. The searchers, with excellent co-operation from the British Commissioner and from American officers at the 30th Engineer Base Camp, recovered 38 deceased and completed operations late in February.⁹²

After leaving Guadalcanal, the LST 711 sailed northward across the equator, visiting both the Gilbert and Ellice Islands during March. The expedition made its final stop in the Marshall Islands, but no recoveries resulted from these efforts, although the entire search of the Pacific area yielded a total of 109 remains.

In analyzing the merits and results of the second expedition, certain definite observations can be made. In the first place, better techniques and equipment for handling recovered remains had been made possible by knowledge gained on the earlier voyage. Secondly, the whole group worked under a single command, thus avoiding conflicts in policy which, under a divided authority, had marred the first expedition. In the third place, the recovery of over 100 additional remains, many of which were successfully identified, largely justified the labor and time expended. Graves registration officials

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 88.

⁹² *Ibid.*, App. D, Vol. 3, p. 124.

felt confident that the journey's varied experiences would aid any future search and recovery operation.⁹³ Upon the return of the second expedition, the search areas assigned to AGRS-PAZ were closed to further organized search, effective 13 May 1949.⁹⁴

Statistics

The following figures show the status, as of 31 May 1949, of the recovery program in all 25 sub-areas of PAZ.⁹⁵

Group A (includes sub-areas 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 25)

0 Recoverable Remains
1,791 Unrecoverable Remains
<u>1,791</u> Total

Group B (includes sub-areas 2, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12)

0 Recoverable Remains
2,503 Unrecoverable Remains
<u>2,503</u> Total

Group C (includes sub-areas 13, 14, 19, 23)

0 Recoverable Remains
442 Unrecoverable Remains
<u>442</u> Total

Group D (includes sub-areas 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24)

0 Recoverable Remains
34 Unrecoverable Remains
<u>34</u> Total

Group E (includes sub-area 7, 18)

0 Recoverable Remains
4,279 Unrecoverable Remains
<u>4,279</u> Total

Grand Total: 9,049 Unrecoverable Remains

As can be readily observed, no recoverable deceased lay in the Pacific Zone after the return of the second mission, although a total of 9,049 servicemen were considered unrecoverable. Except for a small number of specific searches based upon new evidence, search and recovery efforts in the Pacific Zone had ended by mid-1949. Total recoveries resulting from both major expeditions numbered 178. While this number may seem small, it must be borne in mind that in areas under control of AGRS-PAZ, most remains received burial shortly after death. Relatively few men died in prison camps

⁹³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 90.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 90-91.

⁹⁵ (1) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-PAZ, 31 May 49. (2) For key to sub-areas in each group, see above, p. 472-73.

or in remote jungles, as in the Far East Zone, but many deaths occurred at sea or on beaches where the bodies soon were swept out into the ocean, thus becoming totally unrecoverable. Plane crashes over oceanic expanses added to the number of non-recoverable dead, since the direction of the plane often formed the only clue. In any event, the small number of located deceased did not result from any lack of effort or thoroughness by search teams.

China Theater and Zone

A formidable undertaking faced the men selected to recover the remains of Americans who died in China. Many of the more than 3,000 deceased lay in widely dispersed regions from Manchuria to the hot jungles of Thailand. The problems confronting the searchers differed somewhat from those encountered in the island-hopping operations of the Pacific Zone. In contrast to the small islands of the middle and western Pacific, extensive continental areas, often encompassing rough and varied terrain, must be covered. Another difference resulted from the absence of ground combat involving American units. Fatalities in China requiring search activities arose from three major causes: combat operations of General Chennault's airmen, bombardment missions of the Twentieth Air Force against Japan, and crashes over the "Hump" Route between China and India. A few deaths resulted from various diseases.

Early Search and Recovery in China

The search and recovery program commenced long before activation of the American Graves Registration Service, China Zone (AGRS-CZ), at the end of 1945. The Air Ground Aid Section of the China Theater, whose principal mission was the recovery of missing, but living servicemen, maintained extensive records which proved very valuable when transmitted to the China Theater Search Detachment—a new unit which was activated on 17 November 1945 under GO 232, Hq, United States Forces, China Theater (USFCT). These records indicated that some 1,012 persons still were missing in China, mostly from the Fourteenth Air Force, with some from the Tenth and Twentieth Air Forces, the Chinese Combat Command, the Office of Strategic Services, and Services of Supply.⁹⁶

The newly-created China Theater Search Detachment, following the suggestions made in a Casualty Clearance Report, 10 November 1945, undertook searches only when there was a reasonable ex-

⁹⁶ Hist, AGRS-China Zone, pp. 2-3.

pectation of recovering one or more remains. The numerous cases involving apparently unrecoverable dead received only administrative review of statements and reports already on hand. Early in 1946, Hq, China Theater Search Detachment, recommended to the Commanding General, USFCT, that 1,014 cases be closed summarily as unrecoverable.⁹⁷

By the beginning of March, a Report of Operations showed the following accomplishments by the Detachment:

- (a) Bodies recovered and positively identified—38
- (b) Bodies recovered, not positively identified—57
- (c) Cases of missing personnel resolved and recommendations forwarded for final disposition—88.

These figures did not include some 70 remains found on Formosa, of which about half were identified. At this time, the Search Detachment included 44 officers and 61 enlisted men, representing a shortage of 14 individuals under authorized strength.

During the period of its activities, the Search Detachment maintained close liaison with the Casualty Section, Adjutant's General's Office, Hq, USFCT. Its teams did not visit physically all parts of areas under investigation, but they usually reached several points in each area. In lieu of visits, investigations consisted of an examination of reports received from Chinese officials and other sources concerning missing persons.⁹⁸

Unsettled political conditions particularly hampered search operations in those regions partially or wholly occupied by the Chinese Communists, especially in the Tsinan and Kaifeng areas. Similar revolutionary activities in French Indo-China, particularly around Hanoi, also impeded search teams. In addition, communication difficulties constantly plagued Detachment teams throughout the Theater.

AGRS Activities and Problems

The recently established American Graves Registration Service—China Zone, (AGRS-CZ), meanwhile, placed four of its own teams in the field during January 1946. They normally consisted of 3 officers and 6 enlisted men, in addition to military police needed to protect property. These figures fell somewhat short of the planned team average of 3 officers and 9 enlisted men. Three units worked in China and the other on Formosa. In January, they recovered 16 remains and, in co-operation with the Search Detachment units, located 12 additional deceased. During February, graves registra-

⁹⁷ Rpt, Hq CTSD to CG, USFCT, 1 Feb 46, sub: Rpt of Opns of CTSD for Jan 46.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 Mar 46, sub: Rpt of Opns of CSTD for Feb 46.

tion search teams found 30 bodies, which were later interred in Shanghai. By the close of this month, the strength of AGRS-CZ had increased to 8 officers and 29 enlisted men.⁹⁹

Finally, late in April 1946, AGRS-CZ absorbed the personnel of the Search Detachment, thus consolidating the strength of both organizations and eliminating all duplication of efforts. At the time of this union, ten graves registration search and recovery teams were operating in the field, while Search Detachment units were functioning at Amoy, Foochow, and Nanchang.¹⁰⁰

Because of the isolated locations in which most search activities took place, teams usually established sub-headquarters at key points as a base of operations. Usually, they split into smaller groups, leaving sufficient men in the sub-headquarters to safeguard military property and to carry on administrative duties. A mechanic accompanied each unit, since its vehicles underwent constant wear and tear on the poor roads. Each team also needed persons who could transcribe, interpret, and speak the difficult Chinese language. Experience had also demonstrated the importance of adequate replacements, since three months in the field about represented the limits of human endurance.

Searchers in the "Hump" area of China were highly imbued with the spirit of adventure. Few white men had ever penetrated this remote and little-known region of the Himalayas and the men often were exposed to unforgettable experiences in the battle against the elements and in contact with the natives. In fact, many of those recalled for redeployment felt reluctant to return to more familiar and civilized scenes.¹⁰¹

In November 1946, Hq, AGRS-CZ, submitted a special report to the Office of the Quartermaster General on search and recovery activities, which indicated that sweeping operations met with far greater success in coastal regions than in the interior of China, because of the former's accessibility to water and air transportation. Moreover, Chinese near the coast were not evacuated during the war to the interior nor to non-combat areas to the same degree as those in some other parts of China and were thus better able to tell of air crashes and burials they had witnessed.¹⁰²

Late in 1946, several problems still confronted AGRS-CZ, such as the continuing shortage of replacements, which necessitated the dispatch of newly arrived, untrained men to the field. In addition, anticipated losses through the new redeployment regulations

⁹⁹ App. D, G-1 Periodic Rpt, 1 Jan-28 Feb 46; KCRC-AGRS-CZ, 319.1.

¹⁰⁰ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, China Zone, 30 Apr 46.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 30 Nov 46.

¹⁰² Ltr, Hq AGRS-CZ to OQMG, 9 Nov 46, sub: Special Rpt of S&R Opns, 293.

threatened a curtailment of 25 percent in search and recovery personnel by January 1947, and of 50 percent by June 1947 unless suitable replacements became quickly available. Inaccurate and inadequate records, made by those search units which preceded both the Search Detachment and AGRS-CZ, also posed a vexing problem. Repeatedly, teams visited locations only to discover that remains had been removed by previous search parties. Burial records at cemeteries where located dead were interred usually contained incomplete data regarding the time and place of the original recovery and the identity of the operating unit.¹⁰³

At the beginning of 1947, graves registration operations in the China Zone reached their peak, with about 400 military and civilian personnel engaged in the various phases of the program. Plans for the entire year confronted search and recovery personnel with the formidable task of completing both sweeping and specific search operations by September.¹⁰⁴

The "Lolo" Case

The complex problems posed by investigation of remote air crashes were well illustrated in a unique case in the China Zone, often called the "Lolo Case" or "Live Americans Case." It was distinguished from most other search projects in two ways. In the first place, there existed a possibility that living Americans would be located. Secondly, it became so well known in China that it was referred to as "The Case."

The "Lolo Case" began in the summer of 1946 when a search team, heading west from Chungking, was approached by a ragged and almost incoherent Chinese farmer, who had heard rumors that American airmen were captives of a barbarous tribe in western China to whom the name "Lolo" was often applied. He admitted that the story was hearsay and that he had not seen the airmen or the plane. After questioning other Chinese in the area, the officer in charge of the search team decided to investigate further.¹⁰⁵

Another member of the search party, Father Breitt, was asked to communicate with the area missionary, Monsignor Stanislas Baudry, Bishop of Hsichang, who had lived in that section of China for about 30 years. Bishop Baudry replied that he had also heard rumors about five Americans held in slavery by the Lolos and had sent this information to the American Ambassador to China, at the same time requesting permission to bargain with the Lolos for release of the alleged captives.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Hist, AGRS-CZ, pp. 7, 18-19.

¹⁰⁵ AG File 370.22, AGRS-China, sub: Lolo Case-Misc. Correspondence.



FIGURE 19. *Army personnel near the end of Lololand expedition into the wilds of Western China.*

A Graves Registration team was organized to conduct the special search under the direction of Lt. Col. H. W. Wurtzler, who was responsible to Col. Charles F. Kearney, Chief, AGRS-CZ. A decision had been reached that all operations aimed at rescuing the captured airmen would be held in strict secrecy, since officials believed that publicity might be dangerous. In September, after establishment of a permanent base at Hsichang, on the edge of the Lolo country, secret negotiations commenced. Circulars were published in the Lolo language and distributed throughout the area.

The search team made several attempts to enter the Lolo country, but despite co-operation from Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, they encountered many obstacles, which resulted largely from the attitude of provincial authorities who were split by factional differences and by the civil war raging in China. Everywhere, the searchers heard fearsome stories of Lolo savagery. The Chinese either refused to enter the area or sent in expeditions which exaggerated the dangers to which they were exposed. Yet continuing rumors tended to con-

vince the American searchers that there actually were live captives in this region.¹⁰⁶

Finally, two members of the search party, Capt. Edward E. McAllister and Sgt. John C. Fox, entered the Lolo area disguised as traders. To their great surprise, they found the Lolos quite friendly and co-operative. Apparently, they hated only the Chinese. Probably they were the original inhabitants of China who retreated into the remote, mountainous regions of the west many centuries ago and remained apart from the rest of the country, still unsubdued and still defiant of successive Chinese governments. Possibly because of this background, they had earned the reputation of being dangerous savages.¹⁰⁷ After an exhaustive and prolonged investigation and much contact with the various Lolo tribes, the searchers finally concluded that no missing Americans had been held captive. Consequently, all activities connected with this long drawn-out case ceased in November 1947.¹⁰⁸

Other Search Efforts; Exhumation Directive

Efforts of the search team based on Hsichang were not entirely directed towards the solution of the Lolo case, for many other planes had been reported as lost in this uncharted territory. One party moved to an area east of the base and recovered 1 known burial, cleared 5 doubtful cases, and received leads on 2 others. Another unit from this team proceeded by airlift to Chengtu in May 1947 for an estimated 25-day mission into the rugged terrain northwest of Chengtu. The search party suffered an ambush by bandits, resulting in the loss of supplies and equipment carried on yak backs. One Chinese soldier was killed and several wounded, but no AGRS casualties occurred. Despite this unfortunate incident, the search team procured new supplies and equipment from Chinese authorities and the project continued. Later, the unit moved southwest to Loshan, clearing all cases in those areas.¹⁰⁹

Most of the searching operations in the China Zone were interrupted or affected by a radio directive received at AGRS-CZ Headquarters on 12 March 1947, which ordered the exhumation of the cemeteries at Kunming, Chengtu, and Shanghai and the shipment of all remains in the China Zone to Hawaii by the middle of April 1947. Sufficient manpower was not available for exhuming and processing operations without diverting search and recovery workers

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ (1) Ltr, Hq AGRS-CZ to OQMG, Washington, D. C., 14 May 47, sub: Special Report on S&R Opns. (2) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-CZ, 31 Jul 47, pp. 2-3.

to the task, and virtually all search activities came to an abrupt standstill during the exhumation and concentration project. (For details, see Ch. XIII of this study, pp. 432-33.)

Resumption of Search and Recovery; Close-Out and Deactivation

After the evacuation of cemeterial remains to Hawaii, the primary mission of AGRS-CZ became the search and recovery of the missing dead. This task increased the work of the Search and Recovery Division, which already handled current death and identification cases and operated the Remains Depot at Shanghai. In order to accomplish its many jobs, the Division was split into two sections—the Casualty Section and the Plans and Operations Section. The latter had charge of actual search activities in China. After the evacuation, 14 of the 28 officers authorized for AGRS-CZ were assigned to field operations, 3 to headquarters, and 11 to general overhead activities.¹¹⁰ Records of the Division at that time (April 1947) showed that operations had progressed quite slowly because of previously mentioned obstacles.¹¹¹

When post-evacuation adjustments were ironed out, activities were resumed on a wide scale and continued into the summer of 1947, with six full field teams. The July report of Graves Registration Activities for the China Zone showed the following picture:

Team 1, stationed at Hankow, had recovered four remains during July, while six more cases were investigated with negative results.

Team 2, based at Hsichang, was engaged in the Lolo Case.

Team 3, based at Hq, AGRS-CZ, operated in the district of Amoy, Hangchow, and Foochow on a roving mission. A flier lost in the Doolittle raid on Tokyo in 1942 had been recovered in July and the remains stored in the AGRS-CZ Remains Depot, marking the final episode in the Doolittle story.

Team 4, stationed at Kunming, performed most of its operations in the China portion of the "Hump." Fourteen cases yielded only negative results. Nevertheless, search activities continued in the immediate vicinity of Kunming in order to clarify all doubtful cases.

Team 5 a roving team, departed by air from Shanghai on 15 July and landed at Nanchang to investigate the eastern part of the corridor from Nanchang north and east. No report of progress had yet been received.

Team 6, stationed at Hengyang, had continued its sweeping operations and made seven recoveries. Ten additional investigations had proved fruitless.

¹¹⁰ Hist, AGRS-China Zone, pp. 36-37.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Officials anticipated that all sweeping searches might be completed by the close of September, when all future efforts would be confined to specific cases. They also expressed hope that all recoverable remains in China might be retrieved by the end of that year.

As expected, sweeping search operations ended by 30 September, and thereafter, only specific cases engaged the four remaining recovery teams, which were located at Hankow, Hsichang, Chengtu, Foochow, and Kunming. During the remainder of 1947, search and recovery activities continued on a waning scale. On Christmas Day, the last team arrived in Shanghai from the field, thereby concluding the search mission of AGRS-CZ.¹¹²

With the arrival of all teams from the field, AGRS-CZ began to close all case files. Deactivation of the Zone, set for 1 February 1948, was postponed until 1 March when orders arrived to duplicate all records of unknown recoveries.¹¹³ Five officers, 4 enlisted men, and 15 civilians comprised the Zone upon deactivation, 1 March 1948. After an existence of two years and two months, this establishment passed out of existence, to remain only in the memories of villagers and peasants who had helped return fallen servicemen to their own countrymen. A final recapitulation of search and recovery figures showed the following:¹¹⁴

Total persons involved.....	2,646
Total accounted for:	
Recovered.....	1,479
Not Recovered (Remains in politically contested territory).....	20
Unrecoverable.....	752
Returned to Duty (Either by release from prison camps or by aid from Chinese during war).....	395

India-Burma Theater and Zone

Wartime Activities and Initial AGRS Efforts

During the war, the movement of supplies by air from the India-Burma Theater to China was accompanied by the loss of hundreds of planes and their crews, especially in the very dangerous "Hump" area of the lofty Himalayas. Recovery of the dead from isolated plane crashes presented the greatest problem for graves registration operations. From the beginning, many of the deceased obviously would never be located. The rapid growth of the jungle quickly

¹¹² (1) Hist, AGRS-CZ, p. 45. (2) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-CZ, 31 Dec 47, p. 2.

¹¹³ Hist, AGRS-CZ, p. 47.

¹¹⁴ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-CZ, 31 Mar 48.

concealed evidences of plane accidents and each monsoon season added to this process. To make matters worse, visibility in the dense jungles was often limited to a few feet. Many crashes occurred in totally uninhabited areas, precluding any possible aid from natives, or in enemy-held territory, where ground searches were necessarily postponed until the Japanese had been dislodged. The campaign of "Merrill's Marauders" in 1944, which terminated in the capture of Myitkyina, Burma, also cost American lives. Combat troops buried those who died in battle, but failed to record their graves adequately. Trained Graves Registration units did not enter the area until after the capture of Myitkyina.¹¹⁵ At this time, approximately ten enlisted men located and concentrated all combat fatalities.

During hostilities, the India-China Division of the Air Transport Command operated a Search and Rescue unit, whose job was the location and rescue of airmen who had survived accidents over the "Hump." In addition, it bore responsibility for the identification and burial of the deceased. On 15 January 1945, it became known as the 1352d AAF Base Unit with Headquarters at Mohanbari, India—the only unit in the Army Air Forces organized solely for the purpose of search and rescue operations. By V-J Day, it had grown into a well-knit group, made up of over 200 skilled persons, from paratroopers to jungle experts, and equipped with a fleet of 16 aircraft especially chosen for search and rescue missions. At this time, its personnel had recovered a total of 464 living individuals from various parts of the Theater.

Early in 1945, small numbers of men from the 102d, 103d, and 105th Graves Registration Platoons made initial efforts to recover the deceased from the numerous plane accidents in the Himalayas. The searchers lacked experience in jungle and mountain operations and enjoyed little success. A system of air-ground liaison, based on a closer co-operation between the graves registration platoons and the Air Transport Command's 1352d Base Unit, soon emerged as the best method for locating fallen planes.¹¹⁶ Even with air-ground liaison, many lost planes could not be found. Specific wrecks, previously spotted and photographed from the air, soon became invisible as dense jungle growth rapidly covered the white, exposed tree surfaces.¹¹⁷ Because graves registration units were unable to reach the more remote crashes, they tended to investigate accidents in only the more accessible areas.

¹¹⁵ Rpt, Lt. Donald H. Weeks, QMC, IBT; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, Historical Summaries, 314.7.

¹¹⁶ Hist, AGRS-IBZ, Summary, AGRS-IBT, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

Later in 1945, when the War Department indicated its intention to repatriate World War II deceased according to wishes of the next of kin, immediate efforts were begun to hasten recovery work in the India-Burma Theater. In consequence of the shortage of graves registration personnel, the 24th Ordnance Maintenance Company was activated and filled by volunteers for search and recovery operations. It undertook a complete investigation of plane crashes and other isolated mishaps in Assam and northern Burma, while the 970th and 971st QM Supply Detachments moved war dead from temporary cemeteries into the two major concentration points at Barrackpore and Kalaikunda.¹¹⁸ On Christmas Day, 1945, the 1352d AAF Base Unit was inactivated, and its records were turned over to graves registration operators. At this time, a few graves registration officers held the erroneous belief that search and recovery operations in the theater might be completed by the end of February 1946. How wrong this estimate was, time was soon to prove.¹¹⁹

Developments During 1946

The Theater assumed responsibility, early in 1946, for graves registration activities in the whole Southeast Asian area, consisting of Siam, Malaya, Singapore, Netherlands East Indies, Borneo, Celebes, and southern French Indo-China. Captain Rider, of the 24th Ordnance Maintenance Company, who had handled search and recovery in northern Burma and Assam, was chosen to assist the Commanding General at Singapore in planning these activities in Southeast Asia.¹²⁰

The Theater closed search and recovery activities in Assam and northern Burma, on 28 February 1946. The following table shows the results achieved in these areas, but they should be considered as only an approximate indication of the general trend:

TABLE 17—*Recoveries in India-Burma Area, 28 February 1946*

	Planes found	Bodies identified	Bodies unidentified	Total bodies	% Identified
17 Feb-18 Apr 1945.....	3	3	3	6	50
19 Apr-30 Jun 1945.....	11	14	19	33	42
1 Jul-30 Nov 1945.....	21	20	38	58	34
1 Dec-31 Dec 1945.....	No reports from field.....				
1 Jan-31 Jan 1946.....	47	12	82	94	13
Total.....	82	49	142	191	26%

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ Rpt, GR Activities, Hq IBT to Theater QM, 3 Jan 46; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, 293.

¹²⁰ Hist, AGRS-IBZ, Summary, IBT, p. 3-4.

These figures emphasized the fact that fewer remains were identified with the passage of time and underlined the importance of early recovery for identification purposes.¹²¹ These accomplishments were achieved despite the many difficulties which beset searchers even during dry months. In the monsoon season, serious handicaps had slowed all search parties. Upon encountering swollen and impassable streams, the teams often had been obliged to return to their starting points. Poor flying weather frequently grounded all planes and prevented scheduled air-drops of supplies to the men.¹²²

Plans had been formulated for closing the India-Burma Theater on 31 May 1946, but at that time the graves registration program was only partly completed. This situation required the employment of a larger staff, and the Detachment, United States Army in India (DUSAI), was activated, effective 1 June 1946. As indicated in Chapter XII, this organization, comprising a small detachment left behind by the Theater Commander with Headquarters at New Delhi, was created to handle residual functions in India. Several days after establishment of DUSAI, the Air Transport Command ceased operations in India and the last of its officers and enlisted men left India by air on 19 June.

AGRS-IBZ, meanwhile, had become self-sustaining, although organizationally subordinate to DUSAI. At this time, Capt. Harold B. McNemar, Chief, Plans and Operations Division, returned from a three weeks' reconnaissance that included the cities of Rangoon, Bangkok, Saigon, Singapore, Palembang, and Batavia. A graves registration conference in Singapore, attended by representatives of the British, Dutch, Australian, and Indian Graves Commissions, highlighted his journey. Based largely upon information gathered on this trip, the Search and Recovery Plan of 17 June 1946 emerged. It provided for operations in French Indo-China from July to September 1946; in Burma, Bengal, and Assam from the latter date to April 1947; and in the Netherlands East Indies from May to September 1947.¹²³

In order to gain first-hand knowledge of conditions under which operations would be conducted, Maj. John C. Corbett left Calcutta on 1 July 1946, and attended further conferences at Rangoon and Singapore. During his absence, staff members in Calcutta busily evaluated and tabulated information contained in Army Air Force crash files, War Crimes records, and burial reports. Upon Major Corbett's return, final plans were made. The Zone was divided into

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, TAB D, Rpt, Hq USF, IBT to TAG, 9 Apr 46; sub: Resume of Search Actions, p. 2.

¹²² Hist, AGRS-IBZ, Summary, AGRS-IBT, p. 3.

¹²³ Hist, AGRS-IBZ, Sec. I, Ch. I, sub: S&R Plans, p. 1.

definite areas and the number of teams and time required were determined. The areas, cases, and estimated remains were listed as follows:¹²⁴

TABLE 18—*Estimate of Unrecovered Dead in India-Burma Theater*

Area	Cases*	Remains
Assam.....	44	161
Bengal.....	55	197
North Burma.....	213	753
South Burma.....	41	277
Siam.....	1	1
Malaya.....	6	27
French Indo-China.....	9	40
Sumatra.....	3	20
Java.....	9	111
Borneo.....	17	115
Celebes.....	9	59
Lesser Sunda Islands.....	2	2
	409	1,763

*A case represented one problem by a search and recovery team, such as the removal of all bodies from one plane crash or one cemetery.

Of the total cases shown, 304 involving 1,290 remains were classified as doubtful of recovery. Not included in the list were 164 cases involving 673 bodies, for which no known location or clue existed. The search and recovery teams provided for in this plan consisted of one officer and one or two enlisted men, to be equipped and outfitted for an absence from supporting headquarters of weeks or even months. In actual practice, the precise number of officers, enlisted men, Civil Service employees, and locally hired natives in teams varied considerably.¹²⁵

Even before the search and recovery plan had reached the second-draft stage, the first teams had departed for the field. One unit, consisting of a captain and two noncommissioned officers, left for Saigon, French Indo-China, and established a base in the Continental Palace Hotel there. The first field trip took the searchers to Long Thomh, an area considered dangerous by French authorities, who furnished an escort of two armored vehicles and a truck carrying ten riflemen. The trip, made for the purpose of locating several American flyers buried near Long Thomh, proved unsuccessful, and the team returned to Saigon empty-handed. Subsequent field trips in French Indo-China yielded nine recoveries.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, Sec. I, Ch. I, pp. 2-3.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, Sec. I, Ch. II, sub: French Indo-China, p. 1.

During the late summer of 1946, the searchers encountered open resistance from Annamite forces who were fighting the French. The team nevertheless located the grave of seven airmen of a Catalina Flying Boat, which had crashed in January 1945 near the village of Pletenang. Because of the increasingly delicate political situation, the team withdrew from the area in December. This move was amply justified by heavy fighting, which broke out in January 1947.¹²⁷

Operations in Netherlands East Indies, Burma, and Assam

While searching in French Indo-China progressed, four officers, comprising two teams, left Calcutta by plane on 15 August 1946, to recover reported remains from the islands of the Netherlands East Indies. The most fruitful operations in this region took place on Celebes. Upon arrival at Makassar, the searchers contacted Major Ferguson of the Australian War Graves Unit, and he, with Capt. Harold B. McNemar, worked out a schedule of operations. Despite a war for independence waged during the AGRS operations, considerable success rewarded the efforts of the men. They worked throughout Celebes unmolested by the Indonesians, who even gave their co-operation upon learning of the search mission of the teams. The Dutch authorities also rendered protection to the searchers. Australian War Graves Registration units willingly worked with the teams on terms of comradeship and close understanding. The remains recovered in Celebes numbered about 130.¹²⁸

The search unit next moved in October 1946 to Borneo by commercial steamship and set up headquarters at Balikpapan. Captain McNemar immediately received permission from the Dutch authorities to search the island. Captain Powers, another member of the search unit, went to Tarakan to locate 14 Americans buried in the Australian War Cemetery. Only about half this group was identified, the other remaining unknown, for only small bones could be located and tooth charts were unobtainable.

Captain McNemar spent three weeks, during October and November, searching the jungles of the Balikpapan area. He interviewed Japanese war prisoners, natives, and Dutch civilians, hoping to gain information regarding American burials. Lieutenant Wendt concurrently worked along the coast of northern Borneo. Fighting between the Dutch and Indonesians was increasing in severity and soon forced all searchers to confine their activities to the Balikpapan area. One team received permission to explore a Dutch civil ceme-

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, Ch. III, p. 6.

tery and opened 64 graves, recovering 4 Americans, who had been buried in shallow graves between those of the Dutch. Operations continued on Borneo into the summer of 1947.

At the end of the 1946 monsoon season in Burma, additional teams joined the two previously sent there, and by December, a total of nine were operating. Using Maymyo as a base, the team systematically searched the region from Meiktila north to Bhamo, near the China-Burma border. Bandit activities and political troubles were especially prevalent in northern and central Burma while Chinese bandits and the Nationalist Army proved to be a constant menace in border areas. One team, traveling in a jeep, was fired upon from the rear at night, but no one was injured. At one of the Myitkyina battle sites, two coolies in a search party received severe wounds from live land mines. The recovery, by the combined teams, of 37 remains from a battlefield on the outskirts of Myitkyina, constituted the major accomplishment in this region.

In Assam, a preliminary survey was completed by the end of the monsoon season, and field work began late in November 1946. One team, after an extremely arduous six-day trek up and down four ranges of high hills and through occasional dense jungles, reached



FIGURE 20. *Member of AGRS Search and Recovery team in Burma questions women and children concerning "dog" tags.*

the site of a fallen C-46 in the Duffla Hills, at a spot requiring a five-hour march from the nearest village. The searchers concluded from this expedition that, because of the rough terrain in the jungled-clad areas of Assam, it was impossible to locate any isolated burials without an accurate sketch or a guide who knew the exact location of a grave or group of graves. Another team made a journey into the Naga Hills, encountering rough, rugged country with trails "either straight up or down or through streams."¹²⁹ One day, the team forded the same river 42 times.

By the end of 1946, with the addition in December of 4 teams in Burma and 1 in Assam, the goal of 15 search and recovery teams in



FIGURE 21. *Search and Recovery team preparing to start on investigation project in Burma after equipping themselves with needed supplies.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, Sec. I, Ch. X, pp. 2-3.

the Zone was reached. Because of disturbed political conditions, the unit which had operated in French Indo-China returned to Zone Headquarters and awaited reassignment.¹³⁰ The following table shows the situation in the India-Burma Zone at this time:¹³¹

TABLE 19—*Search and Recovery Figures in India-Burma Theater at End of 1946*

Area	Total Cases	No. of Remains	Doubtful Cases	No. of Remains
	involving	including	involving	including
Assam.....	38	120	33	86
Bengal.....	46	161	33	113
North Burma.....	200	724	137	517
South Burma.....	41	277	40	276
Siam.....	2	2	0	0
Malaya.....	6	27	4	22
French Indo-China.....	10*	42	6	30
Sumatra.....	3	20	2	18
Java.....	9	111	1	11
Borneo.....	17	115**	15	101
Celebes.....	0	0	0	0
Lesser Sunda Islands.....	1	1	0	0
Total.....	373	1,600	271	1,174

*One more case was added since the November report based on information received from the American Consul, Saigon.

**Forty-seven more bodies have been recovered from Borneo, but are not taken into account in the above figures until additional information is available to allocate the bodies to the respective cases.

Progress in graves registration matters enabled Lt. Col. Stanford-Blunden, at the end of April 1947, to list these results of search and recovery efforts during the period since 15 August 1946:¹³²

- (a) Burma—Approximately 230 remains have been recovered, of which 162 await medical processing. It is estimated that identities will be established for 50 percent either as individuals or as groups.
- (b) Assam—Approximately 53 remains have been recovered of which 9 await medical examination. It is estimated that identities will be established either as individuals or as groups for 70 percent.
- (c) Borneo—Approximately 66 remains have been recovered of which 23 await medical processing. It is estimated that identities will be established for 80 percent either as individuals or as groups.

Resumption and Subsequent Termination of Operations

In November 1947, after several months' interruption because of the monsoon season, search and recovery operations based on cases

¹³⁰ Rpt, GR & Repat Opus, IBZ, 31 Dec 46.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² (1) Rpt, Hq AGRS-IBZ to TAG, Wash, D. C., 30 Apr 47. (2) "Medical processing" probably refers to efforts to disinfect all remains in order that they might pass rigid port of entry health standards in the United States before admission.



FIGURE 22. Search unit embarks on a 4-day mission into Burmese jungles to recover 13 Air Corps men killed in action during January 1945.

for which specific information was available, were resumed. Six teams departed to recheck specific cases and to work on others that offered hope for recovery of remains.¹³³ Five teams recovered 29 remains during December. Except for parts of the Netherlands East Indies, where political conditions precluded further investigations, and for specific cases, the search and recovery mission in the Zone had been completed, and it formally ceased on schedule at the close of 1947.

By the end of the following January, 1,352 cases had been closed as unrecoverable. Some involved those who had drowned at sea en route to India or in rivers while stationed in the Zone. Others had perished in air crashes in remote and inaccessible regions. A few deceased lay in known locations, but attempts to recover them were abandoned because of natural or political dangers to the safety of searchers.¹³⁴

On 31 March 1948, the overall graves registration program, too, terminated, bringing to a close in two years and one month an operation which generally had been estimated to consume three or more years. On inactivation day, only 6 officers and 2 enlisted men remained with AGRS-IBZ. During its existence, search teams had re-

¹³³ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-IBZ, 30 Nov 47.

¹³⁴ AGRS Newsletter, Mar 48.



FIGURE 23. *A soldier tries to push jeep out of mud along the Stillwell Road.*

covered about 1,182 remains. A total of 1,449 deceased were declared unrecoverable by a Board of Officers appointed by Hq, AGRS-IBZ. Cases involving some 275 remains in the Netherlands East Indies were turned over to the Far East Command on 31 March 1948.¹³⁵

In the area encompassed by the former India-Burma Zone, limited search activities, based only upon specific clues, continued even after deactivation. In October 1948, five small search teams still were operating, but this number had shrunk to two at the end of the year. By March 1949, a "team," which consisted of a single civilian investigator, searched for the two "recoverable" remains in Sumatra. The target date for completion of this mission was 31 May 1949. No significant search and recovery operations occurred in the India-Burma region after the summer of 1949.

¹³⁵ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, IBZ, 31 Mar 48.

CHAPTER XV

PERMANENT CEMETERIES IN THE PACIFIC

Establishment of overseas cemeteries naturally followed the eventual concentration of deceased into five centralized points and accompanying search and recovery efforts in Pacific war areas. In other words, both concentration and recovery activities were by their very nature closely linked with the creation of overseas burial grounds to accommodate those remains which had been moved to centralized points or which had been recovered from isolated resting places.

Postwar Plans

At the close of World War II, the War Department made apparent its intention to repeat its World War I policy of establishing permanent overseas cemeteries, where the Nation's honored, but unre-patriated dead might rest eternally. The "current" plan, issued on 8 September 1945, contained a list of proposed overseas cemeteries which included only two for the Pacific war theaters—Honolulu, in the Hawaiian Islands, and Bataan, or another suitable site near Manila, in the Philippines.¹ The War Department did not believe that the comparatively small number of dead in China, India, Burma, the Malayan Peninsula, or the Dutch East Indies warranted the creation of cemeteries in those areas. Most interested officials favored the disinterment and repatriation of the war dead from these regions or their final interment in better-located, permanent overseas burial grounds, according to the wishes of their relatives.

The widespread official preference for the Honolulu and Manila areas was based on several important considerations, which included: (1) adequate port and housing facilities in case of a Gold Star Pilgrimage, wherein mothers of deceased servicemen visited the overseas graves of their sons; (2) regularly scheduled oceanic transportation; (3) presence of permanent United States Army garrisons in both localities to provide adequate maintenance and supervision.²

During the early postwar period, officials in the Memorial Division, OQMG, considered numerous world-wide plans for establish-

¹ Current Plan for Return of American Dead, 8 Sep 45, p. 8.

² Ltr, Brig Gen William Campbell, CQM, GHQ, USAFPAC to OQMG, Wash., D. C., 4 Apr 46, pp. 11-12, 293.

ment of permanent overseas cemeteries. In addition to Honolulu and Manila, such points as Guam, Finschhafen, and Ipswich, were suggested. Plan No. 1, for example, prepared by Operations Branch, Memorial Division, and submitted by OQMG to higher echelons of the War Department for approval, proposed the establishment of three permanent Pacific burial grounds—Manila No. 2; Punchbowl Crater, Oahu; and the Army, Navy, Marine Cemetery No. 2, Guam.³

In the autumn of 1946, the American Battle Monuments Commission, desirous of collaborating with OQMG on the selection of cemeterial sites, requested The Quartermaster General to furnish the names of those localities then under consideration as permanent burial grounds. In reply, he furnished a tentative list, which included Manila and Honolulu in the Pacific war theaters, but omitted Guam.⁴ The Quartermaster General also expressed his belief that the War Department would make final decisions on all overseas cemeterial sites by 1 February 1947 in order to be able to request a Congressional appropriation for acquisition of the necessary land. Any considerable delay beyond this date in making such decisions, he feared, might necessitate final burials in overseas cemeteries before the land had actually been acquired in perpetuity and "might make it impractical for the American Battle Monuments Commission to furnish a layout of burial plots before permanent interments began."⁵ He therefore urged the Commission to submit its recommendations in this matter before 15 February 1947 and provide a layout of burial plots before 1 July 1947.

In January 1947 The Quartermaster General again stressed the importance of an early presentation of the Commission's recommendations on permanent overseas sites since the War Department wished to consider the Commission's views carefully before taking final action.⁶ By late March 1947, when OQMG had completed an exhaustive survey of proposed burial places throughout the world and the Commission had submitted its recommendations, it was obvious that there were notable divergences in the views of OQMG and ABMC. These differences probably arose from dissimilar concepts of the purpose of military cemeteries. The Commission maintained that overseas burial grounds served as perpetual re-

³ Plan Number One, Planned Opns, Overseas Permanent American Military Cemeteries, Prepared by Opns Br, Mem Div, OQMG, 31 Mar 46.

⁴ Ltr, Maj Gen T. B. Larkin, TQMG to Brig Gen Thomas North, Sec, ABMC, 9 Dec 46.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Ltr, Larkin to SS&P, WDGS, 22 Jan 47, sub: ABMC Recommendations for Permanent Overseas Cemeteries.

minders to other countries of American sacrifices on their soil. For this reason, it favored a greater number of permanent overseas cemeteries than otherwise would be necessary. The Quartermaster General, on the other hand, contended that the primary purpose of such burial places was the provision of a suitable final resting place for the unrepatriated dead and that monuments, rather than numerous cemeteries, served better for purely commemorative purposes.⁷ Finally, Lt. Gen. LeRoy Lutes, Director of Service, Supply, and Procurement, War Department General Staff, recommended the approval by higher echelons of the overseas cemeteries proposed by The Quartermaster General.

Because of these divergent opinions, a conference took place on 15 April 1947, attended by Brig. Gen. Aaron Bradshaw, Service, Supply, and Procurement Division, War Department General Staff; Brig. Gen. George Horkan, OQMG; and Brig. Gen. Thomas North, Secretary, ABMC. The latter official indicated that he lacked authority to diverge from the unanimous recommendations of the Commission. He stated, nevertheless, that in view of the much reduced number of overseas interments as indicated by the trend of replies from the next of kin, he would suggest, upon the request of the War Department, that the ABMC reconsider its position. The conferees agreed upon the need for expeditious action in final selection of cemeterial sites because of the swiftly oncoming repatriation of remains by autumn of that year. At this conference, the OQMG and ABMC reached agreement on several sites, including the same two Pacific localities so often suggested—Hawaii and the Philippines.⁸

On 22 April 1947, the War Department approved those permanent overseas sites agreed upon by the two agencies. Since the two aforementioned localities received final selection as Pacific burial grounds for the unrepatriated war dead, a detailed study follows of the developments in each (Honolulu and Manila), as well as a brief consideration of the proposal for a national cemetery on the island of Guam.

The National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific

The first proposals for a national cemetery in the Territory of Hawaii date back to the years between the two world wars. Hawaiian veterans of World War I, spearheaded by the American Legion, waged an active campaign for such a site. The first concrete results of their efforts came late in 1941 with the approval of

⁷ Memo, Lt Gen LeRoy Lutes, Director of Services, Supply & Procurement, to C/S, USW, SW, 28 Mar 47, sub: Staff Study, Permanent Overseas Cemeteries.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 18 Apr 47.

legislation appropriating \$50,000 for the establishment of a national cemetery in Hawaii, provided land was made available at no cost to the Federal Government.⁹

Within a month after passage of this legislation, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, signalling American entrance into World War II. In the months that followed, bickering arose over the question of the actual location of the proposed cemetery. In August 1943, the OQMG took the matter out of the hands of the Hawaiian Department by its statement that the War Department had no intention of establishing a national cemetery in Hawaii during hostilities.¹⁰

When World War II ended, the Quartermaster, AFMIDPAC, suggested continued inaction in the matter, even though the \$50,000 was still available. His attitude evidently reflected the disfavor with which local Army Headquarters then regarded the so-called Punchbowl (the crater of an extinct volcano which lay on the outskirts of Honolulu), as a possible cemeterial site and the prevailing official sentiment which seemingly supported a policy of waiting until after the repatriation program had begun. Several factors guided AFMIDPAC thinking. In the first place, firm requirements for permanent overseas burial grounds could not be accurately determined until after the next of kin had been polled on their preference as to final disposition of remains. Secondly, the formal establishment of a national cemetery required Congressional action, which had not as yet been forthcoming. Finally, the War Department favored a careful study of cemeterial sites and the selection of only a limited number.¹¹

Later in 1945 and during the early part of 1946, officials in Memorial Division, OQMG, and in Hq, AFMIDPAC, gave further thought to the establishment of a permanent burial ground near Honolulu, but took no positive steps in that direction. On 2 April 1946, however, The Quartermaster General apprised the Commanding General, ASF, that "in a study being conducted by the War Department for a selection of permanent cemeteries, the site being considered for Hawaii is on the Island of Oahu, T. H., within proximity of crater of Punch Bowl, Honolulu."

By August 1946, Col. H. R. McKenzie, Quartermaster, AFMIDPAC, concluded that Honolulu would definitely become the site of an overseas national cemetery. Based upon the number of

⁹ Public Law 298, 77th Congress.

¹⁰ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, pp. 249-51.

¹¹ Ltr, Col C. Z. Shugart, Asst AG to CG, AFMIDPAC, 15 Sep 45, sub: Permanent Cemeteries; App. J, Incl. 19, Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II.

temporary burials in the MIDPAC area, he estimated that about 5,000 remains would rest there—a figure far short of the number finally interred. Since he and other MIDPAC officials then contemplated beginning repatriation operations in the Hawaiian Islands during March 1947, Colonel McKenzie urged The Quartermaster General to take immediate action toward establishing the cemetery.¹² But exchanges of correspondence between Washington and Honolulu resulted in no immediate choice of a site. By the end of 1946, the full magnitude of the oncoming repatriation program thrust itself upon AFMIDPAC officials, and Headquarters, AFMIDPAC, dispatched an urgent radiogram to OQMG requesting funds for an Engineer Survey of the Punchbowl area and an early appropriation from Congress for its development.¹³

Early in February 1947, as a result of this pressure for action, OQMG contacted the Office of the Chief of Engineers, which in turn, quickly authorized the Western Engineer Division to formulate plans for the proposed cemetery. During this same period, the Department of the Army began efforts to secure Congressional approval of the project. In Honolulu, meanwhile, the Punchbowl site received growing support from such local organizations as the City Planning Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, veterans' organizations, and other groups. Nevertheless, in June 1947, Joseph Farrington, Hawaii's delegate to Congress, sent a message to Mayor John H. Wilson of Honolulu, requesting his views on a re-examination of the whole issue of establishing a national cemetery in the Punchbowl.¹⁴ Mr. Farrington believed that a reappraisal might be prudent in view of several developments in Washington.

In the first place, the Subcommittee on Appropriations for War Department Civil Functions had seriously challenged the War Department proposal for a total expenditure of \$1,500,000 for the development of a Punchbowl Cemetery. Secondly, the current thinking in Washington contemplated the eventual burial in Hawaii of some 20,000 deceased, including about 9,000 already on Oahu and others from scattered Pacific Islands where temporary cemeteries must be abandoned. In the third place, Mr. Farrington reported that the Act authorizing the expenditure of \$50,000 for a permanent burial ground in Hawaii might well pose a technical obstacle to current appropriations for this purpose. In the next place, certain members of the American Battle Monuments Commission had shown some skepticism over the wisdom of placing a

¹² Ltr, Col H. R. McKenzie to Brig Gen George A. Horkan, OQMG, 26 Aug 46.

¹³ (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, p. 253; (2) Rad, HAFMIDPAC to OQMG, 15 Jan 47.

¹⁴ Rad, Farrington to Wilson, received about 14 Jun 47.

cemetery in the Punchbowl Crater. Lastly, Mr. Farrington had heard that members of the City Planning Commission of Honolulu had expressed objections to the Punchbowl site and had accepted it with the feeling that no alternative existed. Since Mr. Farrington had always assumed that the Honolulu populace generally approved the proposed site, such information came to him as an unpleasant surprise.¹⁵

Mr. Farrington's misgivings concerning the mood of the Appropriations Committee were well founded, since word reached Hawaii late in June that the Committee had denied funds for the construction of the proposed cemetery.¹⁶ This action was taken despite an official War Department decision earlier in the month that the only permanent cemetery in the middle Pacific would be located in the Punchbowl Crater.¹⁷

Although the City Planning Commission in Honolulu had endorsed the plan of the District Engineer for the development of the Punchbowl site, an articulate local opposition arose over its use as a permanent burial ground, much to the surprise and consternation of local Army Headquarters. Three criticisms were most frequently expressed. In the first place, opponents asserted that the proposed site was too small to accommodate the burial of eligible veterans in future years. Secondly, they feared that a cemetery in the Punchbowl might contaminate the source of Honolulu's future water supply. Lastly, they expressed the emotional objection that "We don't want a city of the dead overlooking a city of the living."¹⁸

Since nobody then knew the number of war dead destined for eventual interment there, proponents of the Punchbowl location could not counter the first criticism very effectively. In rebuttal to the second point, they cited the opinion of the territorial Commissioner of Public Health, given in 1942, which held that the establishment of a cemetery at the Punchbowl would *not* result in a health menace to the community. Furthermore, the Territorial Board of Health had recently (June 1947) reaffirmed this position. Finally, the advocates asserted that Honolulu should take pride in having an eternal, silent vigil over the city by those who had died to save it.¹⁹

While the controversy raged, Army authorities, somewhat disconcerted by the unfavorable action of the Congressional appropri-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 27 Jun 47.

¹⁷ Rad, WD to COMGENAGFPAC, 9 Jun 47, 687.

¹⁸ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, pp. 253-54.

¹⁹ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 254. (2) *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 27 Jun 47.

tions committee, feared that a permanent overseas burial ground would not materialize soon enough to play any important role in the swiftly approaching repatriation operations. This attitude grew despite the Hawaiian delegate's prompt introduction of another bill for the establishment of a national cemetery in Hawaii. In any case, on 1 August 1947, OQMG queried AGFPAC on the cost of adapting or expanding Schofield Barracks Post Cemetery for use as a temporary burial ground. AGFPAC officials were only lukewarm to this suggestion, preferring above-ground storage of remains until a national cemeterial site became available.²⁰ They did not believe that such storage would cause any unfavorable public reaction.²¹ The War Department, taking cognizance of their attitude, soon dropped all plans for temporary burials in Schofield Barracks Cemetery and approved above-ground storage pending final disposition.

In the early autumn of 1947, a group of Congressmen from the House Armed Services and Appropriations Committee visited the Hawaiian Islands. After surveying possible burial grounds, they approved the Punchbowl rather than Schofield Barracks as the site for a national cemetery. This highly favorable development, coupled with an obvious preference for the Punchbowl on the part of Memorial Division officials, practically settled the issue.²²

During the ensuing weeks, the final skirmishes of the campaign for the Punchbowl site took place on Capitol Hill. In February 1948, the Appropriations Committee approved necessary funds for the establishment of a national cemetery in the Punchbowl but disapproved a similar project on Guam. Instead, the Committee recommended the merger of the proposed Guam and Hawaiian burial grounds into the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Honolulu (Punchbowl) and allowed a total of \$1,172,000 for the task. This recommendation was enacted into law.

Since earlier estimates as to the numbers of war dead who would lie permanently in Pacific cemeteries had been based on the supposition that three burial grounds would be available, the action of Congress rendered these figures meaningless. The Chief, Operations Branch, Memorial Division, OQMG, immediately proposed that the estimated total of Pacific overseas burials—38,022—be

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 254–55. See following chapter for discussion of operations at Schofield Barracks Cemetery.

²¹ The following two years of above-ground storage in Hawaii proved them correct in this assumption.

²² Memo, Lt Col Norman Wiggs, Mem Div, OQMG to Col E. Busch, Asst Chief, Mem Div, 10 Oct 47.

divided between the Punchbowl and Ft. McKinley, Manila, in the following manner:²³

In the Punchbowl, Honolulu, 40 percent of knowns in area.....	6,695
Add token unknowns.....	400
40 percent of knowns from Guam area.....	8,834
Total estimated burials in Punchbowl.....	15,929
In Ft. McKinley, Manila, 40 percent of knowns in area.....	13,906
All Pacific unknowns less 400 in Hawaii.....	7,593
Total estimated burials at Manila.....	21,499
40 percent of cremated remains in Pacific.....	594
Total estimated burials in Pacific.....	38,022

Construction of the Punchbowl Cemetery finally started in August 1948 and, for all practical purposes, was completed in September 1949. The task was accomplished in four phases under the supervision of the Honolulu District Engineer.²⁴ The first phase consisted of clearing, grading, and preparing the site, and installing a drainage system; the second, of construction of water and electrical systems, retaining walls, sidewalks, and preliminary work on roads. The third phase included the building of entrance pylons, the flag pole and observation point, the completion of roads, topsoiling and grassing, and lastly, the general landscaping and construction of the superintendent's lodge, administration and utility buildings.²⁵

From time to time, proposals were made to erect a chapel and columbarium. They gained considerable support from war veterans and next of kin living in Hawaii, and the District Engineer in Hawaii made rather definite plans for building such structures. Because of their cost, the OQMG disapproved them, and the idea was finally dropped.²⁶

While construction activities were in progress, graves registration officers considered which methods and procedures should be followed in making final interments. Initial thinking was guided by the belief that AGRS should maintain close supervision over inter-

²³ Memo, Chief, Opns Br to Chief, Mem Div, 26 Feb 48; KCRC-AGRS-PAZ.

²⁴ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, p. 255.

²⁵ (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 255-56. (2) App. J, Incl. 22. (3) Ltr, AGRS-PAZ to District Engineer, Honolulu District, 27 Oct 49, sub: Request for Information.

²⁶ (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, pp. 256-57. (2) App. J, Incls. 24, 25, 26.

ments in order to insure reverent handling of the caskets and accurate recording of burial locations. AGRS planners at first thought that laborers already on the payroll could best handle interment operations, augmented, if necessary, by short-time employees. It was soon realized, though, that the shortage of trained laborers in the Hawaiian area would necessitate the hiring of outside workers for those activities. Recent painful experiences in Hawaiian exhumations had demonstrated all too clearly the very low quality of available short-term labor.²⁷ Furthermore, the brief period of employment did not justify the expense and inconvenience of placing laborers on the civil service payroll and then soon removing them. Another factor which militated against this method was the inexperience of AGRS officers in supervising operations of this scope.

Interment by Honolulu morticians who submitted the lowest bids for this work was next considered. But this solution was in the end rejected because of the impossibility of guaranteeing that contractors would co-ordinate their work with building activities and because of the unwelcome publicity that would accompany invitations to bid.²⁸ Finally, the Honolulu District Engineer proposed the relatively simple procedure of changing an existing contract held by one of the construction firms already working at the cemetery so as to include interments. The problem of close co-ordination of burial and construction operations would thus be much simplified. The only disadvantage in this procedure came from loss of direct supervision by graves registration officials, but even this factor could be minimized by care in writing job specifications and by close co-operation of contractor, Honolulu District Engineer's Office, and AGRS Headquarters. On 9 December 1948, AGRS-PAZ Headquarters and the Honolulu District Engineer's Office finally agreed upon this procedure.²⁹

After studying the construction schedule, the District Engineer recommended the period from 10 January to 28 February 1949 for the first phase of interments. As the end of 1948 approached, graves registration officials realized that burials could begin as early as 4 January 1949. By then, the subsoil water distribution lines, sewer lines and manholes and electric primary cables would have been installed and work begun on the fine grading and base course of the roads and on the curbing.³⁰ With the date for starting inter-

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 260-61.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 261-62.

²⁹ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 262. (2) App. J, Incl. 27, Weekly Activity Rpt, Cemeterial Div, AGRS-PAZ.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

ments now determined and with work specifications written, the necessary directives were issued.³¹

At a press conference on 3 January 1949, the Commanding General, U. S. Army Pacific (USARPAC), stated that since he had no misgivings over the manner in which interments would proceed, the cemetery would remain open to the press. He also expressed full confidence in the good taste of reporters in treating this delicate matter.³²

Interments in the new cemetery commenced on 4 January 1949 with the reading of a burial service over the casket of an unknown serviceman who lost his life during the attack on Pearl Harbor. One hundred and eight others were buried that same day. The interment of these war dead shaped the general procedure followed during subsequent interments in the Punchbowl. Military chaplains of each of the major faiths professed by the decedents conducted appropriate rites, which were followed by the traditional firing of three volleys and the sounding of taps.³³

During the first phase of operations, covering the period from 4 January to 25 March, some 9,940 deceased received final burial. Interments occurred on 49 working days, with 8 days lost because of heavy rains. Those buried during this time came from such widely scattered localities as China, Australia, India, Burma, Saipan, Guam, Okinawa, and Iwo Jima, and the temporary Hawaiian Island cemeteries from which the remains had been disinterred more than a year previously and placed in above-ground storage.³⁴

Although the cemetery remained closed to the general public until July, a number of visitors gained admittance, including next of kin or their representatives. Either the Chief, AGRS-PAZ, or his Public Information Officer escorted the visitors and explained interment procedures.³⁵ By 25 March, the first interment phase ended, since virtually all war dead then eligible for interment rested in the Punchbowl and since more preparatory work was needed before opening the cemetery to the general public.

Graves registration officials at Honolulu fully realized that disinterment directives for those still buried in temporary PAZ cemeteries would continue to arrive from OQMG after the first inter-

³¹ Ltr, HUSARPAC to All Genl and Special Staff Divs, *et al.*, 3 Jan 49, sub: Interments in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl); 4 Jan to 28 Feb 49, App. J, Incl. 30.

³² Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, pp. 263-64.

³³ *Ibid.*, App. J, Incl. 32.

³⁴ (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, p. 266. (2) *Ibid.*, App. J, Incl. 32.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, II, p. 266.



FIGURE 24. Men prepare a grave at the "Punchbowl," Honolulu, Hawaii.

ment phase had ended, and therefore expected that a considerable number of remains would accumulate in above-ground storage before the Punchbowl site was ready for public display. AGRS authorities wished to inter as many eligible decedents as possible before the public opening of the cemetery and under the same conditions which surrounded the recently completed operation. Fortunately, the Honolulu District Engineer and the contractor agreed to this procedure. On 21 March, at a meeting of representatives of AGRS-PAZ and the District Engineer, the decision was made to inter all eligible and available deceased servicemen during the month of June 1949.³⁶

³⁶ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 268. (2) App. J, Incl. 36, Brief of Meeting Held 21 March 1949 in office of Honolulu District Engineer.

In the 2½ month period following the completion of the first phase of operations, the contractor finished work on the paving of roads, the laying of remaining water pipes, and the spreading of topsoil and Bermuda grass in all sections except those chosen for the June burials.

The second major phase of interments began on 13 June 1949, under conditions almost identical to those existing during the preceding period of activity. Upon the contractor's request, the rate of burials dropped to 144 caskets a day, in contrast to an average of more than 200 daily during the 4 January-25 March period. By 23 June, a total of 1,778 remains had been interred, including servicemen from Wake Island and Formosa.³⁷

After completion of the June burials, the cemetery superintendent, the contractors, and AGRS Headquarters worked feverishly to prepare the Punchbowl for its public opening in July. Workers cleared roadways, installed traffic and office signs, erected grave markers, issued necessary directives, and trained escorts.

On 19 July 1949, although still not formally dedicated, the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific opened its gates to the public, drawing between two and four thousand persons during the day. The occasion also marked the beginning of the third phase of operations in the Punchbowl. The first public interment rites in the cemetery involved the burial of "Ernie" Pyle and four other World War II decedents, and was attended by the major military commanders in Hawaii and by representatives of fraternal and veteran organizations. In the afternoon, a plane crew of 10, shot down over Japan, was buried. On the following days, 20 remains were interred daily, in groups of five. By 24 August, all war dead in this phase of operations—a total of 396—had received final burial.³⁸

During this phase, interments were sometimes marred by considerable confusion. Work specifications required a cessation of all activity for a 30-minute period during each burial ceremony. Many of the next of kin, however, held private services after completion of military rites, causing either a loss of the contractor's time for more than the prescribed half-hour period or annoyance to the next of kin from a resumption of burial operations in the immediate vicinity. Although the contractor usually suspended work, he was never happy over the situation. In addition, the limited space of Section D congested traffic and otherwise created crowded condi-

³⁷ *Ibid.*, II, p. 268.

³⁸ (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 271-72. (2) App. J, Incl. 27, Weekly Activity Rpts, Cemeterial Div, AGRS-PAZ.



FIGURE 25. *Caskets being moved to burial site at "Punchbowl" Cemetery.*

tions for large groups of mourners. Graves registration officials might have avoided these difficulties by making interments in two or three widely separate sections of the cemetery. This arrangement would have alleviated traffic problems, especially during the first few days of public burials. As it was, the employment of a larger number of police soon resolved the difficulty.³⁹ Despite such annoyances, the next of kin almost uniformly praised interment procedures.

As indicated earlier, although the public had already been admitted to the National Memorial Cemetery, it had not yet been formally dedicated. Even before the first interments were made, however, officials had begun to plan for the dedication.⁴⁰ At the conference held in November 1948, Memorial Day, 1949, was chosen as the tentative date for the ceremony. Officials in Hawaii at first hoped that the dedication could coincide with the public opening of the cemetery, but it soon became evident that the Punchbowl could not possibly be ready for this ceremony by Memorial Day. Since graves registration authorities had agreed that a date of significance in military history should be selected, the elimination of Memorial Day reduced the choice to three such dates—V-J Day, Armistice Day, and Pearl Harbor Day. Despite the strong objections of the Honolulu District Engineer, who wished

³⁹ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 271-72.

⁴⁰ Memo, Chief, AGRS-PAZ to Div Chiefs, AGRS-PAZ, 1 Dec 48, sub: Conference with CG Regarding Burials in NMCP, Held 11 Hours, 26 Nov 48, App. J, Incl. 44.



FIGURE 26. *Military honors conducted at burial services, "Punchbowl" Cemetery.*

to wait until landscaping could clothe the cemetery's unfinished appearance, the Commanding General, USARPAC, decided in March that V-J Day, 2 September, was the most suitable date.⁴¹

With the dedication time settled, Headquarters, AGRS-PAZ, began efforts to obtain the principal speaker and prepared an invitation list containing the names of the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense. A tentative program, endorsed at the first meeting of the Dedication Committee, included, besides the main address, appropriate band music, a choral selection, prayers by Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish chaplains, the traditional firing of three volleys, and taps. Although the President and the Secretary of Defense were unable to attend the dedication, the Secretary of the Navy on 3 August accepted an invitation to deliver the main address.⁴²

On 2 September 1949, the gates of the cemetery opened at 11 a. m., 3 hours before the ceremony was to begin. As the hour for dedication neared, the crowd swelled into thousands of persons.

⁴¹ (1) *Hist*, AGRS-PAZ, II, p. 274. (2) App. J, Incl. 45.

⁴² (1) *Ibid.*, II, pp. 275-76. (2) App. J, Incl. 47.



FIGURE 27. *Hawaiian families at graves of their loved ones in the Punchbowl Crater on eve of Memorial Day, 1952.*

Six thousand seats were provided, with reserved seats for invited guests, the next of kin, and officers of the rank of colonel or the equivalent. Shortly before 2 p. m., Governor Stainback, Adm. William F. Halsey, Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger, Gen Henry S. Aurand, Secretary of the Navy Francis P. Matthews, and the three chaplains, took their places on the speakers' stand.

The solemn ceremony, held on the fourth anniversary of V-J Day, constituted a fitting tribute to the 12,082 World War II deceased already interred in this cemetery. The remainder of the more than 25,000 grave sites in the Punchbowl would now be available for veterans of all branches of the armed services and their dependents. At the time of its dedication, the Punchbowl was the largest in area and in number of burials of the three national cemeteries located outside the continental United States.⁴³

⁴³ (1) *Paradise of the Pacific*, October, 1949, p. 3. (2) The other two national overseas cemeteries are located in Alaska and Puerto Rico.

Fort McKinley Military Cemetery, Manila, P. I.

During the greater part of 1947, the Memorial Division, OQMG, favored the use of Manila No. 2 Cemetery as the permanent overseas burial ground for the unrepatriated deceased of the Southwest Pacific Area. They expected the American Battle Monuments Commission and the American Graves Registration Service to share a joint responsibility for the cemeterial layout. The Department of the Army, through the Graves Registration Service, would acquire the land (under authority of Public Law 368, 80th Cong., approved 5 August 1947), perform necessary grading, establish temporary roads and walks, install drainage, and inter the remains in final locations. At this time (1947) it was anticipated that after the conclusion of all burials, the ABMC would assume responsibility for the construction of permanent buildings, roads, walks, and the like for the cemetery's future care and maintenance.⁴⁴

Plans for establishment of Manila No. 2 as a permanent overseas cemetery were altered when ABMC members expressed serious doubt that the seventy-odd acre site could accommodate the estimated 20,000 remains which eventually might be interred there.⁴⁵ They proposed an investigation into the possibility of obtaining another 30 or more acres, adjacent to the existing area, or preferably, the selection of a suitable alternate site containing 100 acres or more.

During November 1947, as a result of ABMC's suggestions, a group of interested officials, including Brig. Gen. Thomas North, Secretary of the ABMC, Lt. Col. D. K. Donelson, representing the Secretary of the Army, Lt. Col. Lindley A. Pennypacker of OQMG, Col. C. P. Kearney, from Tokyo, and Mr. Ray Larson, Consultant Architect, investigated several other locations, such as Fort McKinley, Little Baguio on the Bataan Peninsula, and Corregidor Island.⁴⁶ They arranged a conference with the President of the Philippine Republic, Manuel A. Roxas, during which they discussed the availability of land for cemeterial purposes.

After considering all these areas, this group recommended the selection of a 150-acre site in the Fort McKinley area, embracing the existing temporary military cemetery. The prime factors which influenced this choice were: the site's contour and high suitability for burial purposes; its scenic beauty; its easy accessibility to Manila; its historic associations; and the economy of operating a

⁴⁴ Ltr, Gen George Horkan, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG to Gen A. D. Hopping, CQM, GHQ, FEC, 6 Oct 47, 293, Far East, Alex RC.

⁴⁵ Ltr, Col E. Busch, Mem Div, OQMG to Lt Cols Pennypacker and Donelson, Mem Div, OQMG, 21 Oct 47.

⁴⁶ Hist, AGRS-FEZ, 1 Oct 47 to 31 Mar 48, I, p. 17.



FIGURE 28. *United States Military Cemetery No. 2, Manila, Luzon, Philippine Islands.*

permanent burial ground there. Aerial photographs and a map showing the tentative boundaries were sent late in December 1947 to Memorial Division, OQMG, for final approval.⁴⁷

Immediate steps followed to get the projected cemetery underway. The Manila Engineering District (MANED), after computing the costs of establishing cemetery boundaries and clearing and grading the land, forwarded its conclusions to Washington. Funds could not be authorized for the clearing of Fort McKinley property until receipt of official notification from Washington of the property transfer.⁴⁸

By 1 January 1948, OQMG informed graves registration officials in Manila that appropriations had been made for the survey of the Fort McKinley site and that the Western Pacific Engineering Division had received orders to proceed with this task. The OQMG also instructed Manila to transfer pre-World War II remains interred in the old Fort McKinley Post Cemetery to the post cemetery at Clark Field, Fort Stotsenburg, in order that preparations for

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

the permanent burial ground at Fort McKinley might proceed promptly.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, in the area of the proposed permanent cemetery, graves registration forces carried out preparatory operations, which included the removal of concrete structures, posts, and foundations, as well as heavy underbrush. By mid-February, they had cleared away about 1,000 tons of concrete.⁵⁰ Throughout the period extending from early January to late May 1948, graves registration workers also disinterred and removed all remains from the old Post Cemetery to Fort Stotsenburg.⁵¹

During the summer and into the early autumn of 1948, preparations for the new cemetery continued at Fort McKinley except for a temporary halt in August because of heavy rains. Graves registration employees removed jungle growths, leveled the ground, and made extensive repairs on the administration buildings, quonset huts, and roads in the immediate area. The arrival of graves registration workers from Manila No. 2 Cemetery, where disinterment and removal of remains to the Manila Mausoleum had been completed late in July, accelerated progress at Fort McKinley.⁵² In October, Col. James A. Murphey, CO, AGRS-PZ, raised the American flag over the unfinished military cemetery at the Fort, marking its formal opening, months before the first interments took place.⁵³

Shortly after the formal opening of Fort McKinley Cemetery, GHQ, Far East Command, predicted that 24,000 remains would eventually lie within its confines. This figure was based upon a projected 50-50 division of preference by the next of kin between repatriation and permanent overseas burial. Memorial Division officials promptly disagreed with this estimate and asserted that the figures were too high, both for the total number of interments and for the percentage of overseas burials. They expected a total of about 19,224 deceased at Fort McKinley.⁵⁴

Although the question had actually been settled for some time, General Order 76, Paragraph 4, 2 December 1948, officially designated Fort McKinley Cemetery as the permanent overseas burial ground for the Far East Command. It was generally expected that interments would be completed by the end of 1949, and that the cemetery would then be transferred to the ABMC. In this relatively small area would rest those for whom the next of kin wanted over-

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Hist, AGRS-PZ, 1 Apr-30 Sep 48, p. 24.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 35-36.

⁵³ Hist, AGRS-PZ, 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, p. 20; KCRC-AGRS-PZ, 314.7.

⁵⁴ (1) 1st Ind, 4 Nov 48, to Basic Ltr of 15 Oct 48, GHQ, FEC to TQMG. (2) 2nd Ind, 8 Dec 48, D/A, OQMG to CINCFE, 687, Far East.

seas burial, the war dead for whom no specific instructions had been received, and all recovered unknowns.

On 27 December 1948, a contract was let to Santiago Gaucayco for *permanent* construction work in the cemetery at an estimated cost of \$109,081.50. Clearing and grubbing began on 3 January 1949 and grading of burial plots five days later. At the same time the Manila Engineering District worked on a burial layout plan for early submission to Washington and graves registration employees moved supplies and work shops into an area not affected by the construction activities.⁵⁵ Since local officials hoped to begin interments during April or even earlier if burial layout plans received the necessary approval from the Department of the Army and the American Battle Monuments Commission, the clearing and grading of burial plots received special attention.

While permanent construction activities continued in the cemetery, AGRS-PHILCOM, on 1 March 1949, recommended to Memorial Division, OQMG, the adoption of the contract method for interment operations and the use of mechanized equipment, such as power shovels, in order to cut expenses and complete the project in only four months. This time estimate was based upon a maximum of 20,000 grave sites.⁵⁶ On receipt of approval by the Memorial Division of the contract method, bids were called for, but only one was submitted. Graves registration authorities found it unacceptable, for both the cost and completion date exceeded their original estimates. The Manila Engineering District thereupon proposed use of the purchase and hire method of interment in lieu of a private contract.⁵⁷ Late in April, Memorial Division, OQMG, authorized this procedure.⁵⁸

With the question of the interment method settled, matters moved more quickly. The first burials in Fort McKinley Cemetery occurred on 3 May, several weeks later than had been planned. Manila Engineering District workers accomplished the cemeterial excavations while graves registration employees carried out the actual interment of remains. Sixteen burials were performed on the first day of operations; thereafter the daily interment rate increased until by the end of May 1949 it had reached a total of

⁵⁵ Rpt, Hq AGRS-PHILCOM Zone to CO, AGRS-PHILCOM, 20 Jan 49.

⁵⁶ Memo, Col L. R. Talbot, Mem Div, OQMG to CofEngrs, 4 Mar 49, sub: U. S. Military Cemetery, Fort McKinley, P. I.

⁵⁷ In the purchase and hire method, the Army purchased their own supplies and equipment as needed, and hired local workers on the spot.

⁵⁸ Memo, Talbot to CofEngrs, 27 Apr 49, sub: U. S. Military Cemetery, Fort McKinley, P. I.

234—a figure still considerably short of the number estimated before the project began.

Several difficulties contributed to the retarded progress. The major problem arose from the great difficulty experienced in opening graves. The extreme hardness of the foundation in the cemetery rendered practically unusable the mechanical equipment which was on hand for excavation operations. When the workers discovered the true nature of the cemeterial foundation, they attempted various excavation methods in an effort to open as many as 400 graves daily.⁵⁹

Another factor which considerably reduced the number of graves opened on a given day involved such obstacles as trees that must be preserved for the sake of appearance, thus requiring intervals in the rows of graves; antiquated plumbing in both sewage and water lines; and unexploded ammunition, which required careful handling. In addition, the imminent seasonal rains threatened progress on the project, for heavy equipment could not operate when the cemetery area became a quagmire.⁶⁰

On the other hand, the graves registration workers who made the actual interments did not experience the difficulties encountered by MANED in excavating the graves. In fact, a burial crew could have performed 400 interments daily. In actuality, because of MANED's slower progress, graves registration workers spent much time waiting for graves to be opened.

By 24 June 1949, when construction work in the cemetery terminated, interments were about one-fourth completed, with 4,488 remains already interred, 10,928 still awaiting burial, and 2,220 cases yet to be processed.⁶¹ Despite the retarding factors just considered, graves registration workers had buried a total of 12,464 remains by the end of September 1949, with some 4,024 additional burials pending, and with 2,385 cases awaiting final disposition. Although some optimistic officials envisioned the completion of all interments by 15 November 1949, others believed more realistically that perhaps 2,000 cases still might be pending at that time, and that the residual phase of the operation might well continue until June 1950, the new date on which ABMC was scheduled to assume full responsibility for the cemetery.⁶²

As developments actually unfolded, the bulk of interments took

⁵⁹ Memo, G-3, to Deputy C/S, AGRS-PZ, 27 May 49, p. 11, sub: Rpt of GR and Disposition of Remains Activities, 293.9; KCRC-AGRS-PZ.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 20.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 12 Jul 49, Memo G-3 to C/S, AGRS-PZ.

⁶² Memo, GHQ, FEC, to Mem Div, OQMG, 12 Oct 49, 293.

place before the end of 1949, although the activity continued in a diminishing degree throughout 1950, as a result of identification of remains on hand and scattered recoveries by the few search units which still operated. After several delays, the transfer of Fort McKinley Military Cemetery became effective on 1 January 1951, pursuant to the provisions of Executive Order 10057, 14 May 1949, (as amended by Executive Order 10087, 3 December 1949), which shifted the administrative functions of World War II United States Military cemeteries located in foreign countries, together with certain related supplies, equipment, facilities, and records, from the Secretary of the Army to the American Battle Monuments Commission, "effective as to any particular cemetery or group of cemeteries upon the completion of the operational mission of the Department of the Army with respect to each cemetery or group of cemeteries." The Army reserved the right, nevertheless, to re-enter such burial grounds after 1 January 1951 in order to make exhumations or reinterments, should such action become necessary for the proper completion of the repatriation program.⁶³

Although a few small changes in the figure of total interments at Fort McKinley Cemetery may occur in the future, at this writing a total of 17,178 remains rest here. Formal dedication of the cemetery must await completion of all monument projects undertaken by the American Battle Monuments Commission.⁶⁴

Proposed Cemetery on Guam

As previously indicated, certain planners in Memorial Division, OQMG, originally envisioned the establishment of a national cemetery on Guam, which would serve as a final resting place for the deceased of the MARBO Zone as well as for several thousand remains from Okinawa and other Ryukyu Islands. The tentative site most prominently mentioned consisted of 225 acres, located directly north of the airstrip of Harmon Field, overlooking Tumon Bay.⁶⁵ MARBO officials estimated that this proposed burial ground could accommodate about 7,500 remains.

During the summer of 1947, OQMG included the necessary expenses for a Guam national cemetery in the budget then in preparation for presentation to Congress. OQMG officials felt, however,

⁶³ Ltr, TAG to CINCFE, 6 Nov 50, sub: Transfer of United States Military Cemetery; File 687, Fort McKinley.

⁶⁴ (1) Interv, Colonel J. B. Mitchell, ABMC, 4 Mar 55. (2) ABMC Pamphlet, published in 1953, gives a total of 17,177 remains in Fort McKinley Military Cemetery.

⁶⁵ Hist, AGRS-MARBO, 1947-48, I, pp. 48-49.

that the Island of Guam should donate the land required for this project.⁶⁶

Although the Tumon Bay site received more serious consideration than any other on Guam, opposition to it developed in some Navy circles. Late in October 1947, the Quartermaster, Far East Command, apprised the Chief, Memorial Division, OQMG, of this development. Since Guam was essentially a Naval base, the Far East Command believed that any choice for a permanent cemetery there should have Navy concurrence. Interested officials also considered the Mt. Barrigada site, but a careful survey of all possible locations, undertaken by the Corps of Engineers in conjunction with the Navy and Air Force, led to a positive recommendation for Tumon Bay, since it offered the highest ground and the lowest water table of any area under investigation.

Even though Congress failed to act during 1947 on the Guam proposal, authorities at MARBO Headquarters still confidently anticipated a national cemetery there. Even as late as January 1948, they proposed a plan for the "operation of the exhumation, shipment, identification, processing, final-type casketing, and repatriation to the United States, or the *reinterment in National Cemetery on Guam*, of remains of World War II dead now buried at Okinawa."⁶⁷

All plans for a national cemetery on Guam came to a rather abrupt termination late in February 1948 when word reached the MARBO Command that Congress had failed to include funds for the project. All available evidence would indicate that this action came as a distinct surprise to MARBO grave registration authorities. In any case, this development forced a hasty revision of all repatriation plans, as is related in the chapter pertaining to the return of the deceased from that area. Perhaps the underlying explanation for this turn of events was an unfavorable impression formed by a group of Congressmen who visited Guam during the early autumn of 1947.

Several reasons for the rejection of Guam were mentioned in House Report 1420, which dealt with the Appropriation Committee's action. A primary factor was the lack of space. The Report noted that "Guam is a small island, crowded with military and naval installations." The island's warm, enervating climate which averaged 5 to 15 degrees higher than that of Hawaii, constituted another drawback, since visitors from the United States would find

⁶⁶ Ltr, Capt Robert J. McBroom, Hq AGRS-MARBO to CG, MARBO, 3 Jul 47, sub: American Graves Registration Service Conference, Washington, D. C.

⁶⁷ Ltr, Col Edward L. Smith, Hq AGRS-MARBO Sector to CINCFE, 24 Jan 48, sub: Repatriation of Okinawa WW II Dead. [Author's Italics above.]

such conditions unattractive. Furthermore, Guam offered no modern accommodations for visiting next of kin, and its remote location, requiring a round trip of 7,600 miles beyond Hawaii, also militated against its selection. Finally, as a matter of economy, the Report asserted that, in contrast to the situation in Hawaii, no competitive bidding on development work was possible on Guam.⁶⁸

With Congressional approval on 25 June 1948 of HR 5224, as Public Law 782, the recommendations included in House Report 1420 became official. This action ended the efforts of OQMG officials to obtain a national cemetery on the distant island of Guam. Instead, as has been shown, only one national cemetery was established in the Pacific war theaters—the Punchbowl in Honolulu.

Conclusion

Only two permanent cemeteries in the former Pacific war theaters resulted from the many postwar plans for the establishment of overseas burial grounds on a world-wide basis.

Most available evidence indicates that the elimination of Guam as a cemeterial site has proven to be a wise move. The two permanent Pacific cemeteries enjoy the important advantage of accessibility to regular water and air transportation. Both offer modern, comfortable accommodations for visiting next of kin and other interested individuals or groups. Both Manila and Honolulu, particularly the latter, possess reasonably pleasant climatic conditions. On the other hand, Guam remains a distant, rather desolate outpost, offering little attraction either in climatic conditions or in modern, comfortable accommodations. It lacks almost completely any sentimental significance for most Americans.

By contrast, two more appropriate Pacific area locations, from a sentimental viewpoint, than the Hawaiian and Philippine Islands, would be difficult to imagine. In the former, the first American servicemen fell in World War II during the attack on Pearl Harbor. The latter area represented the ultimate goal of General MacArthur's long, tortuous return to the Philippines, which took so many American lives. The presence of a permanent United States military cemetery near Manila symbolizes the bonds of friendship between the American and Filipino peoples, as well as their mutual sacrifices, particularly during the long, bitter fighting against a common enemy on the Bataan Peninsula, where both nations wrote an imperishable chapter in the annals of free men.

⁶⁸ HR 1420, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess; House Rpts, 1403-1449.

CHAPTER XVI

REPATRIATION FROM PACIFIC AND ASIATIC MAINLAND AREAS

Plans and Schedules

Planning for the return of deceased servicemen from Pacific Ocean areas and the Asiatic mainland began long before the first shipment of remains from Honolulu on the *Honda Knot*. The War Department "Plan for Repatriation of the Dead of World II and Establishment of Permanent United States Military Cemeteries at Home and Abroad," described in detail in Chapter II of this study, devoted considerable attention to this part of the program. In addition, TM 10-281 placed particular emphasis upon repatriation, outlining the general policies to be followed, and stressing as the guiding principle the wishes of the next of kin as to final disposition of remains.¹

Graves registration officials in the Pacific Theater also gave much consideration to this problem. For example, Col. Lee M. Hester, Area Graves Registration Officer, AGRS-PATA, offered several recommendations for accomplishment of the repatriation mission.² In general, he proposed that entire cemeteries be included in polling the next of kin, that 100 percent exhumations be made when the OQMG issued disinterment directives for a cemetery or a group of cemeteries, and that all reinterments, whether in the United States or overseas, be made in the same type of casket. Colonel Hester believed that these procedures would permit Field Operating Sections to evacuate entire cemeteries during one visit, thus reducing labor, cost, and transportation to a minimum.³ He also listed five factors to be considered in determining the order in which cemeteries would be evacuated. These factors were: (1) average monthly rainfall; (2) distance between islands containing cemeteries; (3) anticipated date of arrival of caskets from the United States; (4) prevention of backtracking in water transportation, and (5) location of proposed permanent cemeteries.

To carry out repatriation activities in the Pacific Theater, Colonel Hester proposed the organization of two Task Forces, one in the

¹ TM 10-281, Aug. 47, p. 2.

² Ltr, Hester to CINC, AFPAC, no date, sub: Plan for Repatriation, 293.

³ *Ibid.*

MIDPAC Sector and the other in the WESPAC Sector. He suggested that one port unit should be organized as part of each Task Force to receive, store, and issue incoming caskets and supplies as well as to handle the shipment of remains to the United States. He believed that 8 Field Operating Sections would be required in both the MIDPAC Sector and the WESPAC Sector, while 3 would operate in the JAP-KOR Sector—2 in Japan and 1 in Korea.⁴ Colonel Hester, like other officers in the Pacific Theater, anticipated the arrival of sufficient caskets by December 1946 to permit the first repatriation shipment by early 1947.

Although Colonel Hester's suggestions were in general carried out, The Quartermaster General's tentative schedules for repatriation of World War II dead from Pacific and Asiatic mainland areas, issued late in November 1946, clearly indicated that Hester's estimate of the time for the first repatriation shipment was too optimistic. These plans incorporated all Pacific and Asiatic mainland operations into one integrated scheme.⁵ The schedules were based upon the belief that approximately 80 percent of the deceased would be repatriated and the other 20 percent buried in permanent overseas cemeteries, but it was fully realized that variations from these estimates would be necessary. Exhumations preparatory to the first homeward shipment would begin during June 1947 in the Hawaiian Islands, with 13½ Field Operating Sections employed in the operation. Elsewhere in the Pacific war areas, pre-repatriation exhumation activities were listed as follows:⁶

- (a) Australia August 1947, with five FOS and one reduced Port Unit.
- (b) Guadalcanal August 1947, with eight FOS and one reduced Port Unit.
- (c) Iwo Jima October 1947, with thirteen FOS.
- (d) China Zone October–December 1947, with three FOS and a reduced Port Unit from Pacific Area.
- (e) India-Burma Zone November–December 1947, with six FOS and a reduced Port Unit from the Solomon Islands.
- (f) JAP-KOR Sector November 1947–February 1948, with three FOS and one reduced Port Unit.

⁴ (1) *Ibid.* (2) For an explanation of the composition of a Field Operating Section, see Chapter XIII, p. 409.

⁵ Ltr, ASF, OQMG to CINC, USAFPAC and COs, AGRS-China Zone and AGRS-India-Burma Zone, 27 Nov 46; KCRC-AGRS-FEC, 293.

⁶ *Ibid.*

- (g) Okinawa November 1947–February 1948, with four FOS, reinforced in January 1948 by six FOS; one reduced Port Unit.
- (h) New Guinea February–April 1948, with six FOS and one Port Unit.
- (i) Mariana Islands (MARBO). April–June 1948, with seven FOS, reinforced in May by six FOS; one reduced Port Unit.
- (j) Palau Islands June 1948, with five FOS, and one reduced Port Unit.
- (k) Leyte, P. I. June–July 1948, with eight FOS, later augmented by five FOS from Palau Islands and one Port Unit.
- (l) Luzon, P. I. August–October 1948, with 13½ FOS.

OQMG officials anticipated the completion of all exhumations by the end of 1948. They realized, however, that these schedules were only tentative. Subsequent developments fully justified this view since concentration of bodies in a few Pacific cemeteries greatly reduced the number of repatriation points by the time actual homeward shipments were about to begin.⁷ Other factors which combined to alter the schedules set forth in November 1946 included unfavorable weather, delays in casket deliveries, and slow progress at certain points in concentrating deceased into centralized burial grounds. Need for extensive revisions of the earlier schedules became obvious by the spring of 1947. The Adjutant General, cognizant of this situation, then informed top-level commanders throughout the world that the first shipments of World War II dead to the United States would commence in the early autumn of that year.⁸

By July, the polling of some 52,000 next of kin had been almost completed. They favored return to the United States by about three to one.⁹ When exhumations began in Hawaii during August, the most important factor affecting repatriation schedules was the rate of receipt of replies from next of kin to letters of inquiry. Previously, casket production had exerted the heaviest weight in determining

⁷ For further details, see Chapter XIII, Concentration Operations in the Pacific and Asia.

⁸ Ltr, TAG to CINC, Far East, and CGs, AFPAC, *et al.*, 6 Mar 47, sub: Repatriation Program; KCRC-FEC. 293.8.

⁹ Memo, Capt Robert J. McBroom, AGRS-MARBO, to CG, MARBO, 3 Jul 47; KCRC-AGRS-MARBO, 337.

schedules. As mentioned earlier, Public Law 368, 5 August 1947, also changed repatriation plans, since it reversed the original policy of returning unknown dead to the United States.¹⁰

In addition to disposition according to options available to the next of kin and permanent overseas interment of unknowns, two further dispositions were planned, in appropriate cases, at the time of disinterments, as follows:¹¹

(a) "Reinterment in permanent sites, in those cases in which next of kin, although successfully contacted, fail to indicate their wishes within a reasonable time. These cases will be covered by individual disinterment directives, and although nominally permanent reburials, obviously a certain number eventually will be re-exhumed for other disposition if the next of kin concerned so desire, and make known their desires prior to the expiration of the period, prescribed by Public Law 383, within which application for final disposition must be made.

(b) "Above ground storage, for limited periods, in those cases wherein next of kin have not yet successfully been contacted, in those cases involving legal study, etc. These cases will be covered by a blanket directive included in the letter of transmittal covering the disinterment directives."

At the time of initial Hawaiian exhumation—11 August 1947—the deceased in the Pacific Zone (AGRS-PAZ) had been moved into three major concentration points—the Hawaiian Islands, Guadalcanal, and Australia. American dead in the Far East Zone (AGRS-FEZ) also rested or were destined to rest in three major points—the Manila Mausoleum, which eventually contained all recovered remains in the PHILRYCOM Sector, except Okinawa; the island of Saipan, where those who died in the MARBO Sector lay, with the dead on Okinawa scheduled for later transfer there; and the Mausoleum at Yokohama, which finally housed those who perished in the JAP-KOR Sector of the Far East Zone. On the Asiatic mainland, all located deceased from the China Zone had been moved to Hawaii; in the India-Burma Zone, some 3,500 remains later rested in the Barrackpore Mausoleum, near Calcutta.¹²

Hawaiian Operations

Exhumation Problems and Activities

Final preparations for the first repatriations—those from Hawaii—commenced several months before the actual movement of bodies to

¹⁰ Ltr, Col Everett Busch, Mem Div, OQMG to CINC, FEC, 12 Aug 47, sub: Schedules of Operations for the Return of World War II Dead.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² See Chapter XIII, Concentration Operations in the Pacific and Asia.

the United States. Since the major purpose of this shipment of some 3,200 remains was to uphold the faith of the next of kin in the program, great care accompanied all planning for the operation.

In the spring of 1947, the 9105th Technical Service Unit (TSU) was established to carry out disinterments in Hawaii and other areas in the Pacific Zone (AGRS-PAZ). This unit formerly had been assigned to the AGRS-China Zone as the 9103d TSU, but shortly after its transfer to Hawaii, the new numerical designation went into effect. The unit consisted of eight hastily organized Field Operating Sections (FOS), which were dispatched in whole or in part to conduct assigned exhumations.¹³

Transportation for the 9105th TSU demanded much attention, for motor, water, and air movements would all be involved in the unit's operations. The AGRS-PAZ Planning Board in July directed that overland movements of the unit in Oahu be made by a motor pool to be formed and operated by Group Headquarters from Schofield Barracks. For exhumations on the outlying Hawaiian Islands, the unit would use its own organic vehicles, which together with its equipment and supplies, were to be transported by water. The workers would be brought to the outlying islands by air.¹⁴

Many discouraging obstacles arose before the first repatriation exhumations started, largely because of the necessity of hurriedly organizing eight Field Operating Sections to disinter and casket 3,200 remains and place them aboard the repatriation ship within the short span of 8 or 9 weeks. In retrospect, the hasty inauguration of exhumations indeed appears the greatest flaw in these initial repatriation operations.

Perhaps the most acute problem was a persistent shortage of both officers and enlisted men. At the end of July, a group of 29 officers finally arrived and was assigned to the 9105th TSU. From that time to November, three additional contingents, averaging eight officers each, reached Hawaii. After their arrival, many officers expressed keen dissatisfaction with their assignment. They had assumed that they would be stationed permanently in Hawaii and in many cases had even made arrangements to have their families join them. The realization that their tasks would later take them to remote Pacific islands came as a severe blow. Some officers applied for either transfer or discharge.¹⁵

Coupled with the difficulty of obtaining and holding trained graves registration officers were harassing problems stemming from

¹³ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, 1946-49, I, pp. 96-97.

¹⁴ Opnl Dir No. 1, Annex 8, Hq AGRS-PAZ, 9 Sep 46; KCRC-AGRS-PAZ, 008.

¹⁵ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, p. 100.

efforts to recruit qualified civilian workers. Although the War Department had given assurances that all civilians, except laborers, would be obtained on the mainland, there were few applicants for positions and by July 1947, it had become apparent that the great majority of civilians of all kinds would have to be hired locally. Only embalmers and a few clerks arrived from the mainland, and they did not appear until exhumations were about to begin. The sudden recognition of the necessity for bringing the 9105th TSU quickly to full strength forced officials at AGRS-PAZ Headquarters to employ people wherever and whenever possible.

The shortage of time available for this task precluded thorough investigation of applicants, and many recruits proved ill qualified. Although only a third of the necessary civilians had been hired, the training program started as planned on 27 July. Orientation consisted mostly of lectures. On the last day, 9 August, ten remains were exhumed from Schofield Barracks Cemetery under the direction of experienced workers as a demonstration of operational techniques.¹⁶ Pertinent burial information was entered on a form entitled "Exhumation Record." A convoy list was next prepared, and the caskets were then removed to the Military Mausoleum at Schofield Barracks for above-ground storage pending final casketing. At the Mausoleum, the Exhumation Record was used as a delivery receipt and then filed at Headquarters, 9105th TSU, as a guide to completing necessary action during final processing.¹⁷

Meanwhile, on 1 August 1947, the 9105th TSU had established Headquarters at Schofield Barracks. Both officers and civilians were billeted in the Headquarters building in the belief that the two groups would become better adjusted to each other if they were associated more closely.

On 11 August, immediately after the training period, all Field Operating Sections began exhumations in Schofield Barracks Cemetery. Only those remains for which disinterment directives had been received were removed at once, for the eight Sections had to begin work shortly at Halawa and other smaller Hawaiian cemeteries, where all bodies were to be exhumed at one time to avoid frequent trips from the distant graves registration headquarters.¹⁸

While work at Schofield Barracks halted temporarily, the FOS

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, App. E, Vol. 2, Incl. 33, Dir, Hq 9105th TSU to All Military and Civilian Personnel Concerned, 7 Aug 47, sub: Operations Directive.

¹⁸ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 112-13.

units began operations at the other Hawaiian cemeteries in accordance with the following schedule:¹⁹

Makaweli, Kauai	19-22 August 1947
* Mokapu, Oahu	26-27 August 1947
Homelani, Hawaii	27 August-2 September 1947
* Nuuanu, Oahu	28 August-13 September 1947
* Halawa, Oahu	2-20 September 1947
Makawao, Maui	5-10 September 1947
* Naval Cemetery	

Unfortunately, few plans for operations had been formulated until disinterments were actually underway. Little detailed consideration had been given to local conditions, unusual problems, or modifications of the procedures outlined in TM 10-281, which was intended to serve as a guide.²⁰

From the beginning, Hawaiian exhumation operations were beset by difficult labor problems. After working only a few days, many civilians often failed to report for work. During August and September, the daily turnover reached about 10 percent. New replacements were hired as promptly as possible, but no time was available to train them properly. These drawbacks imposed serious handicaps on everyone engaged in exhumations from worker to Chief of the Zone.

Another unfortunate development hindered progress. A steel strike in the United States during the summer halted casket production for several weeks and rendered unavailable some 58,000 caskets needed in Pacific areas. The Quartermaster General had attempted to postpone the start of exhumation operations until late in the year, but the Secretary of War directed that plans for the first repatriation shipment be carried out in the fall as scheduled in order to maintain public confidence in the program.²¹

Several operational problems arose, which proved to be more or less common throughout the Hawaiian Islands. In the first place, supply shortages constantly hindered progress. Since each cemetery presented different physical conditions, officials could not estimate accurately in advance the needs for hardening compound (a dry powder usually with a plaster of paris base, used to prevent odors and to dry and harden any remaining tissue), for cavity fluid, used in cavities of the body, such as the skull and stomach, to harden

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

²⁰ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 101. (2) TM 10-281.

²¹ (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I. 99. (2) Conference Notes, 30 Jun 47, sub: Rpt of OQMG Conference, 9 Jun 47, from Deputy Chief, AGRS-PAZ to AGRS-PAZ Officers, App. E, Vol. 1, Incl. 8.

and preserve tissues, and for disinfectants. They soon discovered, however, that remains in areas which had coral ground formations and warm climates decomposed much more rapidly than elsewhere and required larger quantities of hardening compound and little cavity fluid.²² Secondly, the disposal of rubbish which accumulated rapidly during operations, constituted a problem, for the materials often were not readily burnable. Cases involving special treatment also impeded progress by the extra work they demanded. Such cases included cremations, and changes in and suspensions and cancellations of disinterment directives. Clerical errors, made by untrained and inexperienced workers, intensified loading difficulties since all remains and all disinterment directives must be accounted for. Frequent rains also delayed exhumation activities. Finally, informal inspections of operations by officers unfamiliar with graves registration sometimes retarded progress.²³

Processing Center and Cemeteries

One of the most successful graves registration operations in Hawaii took place at the Processing Center, located in Mausoleum No. 3, where remains were prepared for final casketing and where the casketing itself was mostly carried out. The Deputy Chief, AGRS-PAZ, facing a tight deadline for completion of disinterments before the repatriation vessel departed and realizing that graveside casketing, prescribed in TM 10-281, would be too slow, especially in view of the shortage of qualified technicians which became so serious as to necessitate utilization of two embalmers from the Central Identification Laboratory, determined to replace this method with an assembly-line system, a practice which later became prevalent in all Pacific areas. As a consequence, remains were transported to the Processing Center where 8 receiving lines had been established, each with 2 embalmers, a clerk, sometimes an assistant clerk, and 5 to 8 laborers. Early in the operations, an inspection officer supervised each line, but later the demands for personnel elsewhere in the Pacific reduced this surveillance to one officer for every two lines. The Center processed about 200 remains daily at the peak of its activities.²⁴

The results achieved by this "assembly line" method demonstrated conclusively its superiority over graveside casketing, especially in view of the short time available. Zone officials were so pleased with Processing Center operations that they determined to use this tech-

²² (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 133-34. (2) Interv, Carl R. Allbee, Registration Br, Mem Div, OQMG, 20 Mar 56.

²³ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, p. 134.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, II, p. 189.

nique during subsequent operations in Australia and Guadalcanal.²⁵

In turning to consideration of operations and problems in specific Hawaiian cemeteries, it is found that Schofield Barracks Cemetery presented several features which distinguished it from other Hawaiian burial places. In the first place, during concentration activities, all remains returned to Oahu from Pacific Zone areas (except those stored in mausoleums) were reinterred here. In this process, some of the deceased became separated from the markers which identified them, causing confusion and difficulty in matching markers with the proper remains. Secondly, since Schofield Barracks had been originally a post cemetery and burials had been made before 3 September 1939 and after 30 June 1946 (the period covered by Public Law 383), many graves contained persons ineligible for repatriation. The presence of non-World War II dead forced exhumation units to work around them and later to concentrate them. In the third place, the markers for those servicemen interred just after the attack on Pearl Harbor did not clearly indicate the location of the graves. Furthermore, an absence of identification media with the remains rendered positive identification impossible unless the entire row of graves was disinterred or unless the remains were sent to the identification laboratory for examination. A fourth difficulty arose from the burial of some soldiers with parts of other remains, a complication that posed vexatious identification problems. Such errors no doubt sprang from lack of anatomical knowledge on the part of those who had earlier concentrated the bodies. Cases of this sort were referred to the identification laboratory, causing a delay in the final processing of remains. Finally, regarding activities extending over a period of years had created some very deep burials. In a few unfortunate cases, even the markers had been moved from their original positions for the sake of better alignment.²⁶

By 22 September, when operations were resumed in this cemetery, a total of 975 remains had already been exhumed, with 1,442 more scheduled for disinterment before 10 October 1947, the deadline for ending this project. One week later, on 17 October, the 9105th TSU was to depart for Guadalcanal and Australia.²⁷

With few exceptions, the remains exhumed in the last phase of work at Schofield Barracks lacked disinterment directives. Furthermore, no roster nor other records were available and the plot

²⁵ Ltr, Lt Col Maurice Matisoff, Hq AGRS-PAZ to Col James A. Murphey, CO, AGRS-FEZ, 13 Oct 47, Hist, AGRS-PAZ, App. E, Vol. 2, Incl. 60, Pt. 5.

²⁶ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 131-33.

²⁷ Ltr Hq AGRS-PAZ, to CG, 9105th TSU, 25 Sep 47, App. E, Vol. 3, Incl. 59.

map showed only the plot number, row, and grave number of the interred person. Many grave markers carried only a small metal tag which usually had corroded or rusted to the point of illegibility. Had an adequate roster been prepared or had the plot map included the name, rank, and serial number of the deceased, the wide margin for error might well have been avoided. It must be conceded, however, that the pressing time element in this instance probably precluded detailed preparations for later exhumation and identification. On 9 October 1947, disinterments ended in Schofield Barracks Cemetery, and all deceased from this burial ground rested in Mausoleum No. 3.²⁸

A pre-exhumation inspection of Makaweli Cemetery, located on the island of Kauai, revealed it to be in excellent condition, with grass cut and watered and flowers planted at appropriate spots.²⁹ In contrast to these pleasant conditions, the living quarters and mess hall assigned to FOS No. 1 were in disrepair when the men arrived by air transport on 18 August. The buildings were old, malodorous, and in extremely poor condition. The refrigerator did not function and could not be repaired, and all perishables had to be brought daily from the supply ship—a distance of four miles.³⁰ These conditions demonstrated clearly the importance of proper advance preparations. Difficulties encountered in unloading vehicles and equipment further emphasized this point. Five hours were lost in contacting proper authorities for permission to unload the barge.³¹ At the cemetery, advance liaison also had been slipshod. The manager of the plantation on which the cemetery was located had not even been notified of the approaching operations nor had any provision been made for military use of private roads leading into the area. Happily, the plantation manager co-operated admirably.

Disinterment operations at Makaweli Cemetery began on 19 August, following a brief religious ceremony. The temporary caskets were badly deteriorated. In fact, the men usually had to remove the top, sides, and ends, lift the remains from the bottom of the casket, and process them at the graveside. The deceased were fairly well preserved, for most of them had been embalmed. During the first day, 26 remains were disinterred and stored at the cemetery. On the second day, the unit exhumed 48 remains, thereby

²⁸ Opns Rpt, FOS No. 2, to CO, 9105th TSU, 14 Oct 47, App. E, Vol. 3, Incl. 60.

²⁹ Rpt, Capt Madison E. Cook, AGRS-PAZ, to Deputy Chief, AGRS, APO 958, 7 Aug 47, sub: Report of Cemetery Inspection on Kauai. *Ibid.*, App. E, Vol. 3, Incl. 38.

³⁰ (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 117-18. (2) *Ibid.*, App. E, Vol. 3, Incl. 39. (3) Rpt, FOS No. 1, to CO, 9105th TSU, APO 957, 28 Aug 47, sub: Report of Exhumations Operations.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

completing its activities in Makaweli Cemetery. After processing, the remains were placed in caskets, transferred to trucks, and transported to shipside, where loading began on 21 August with the help of a crane provided by the port. At the same time, another crew policed the cemetery grounds, removing and burning all signs and debris.³²

Several recommendations accompanied the completion of this project. Among them were the suggestions that "more detailed arrangements be made for living and messing facilities" and that "operating headquarters be located as near as possible to cemetery site."³³ Other suggestions were offered regarding supply deficiencies. Two pounds of hardening compound, instead of one, were recommended for each deceased. It was also proposed that one pair of rubber gloves be issued after the handling of each five remains. Finally, about one pound of four penny shingle nails was needed for every 30 temporary caskets. Lastly, each FOS unit required at least four embalmers.³⁴

Before exhumations began at Homelani Cemetery, Hilo, Hawaii, it was twice inspected. Capt. M. E. Cook, after visiting it late in June, reported that the cemetery was in excellent condition.³⁵ During August, he again inspected the area and reported a general lack of billeting and messing facilities. He added that AGRS must furnish all supplies, including gasoline and oil.³⁶

FOS No. 1 arrived at Hilo by air on 25 August 1947. After its equipment and supplies had been unloaded from the ship and transported to the cemetery, exhumations began on the morning of 27 August. Although very rainy weather prevailed, the men worked in suitable apparel, for Hilo's frequent precipitation was well known. Excavations proceeded easily and rapidly, but the damp and deteriorated condition of the caskets slowed the actual removal of remains.³⁷ Upon completion of the Homelani exhumations on 2 September, the entire group of 144 remains were moved in one convoy under police escort from the cemetery to shipside. FOS per-

³² (1) *Ibid.*, p. 119. (2) Rpt. Capt Joseph Dickman, Hq AGRS-PAZ to Deputy Chief, AGRS-PAZ, 21 Aug 47, sub: Report of Travel, Kauai, T. H., App. E, Vol. 3, Incl. 40.

³³ Memo, Maj Colin C. Campbell, Hq AGRS-PAZ, to Deputy Chief, AGRS-PAZ, 22 Aug 47, sub: Inspection of FOS No. 1 Exhumation Operations at Kauai, T. H., App. E, Vol. 3, Incl. 41.

³⁴ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, p. 121.

³⁵ Rpt, Capt Cook to Chief, AGRS-PAZ, 27 Jun 47, sub: Activity Report of Trip to Hilo, App. E, Vol. 3, Incl. 42.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 11 Aug. 47.

³⁷ Rpt, Maj Colin C. Campbell, Hq AGRS-PAZ, to Deputy Chief, AGRS-PAZ, 29 Aug 47, sub: Operation of FOS No. 1 at Homelani Cemetery, Hilo, Hawaii, App. E, Vol. 3, Incl. 43.

sonnel handled the loading of remains on the barge, which transported them to Honolulu, where they were removed to Schofield Barracks for above-ground storage.

As a result of the Homelani operations, several recommendations were offered, somewhat similar to those suggested after the Makaweli exhumations. The first suggestion called for a full complement of 64 laborers to accompany any FOS unit operating independently away from headquarters. The second recommendation pointed out the need for more complete advance arrangements as to ship unloading, proper quarters, messes, supply rooms, gasoline storage, medical service, and police contacts. The third suggestion stressed necessity for a full complement of officers in each FOS unit. Finally, more liberal time allowances were requested to cover such matters as adverse weather, loading and unloading activities, levelling and cleaning up operations, and holidays.³⁸

The disinterment and removal of some 133 deceased from Makawao Cemetery, Maui, presented no special problems not already encountered elsewhere in the Hawaiian Islands. The exhumations began on 5 September and terminated on 10 September. FOS No. 1 performed the necessary tasks. The deceased were taken by barge to Oahu for above-ground storage.

At a conference held on 25 August between AGRS officers, the Vice Admiral of the Navy, and the District Medical Officer of the 14th Naval District at Pearl Harbor, the American Graves Registration Service received permission to enter the three Naval cemeteries in the Hawaiian Islands—Mokapu, Nuuanu, and Halawa. AGRS agreed to leave these sites in a condition satisfactory to Naval authorities.³⁹

Mokapu Cemetery, Kaneohe Naval Air Station, Oahu, was the first of the three Naval cemeteries to be exhumed. FOS No. 2 completed the disinterment of the 18 remains there in only 2 days—26-27 August. In addition to the general conditions encountered in all cemeteries, Mokapu had several unusual characteristics. Established during the feverish days immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor, it was located on a sandy point within the Kaneohe Naval Air Station. Frequent cave-ins of the sandy soil hampered operations, often forcing the workers to shore the sides of the excavation as a preventive measure. In many cases, shifting sand had moved the remains from their original positions. Sometimes they had sunk to a depth of 7 to 10 feet. The difficulty of

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, p. 126. (2) Rpt, Lt Col Joseph E. Conley, Chief, P&O Div., AGRS-PAZ, to Deputy Chief, AGRS-PAZ, 25 Aug 47, App. E, Vol. 3, Incl. 49.

exhumation was further increased by the almost complete disintegration of caskets used in the initial interment. Finally, the distance of the cemetery from both the Processing Center and the billeting area caused faulty communications and a loss of working time.⁴⁰ When operations ended on the second day, FOS No. 2 transported the deceased to Mausoleum No. 3 at Schofield Barracks.

Disinterments in relatively large Nuuanu Naval Cemetery, also on Oahu, began on 28 August and continued through 10 September. FOS No. 2 removed 339 deceased.⁴¹ Nuuanu Naval Cemetery presented several special problems. It had been a civilian cemetery in which the Navy had maintained a plot for several years. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, it was suddenly enlarged to accommodate several hundred additional graves. That part of the cemetery used for these new burials had become filled with boulders, trash, and debris, apparently through neglect. Even the beautification process caused problems, since many markers had been moved from the exact location of remains. Another difficulty arose from the flimsy nature of the temporary caskets, which were often crushed by the weight of the soil and boulders. As much of this cemetery contained civilians, the exclusion of curiosity seekers and other civilians became almost impossible. Finally, an inadequate road net created severe traffic congestion.⁴²

Orders for the exhumation of the 1,516 remains in Halawa Naval Cemetery, Oahu, preceded actual disinterment operations by several days.⁴³ On 2 September, half of FOS No. 3 began exhumation activities. The great depth of burials in this cemetery necessitated the use of heavy earth-moving equipment and a larger force of workers than was originally available. As elsewhere, peculiar problems and difficulties arose. The cemetery lay in a valley, which afforded an excellent view from a busy thoroughfare, and AGRS officials, in consequence, could not adequately screen their activities from a curious public. They had indeed to request aid from military and civilian police to prevent loitering by outsiders and the use of cameras.

Many of the deceased in Halawa had been embalmed, causing an excessive retention of fluids and making their handling difficult as well as unpleasant. Disposal of excessive debris constituted another problem. Original plans called for its removal to the Chemical

⁴⁰ (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 126-27. (2) Corresp re Completion of Opns of Mokapu Cemetery, 20 Oct 47; Request for Retention of Cemetery, 5 Aug 47; Inspection Rpt, 16 Oct 47, App. E, Vol. 3, Incl. 51.

⁴¹ Corresp re Nuuanu Cemetery, 19 Sep 47, 20 Oct 47, App. E, Vol. 3, Incl. 53.

⁴² Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 128-29.

⁴³ Opnl Dir, Lt Col Maurice Matisoff, Deputy Chief, AGRS-PAZ, to CO, 9105th TSU, 27 Aug 47, App. E, Vol. 3, Incl. 55.

Warfare dump at Schofield Barracks—a distance of 20 miles. This plan proved to be impractical because of the time required to make the long haul, and another disposal site was located near the cemetery. Here burnable material was consumed by flames and the residue crushed by a bulldozer. The remaining material went to the Chemical Warfare dump. Other difficulties included equipment breakdowns, discovery of several remains buried together in one casket, and traffic bottlenecks.⁴⁴ Exhumations at Halawa ended on 20 September.

Mission of the Honda Knot

It must be constantly borne in mind that the exhumations and removal of remains from the Hawaiian cemeteries to above-ground storage at Schofield Barracks formed an essential part of preparations for the first repatriation shipment of Pacific war dead. Since the departure of this shipment became a matter of national significance and interest, planning for ceremonies and other details at the time of departure began as early as June 1947 at an AGRS Conference in Washington. The conferees decided upon two initial shipments of remains to the United States, the first from the Pacific, where the first deaths occurred in World War II, followed almost at once by a return of deceased from Europe.⁴⁵

The Commanding General, AGFPAC, submitted to the conference his plans for the first homeward journey of Pacific remains. He recommended: the use of the *Honda Knot*, a 4,000-ton vessel, in lieu of a reconverted Liberty Ship, since none of the latter would be available at that time and there would not in any event be enough remains ready to fill a Liberty Ship; loading of some 3,250 deceased aboard the *Honda Knot*; a plane escort while the *Honda Knot* was still in the port area at Honolulu and a Naval escort during the remainder of the journey; formal invitations to high Military, Naval, and Air Force officials for the ceremony preceding departure from Honolulu; and, reception of the *Honda Knot* at San Francisco by an officer of Cabinet rank or higher.⁴⁶ In July, upon the recommendation of Col. O. W. Humphries, Hq, AGRS-PAZ, priority in loading was granted to Pearl Harbor deceased, and the departure date from Honolulu was set as 4 October 1947.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 129-31. (2) *Ibid.*, App. E, Vol. 3, Incl. 57, Correspondence Halawa Cemetery.

⁴⁵ (1) *Ibid.*, II, pp. 229-30. (2) Conference Notes, App. E, Vol. 1, Incl. 8.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, App. H, Incl. 5.

⁴⁷ Memo, Col O. W. Humphries to Lt Col Maurice Matisoff, Deputy Chief, AGRS-PAZ, 21 Jul 47, sub: Information Relative to Token Shipment, App. H, Incl. 7.

This date was subsequently changed to 1 October to insure the arrival of the *Honda Knot* in San Francisco on 10 October, and finally to 30 September.⁴⁸

By mutual agreement between AGRS-PAZ and the 55th Medium Port, the former organization furnished checkers and typists to prepare the Passenger Lists, Deceased (P. L. D.) in an effort to avoid errors and delay. These lists were completed on 29 September, the day before the vessel sailed. They contained the names of all remains covered by disinterment directives for the scheduled shipment and were used in checking remains during loading operations.⁴⁹

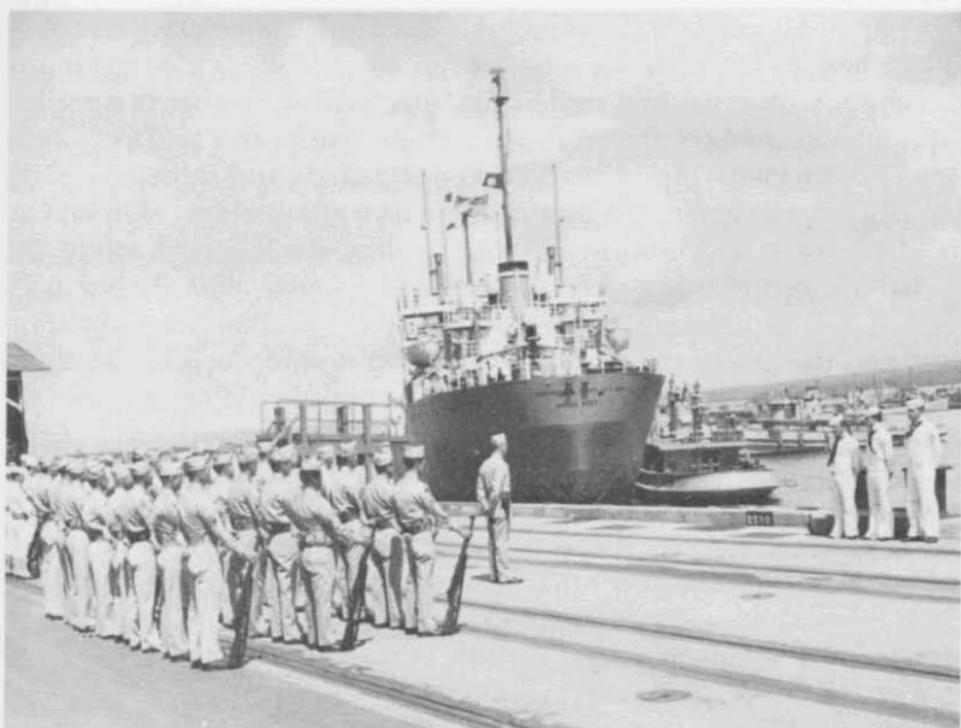


FIGURE 29. *Honor Guards from various services stand at parade rest as USAT "HONDA KNOT" leaves dock at Pearl Harbor, 30 September 1947.*

The Convoy List consisted of the names of those at the Mausoleum, where it was prepared, and served as a check for remains as they were loaded aboard trucks going to the docks. After all deceased had reached the port, the Convoy List was checked against the tentative P. L. D. Port officials subsequently drew up a final,

⁴⁸ Rads, HAGFPAC to C/S U. S. Army, 25 Sep 47; HAGFPAC to CG, Sixth Army, 26 Sep 47; HAGFPAC to CINC, Pearl Harbor, 27 Sep 47, App. H, Incl. 6.

⁴⁹ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, p. 227.

firm P. L. D. based on remains actually put on board the *Honda Knot*. The entire operation, from removal of remains at the Mausoleum to final checking of the Passenger Lists, Deceased, gave the impression of a carefully planned and well executed operation.⁵⁰

Before remains were loaded onto the *Honda Knot*, a thorough inspection of the vessel took place. The superstructure and decks had been freshly painted, and the ship presented a clean, pleasing appearance. The equipment used in conveying remains from mausoleum to shipside also had received a fresh coat of paint. During the loading operation, the Navy flew the flags of its vessels in the harbor at half mast.⁵¹

Only 3 days (25-27 September) were needed to convoy and stow all caskets. The convoys were run in 10 serials, each consisting of 2 tractors with 2 flat bed trailers and 1 tractor with 1 flat bed trailer. Mausoleum workers placed the caskets on trucks and port personnel escorted them to shipside. The honor guards and military police, usually helped by civilian police, acted as traffic escorts. On arrival of the caskets to shipside, military police stood guard while the remains were removed from trucks and placed aboard ship with materials-handling equipment. Owing to excellent co-ordination between the graves registration organization and the 55th Medium Port, the *Honda Knot* was rapidly loaded.⁵² After all caskets were placed on the ship, the escorts also went aboard.

The whole operation was capped by the sailing of the *Honda Knot* on 30 September 1947, bearing 3,027 Pacific war dead.⁵³ Its departure marked the first public evidence of the mission for which AGRS-PAZ and other graves registration commands had been established. These honored dead became the first to return to the land for which they had laid down their lives.⁵⁴

Upon arrival at San Francisco, the master of the *Honda Knot* commended the "splendid treatment accorded him and his crew in Honolulu" and the "high efficiency with which this operation was conducted." The stowage of the shipping cases was excellent, and they suffered no damage except for slight abrasions caused by friction during the homeward voyage.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ (1) *Ibid.* (2) App. H, Incl. 11.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, pp. 227-28, 233.

⁵³ This figure fell somewhat short of the 3,250 deceased planned for the initial shipment and probably resulted from the failure of sufficient disinterment directives to arrive on time.

⁵⁴ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, p. 229.

⁵⁵ Ltr, Brig Gen H. H. McKay, SFPE, to CO, 55th Medium Port, 16 Oct 47, App. H, Incl. 12.

Repatriation From Australia and Guadalcanal

Preliminary Preparations; Departure of 9105th TSU

Hawaiian experience amply demonstrated the need for a clear understanding of conditions peculiar to each cemeterial area and for advance arrangements for disinterments before they began.⁵⁶ Every effort, accordingly, was made to comply with these concepts prior to the arrival of graves registration personnel in Guadalcanal and Australia. Moreover, since repatriation activities in these areas would be carried out on foreign soil, it was also necessary to inform the governments concerned and obtain their permission to proceed with the work.⁵⁷

In October, then, a detail of four officers departed for Guadalcanal and Australia to prepare for the arrival of the 9105th Technical Service Unit. Two of these officers left Honolulu on 17 October 1947 and arrived at Guadalcanal three days later. Shortly thereafter they were joined by the other pair, who had been temporarily attached to the Search and Recovery Expedition currently combing the Guadalcanal area. The team then separated, with two men remaining on Guadalcanal and the other two going on to Australia.

The two officers on Guadalcanal immediately began preparations for the arrival of the 9105th TSU. They arranged for officer and civilian housing, for headquarters, unit supply, and motor pool equipment, and for shipment of fresh meat and other perishables by air from Australia. An agreement was also entered into with the British Resident Commissioner for the diversion of local laborers from cemeterial maintenance to final preparations for repatriation. Their work was to include reconditioning of the Processing Center and other operational buildings and provision of storage facilities for caskets.⁵⁸

Operations Directive No. 1, AGRS-PAZ, called for exhumations of all remains in Australia and Guadalcanal. The number of deceased involved in these operations were:⁵⁹

1. Guadalcanal.....	3,346
2. Australia:	
(a) Ipswich (Brisbane).....	1,406
(b) Rookwood (Sydney).....	465
Grand total.....	5,217

⁵⁶ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 136-37.

⁵⁷ TM 10-281, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 137-38. (2) Ltr, AGRS-PAZ to AGRS Guadalcanal Detachment, 24 Oct 47, sub: Plans and Preparations for Arrival and Operations of 9105th TSU at Guadalcanal, App. E, Vol. 4, Incl. 68.

⁵⁹ Opnl Dir No. 1, Phase III, 9 Sep 47; KCRC-AGRS-PAZ, 008.

In accordance with HAGFPAC Movement Order No. 2, 24 October 1947, the 9105th TSU sailed from Oahu on 31 October aboard the USAT *Goucher Victory*. Troop strength should have consisted of 33 officers, 2 enlisted men, and about 500 civilians. The large number of officers and civilians reflected the tremendous effect of wholesale demobilization and return to the United States of enlisted men. Because of widespread dissatisfaction among experienced officers at the prospect of leaving Oahu, many of them requested relief from active duty. To bring strength up to par, the War Department sent 17 officers, including the Commanding Officer, to Oahu by air only a few days before the departure of the 9105th TSU.⁶⁰

Adding to the troubles of the 9105th TSU was the failure of about 39 civilian employees to assemble at designated points before departure. To make matters worse, many of those who did report were in an intoxicated condition, slovenly-clothed, dirty, and unshaven. Some of them even carried dangerous weapons. Ill feeling and disputes of all sorts, rampant in this wretched group of workers and inexperienced graves registration officers, eventually culminated in an incident on Guadalcanal approaching the proportions of a riot of civilians against military jurisdiction.⁶¹

Guadalcanal Exhumations

After an uneventful voyage, the *Goucher Victory* arrived at Guadalcanal on 9 November and disembarked four FOS teams, two-thirds of a mobile port company, and equipment for exhumation operations. The remaining three FOS teams and one-third of the mobile port company proceeded to Australia. Off-loading, preparation of supplies and equipment for early use, and the organization of operational facilities occupied the first week of these units on Guadalcanal. A formidable task lay ahead of them. Over 3,000 remains were to be disinterred, processed, and casketed within 62 days, during the worst of the rainy season.⁶²

LST 914 arrived from Finschhafen on 11 November, bringing 165 Filipino laborers to augment AGRS forces. Later in the month, an additional contingent of 71 Filipinos reached Guadalcanal. This group, although under the control of PHILRYCOM, received its wages from the 9105th TSU.⁶³

The USAT *Walter W. Schwenk*, carrying final-type caskets and operational supplies, arrived on 13 November and anchored in the

⁶⁰ (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 139-40. (2) See fn. 58 (2).

⁶¹ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, p. 140.

⁶² (1) *Ibid.*, p. 141. (2) Memo, AGRS-PAZ for Chief, AGRS-PAZ, 19 Nov 47, sub: Rpt of Arrival of the 9105th TSU at Guadalcanal, App. E, Vol. 4, Incl. 72.

⁶³ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, p. 142.

bay until the *Goucher Victory* had completed the unloading of equipment and pulled away from the pier on its way to Australia. Exhumations in the Army, Navy, and Marine Cemetery began on 27 November, and by working six days each week, the men disinterred and removed all remains to the Processing Center by 20 December. Two large huts, with a passageway separating them, housed the Center. Each hut contained 3 processing lines, with 2 embalmers in each line, and 1 officer in charge. The number of remains handled daily about equalled the exhumation rate. Since the Center became intensely hot during daylight hours under a tropical sun, all work soon took place at night between 11 P. M. and 7 A. M. The deceased, casketed during the night, were held in the Center and transferred during the day to the custody of the port unit.⁶⁴

The remains were stored in three separate lots:

1. Those in temporary containers, destined for the Identification Laboratory at Schofield Barracks, were delivered directly from the cemetery to the port unit and stored in quonset huts. Great care was exercised to make certain that all clothing, equipment, personal effects, and other items of possible identification were placed with the remains in the temporary containers.

2. Those placed in final-type caskets destined for the Hawaiian Distribution Center were assigned to another area to await shipment.

3. Those in final-type caskets destined for the mainland were segregated according to Distribution Center in the United States and placed in a third area.

This system was used to facilitate unloading of the ship upon arrival at Honolulu. The port unit maintained a complete locator card system for each of the three lots. As a further precaution against error, an additional inspector was assigned to each processing line to double-check the regular inspector. The second man examined the remains after they had been placed in the final-type caskets before sealing. He also checked tags and markings on the caskets and shipping cases to be sure they were in agreement with the disinterment directives.⁶⁵

After all remains had been processed and stored pending shipment, a complete check of the deceased against disinterment directives was made. There were no discrepancies. When the USAT *Cardinal O'Connell* arrived at Guadalcanal during December, loading operations began and proceeded in an orderly manner. The master of the ship assumed responsibility for the caskets as they reached

⁶⁴ (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 143-44. (2) App. E, Vol. 4, Incl. 76.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-45.



FIGURE 30. USAT "CARDINAL O'CONNELL" bringing war dead from Pacific area, passes under the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, 12 February 1948.

the pier and placed all of them aboard ship before work ceased at any given time.

When the USAT *Goucher Victory* returned to Guadalcanal from Australia bearing remains from Ipswich and Rookwood cemeteries, the USAT *Cardinal O'Connell* moved away from the dock and anchored in the bay. The *Goucher Victory* then unloaded its dead. Upon completion of this operation, it pulled away and the *Cardinal O'Connell* returned to the dock, where it received the remains from Australia. This method of shifting the deceased was adopted because the hatches of the two ships did not permit a direct transfer. After this operation had been completed, supplies, equipment, and personnel of the 9105th TSU were placed aboard the *Goucher Victory*, which sailed from Guadalcanal on 12 January 1948 for Saipan. The *Cardinal O'Connell*, carrying the dead from both Australia and Guadalcanal, headed for Hawaii.

The Guadalcanal operation had been marked by several unusual problems:

1. Low morale of workers, stemming from the inadequacy of recreational activities, despite the provision of some movies and library materials, and from the delay in payment of workers because of the

time lag between submission of payrolls and the arrival of the disbursing officer from Hawaii.

2. Lack of satisfactory communications between Zone and 9105th TSU Headquarters.

3. The necessity for finishing the operation without certain supplies and equipment, which were needed in larger quantities than had been anticipated before the unit's departure from Hawaii.

4. The presence of live ammunition and grenades buried with the deceased, making exhumations hazardous.⁶⁶

Australian Operations

Work in Australia had begun with the arrival of the *Goucher Victory* at Brisbane on 17 November. All necessary arrangements and preparations had been completed. Customary passport requirements had been waived, and housing and messing facilities, a motor pool area, and procurement of fuels and lubricants had been arranged for.⁶⁷

By 20 November, the *Goucher Victory* had been completely unloaded. The civilian workers were housed and messed at Amberly Field, RAAF, Ipswich, Queensland, where quarters strikingly resembled those found on any United States Army post. The Australian Government furnished all needed housekeeping equipment, including bedding and cleaning materials. The American Government provided extra civilian employees to keep the quarters clean and to assist in the mess used by American civilians.⁶⁸ Locally hired clerical workers were assigned to Field Operating Sections. Plans had now been completed for exhuming Ipswich Cemetery, Brisbane, beginning on 25 November 1947. The USAT *Walter Schwenk*, carrying 1,896 final-type caskets, hardening compound, and other technical mortuary supplies, arrived in Brisbane on the 26th, and unloading of the ship began on the following day.

Meanwhile, United States Mausoleum No. 4 had been established at Redbank, Queensland, and served as a processing center. Redbank, located on the Brisbane-Ipswich Road, was about 8 miles from Ipswich Cemetery and 16 miles from Brisbane.⁶⁹ Because of these distances, and the inadequacies of organic transportation, a commercial carrier moved the caskets to the Mausoleum. This situation had been anticipated, since the shipping space allocated to

⁶⁶ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 150. (2) App. E, Vol. 4, Incls. 80, 81.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, App. E, Vol. 5, Incl. 89.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁶⁹ Ltr, Capt R. G. Severson, QMC, GRO to CO, AGRS-PAZ, 12 Nov 47, App. E, Vol. 5, Incl. 84.



FIGURE 31. *Main entrance to Rookwood Cemetery, Sydney, Australia, where American servicemen were buried.*

AGRS-PAZ precluded the transportation of any extra vehicles to Australia, and arrangements for use of local trucks had been concluded before exhumations began.⁷⁰

Disinterments and final-type casketing at Ipswich Cemetery followed the procedures used in Hawaii. The constant daily rainfall constituted the chief delaying factor. Unfortunately, graves registration planners had completely overlooked local weather conditions at that time of year (late spring) in Australia. Torrential storms, which swept the area during the late afternoon hours and at night, created working conditions that severely tested human endurance. Furthermore, the site of Ipswich Cemetery proved to be an unhappy one. Although it presented a fine exterior appearance, workers soon discovered that its water table lay less than five feet below the surface. This disconcerting fact, coupled with the thick clay and heavy rain, added to the difficulties. Only the payment of high wages rendered possible the completion of the project within the rigid schedule.⁷¹

Before the 9105th TSU arrived, arrangements had been completed with Australian authorities to remove the American dead from Rookwood Cemetery, Sydney, for shipment to Mausoleum No.

⁷⁰ Ltr, AGRS-PAZ to Capt Severson, GRO, 27 Oct 47, App. E, Vol 5, Incl. 90.

⁷¹ Hist. AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 155-56.

4. Exhumations began in this cemetery on 17 November, by coincidence the very day the *Goucher Victory* reached Australia. Local laborers performed the actual disinterment operations at Rookwood. As in Ipswich, the procedures closely paralleled those employed in the Hawaiian Islands. After careful processing according to Australian health regulations, remains were moved by truck to the nearest railway for shipment to Brisbane. At all times, a tarpaulin covering concealed the caskets from view. An American ex-serviceman, then residing in Australia, escorted each shipment of remains to Mausoleum No. 4.⁷²

Exhumations in both Australian cemeteries had ended by 20 December, and loading of the deceased aboard the *Goucher Victory* was immediately begun. The Australian Government and patriotic organizations in Brisbane carried out a simple ceremony on 22 December 1947, as a final tribute to the fallen Americans. The remains of one unknown serviceman were placed on a gun carriage and escorted through the city to King George Square. The cortege stopped in front of the City Hall, where wreaths were laid by officers of the Commonwealth, the city, patriotic organizations, and by the American Consul. The cortege then moved to Newstead Wharf where taps were sounded and three volleys fired. It was most fitting that this tribute occurred in Brisbane, for it was there that Americans first landed in Australia.⁷³

Repatriation from MARBO

During January 1948, the major activity of the Graves Registration Service in the MARBO Sector, Far East Zone, embraced the processing and final-type casketing of approximately 2,000 remains destined for early shipment either to the United States or to Hawaii for permanent overseas burial. The main portion of the 9105th TSU, comprising parts of seven FOS teams and one Port Company, arrived at Saipan from Guadalcanal on 17 January aboard the USAT *Goucher Victory*. The unit soon was reorganized into five full FOS teams and one Port Company. Three of the teams would perform cemeterial exhumations and the other two would work at the Processing Center.⁷⁴ The 9105th TSU would carry out all AGRS operations, except search and recovery, while the Administration, Supply, and Records Sections would continue to function

⁷² Rpt, Capt Severson, GRO, Rookwood, 30 Nov 47, App. E, Vol. 5, Incl. 93.

⁷³ (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, p. 158. (2) Corresp re Ceremony held in Australia for Return of WW II American Dead, App. E, Vol. 5, Incl. 97.

⁷⁴ (1) Narrative for January 1948, KCRC-AGRS-MARBO, 314.7. (2) Hist, AGRS-MARBO, 1947-48, I, p. 73.

under MARBO Section Headquarters. Before disinterments began, MARBO authorities fixed the processing quota at 160 remains daily in order to meet the late February deadline for the first repatriation shipment from Saipan.⁷⁵

Exhumations commenced on 9 February 1948 in the 2d Marine Division Cemetery and later continued in the 27th Army Division and 4th Marine Division Cemeteries. The 9105th TSU, after long, hard training and experience in Hawaii, Australia, and Guadalcanal, co-ordinated its methods, gained through such experience, with those of graves registration forces in MARBO. In the 2d Marine Division Cemetery, the men encountered considerable difficulty in establishing identifications, for original interment had occurred under combat conditions and the later realignment of crosses often did not agree with plot maps. During February 1948, the strength of the 9105th TSU on Saipan, both military and civilian, reached its peak. At that time it had 78 officers, 65 enlisted men, and 1,094 civilian employees, including 631 Filipino laborers.⁷⁶

Early in February, a conference was held on Saipan to draw up final plans and assign responsibilities for the dockside ceremony scheduled for the 26th, when the *Walter W. Schwenk* would cast her lines and head out to sea, carrying the first group of World War II deceased from MARBO.⁷⁷ All plans were submitted to the Commanding General, MARBO, for approval. On 23 February, representatives from G-3 Section, MARBO Command, arrived from Guam to act as the co-ordinating agency for the whole program.

As planned, on the morning of 26 February 1948, the USAT *Walter W. Schwenk*, shining with polished brass and a new coat of paint, lay anchored at the Saipan pier. A thread of smoke rose from the stack which had been empty during the long days of loading the caskets aboard. Facing the reviewing stand was the flag-draped catafalque, around which were gathered service families, workers, and those wearing the uniforms, khaki and white, of the Army, Navy, and Marines. In the hold of the ship lay the silent dead. High officials of AGRS-MARBO and the Far East Command filled the flower-wreathed reviewing stand. Throughout the ceremony, the sharp crack of the saluting battery re-echoed against the harsh crags of Mount Tapotchau, which many of the dead in the ship had scaled in order to win Saipan. After the addresses and prayers, representatives of all services carried wreaths to the catafalque, where honorary wreath bearers received them and, to the

⁷⁵ Hist, AGRS-MARBO, 1947-48, I, p. 74.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 1948-49, p. 87.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 78-79.

chords of Chopin's Funeral March, carried them up the gangplank to Number 2 Hatch.⁷⁸

When the bearers returned to their position facing the massed troops, benedictions were said, and the firing squad raised its guns for the final salute. As the last notes of taps sounded, the ship's bell rang, the gangplank was raised, and the order to "cast off" was given. After a moment of silence, the ship moved slowly away from the pier amid the strains of "Nearer My God to Thee." As the *Walter W. Schwenk* reached the outer reef, silver-winged escort planes dropped the final wreaths onto her deck. Over 6,000 miles away, in villages, on farms, and in cities throughout America, families of the deceased in this ship awaited their return.⁷⁹

Several repatriation shipments from Saipan followed during the ensuing months. Nearly 2,000 deceased sailed on the *Albert Boe* in April 1948, and some 1,600 on the USAT *Dalton Victory* in July 1948. It will be recalled that during the period from early May until late August, a total of over 10,000 dead from Okinawa were sent in four increments to Saipan for above-ground storage while awaiting repatriation.⁸⁰ These remains formed large portions of outgoing shipments during the closing months of 1948 and in January 1949.

In October 1948, the Commanding General, MARBO, received instructions from Memorial Division, OQMG, concerning the movement of all World War II deceased in the custody of AGRS-MARBO on the island of Saipan.⁸¹ These instructions dealt with three main categories of remains:

1. In the first group were those deceased for which disinterment directives had been received, indicating repatriation to the United States.

2. The second category covered those destined for permanent burial at Honolulu, T. H., including remains for which disinterment directives had indicated overseas interment, all "known" dead for which no disposition instructions had been received by AGRS-MARBO, and all "unknowns" on which current action for final resolution still pended, or which were in some way associated with other remains.

3. The last group comprised those unknown deceased for which no current resolution or action pended. These remains were to be shipped to Manila for permanent burial in Fort McKinley Cemetery.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

⁸⁰ See pp. 424-26.

⁸¹ Ltr, Col L. R. Talbot, Mem Div, OQMG to CG, MARBO, 28 Oct 48, sub: Movement of Remains, 293.

By 1 February 1949, after processing and shipping out a grand total of over 20,000 dead, including the remains from Okinawa, the task of graves registration forces in MARBO, for all practical purposes, was completed. A skeleton staff remained to handle the administrative and physical close-out of the organization. The Pacific Zone (AGRS-PAZ) had meanwhile assumed responsibility for the deceased for whom no disinterment directives had been received, for those whose final disposition had not been determined because of cancellation or suspension of disinterment directives, and for those cases involving major discrepancies.⁸²

Repatriation from Japan

The recovered dead in the JAP-KOR Sector had rested above ground at Yokohama since the completion of disinterment and identification operations in January 1948. In the autumn of that year, the USAT *Dalton Victory* came to Yokohama to transport the remains to final burial points. After routine loading operations, the remains of 1,272 servicemen lay in the hold of the ship.

On the morning of 1 October 1948, ceremonies took place at South Pier, Yokohama. In the reviewing stand were Lt. Gen. Walter H. Walker, CG, Eighth Army, members of his staff, representatives of the Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, and diplomatic representatives of the Allied nations.⁸³ After the invocation and an address by General Walker, members of the services and the diplomatic corps placed wreaths upon the flag-draped catafalque in the center of the square. The Army Air Force Chaplain gave the benediction, and a final wreath was carried up the gangplank onto the ship. Three sharp volleys and the clear notes of taps floated out over the waters of Tokyo Bay, where a little more than three years previously the Japanese had signed the surrender document aboard the battleship *Missouri*, ending World War II. Then, to the tolling of the ship's bell, and the familiar music of "Nearer My God to Thee," the USAT *Dalton Victory* left the pier and headed out to sea.⁸⁴

From Japan, the ship sailed to Saipan and took aboard 218 unknowns for transportation to Manila, where these remains, plus about 50 more unknowns from Japan, were discharged and eventually interred in the permanent Fort McKinley Cemetery. After leaving the Philippines, the *Dalton Victory* proceeded to Hawaii and discharged those deceased whose next of kin indicated prefer-

⁸² Hist, AGRS-MARBO, 1948-49, III, p. 88.

⁸³ Hist, AGRS-JAP-KOR, 1945-48, p. 76.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

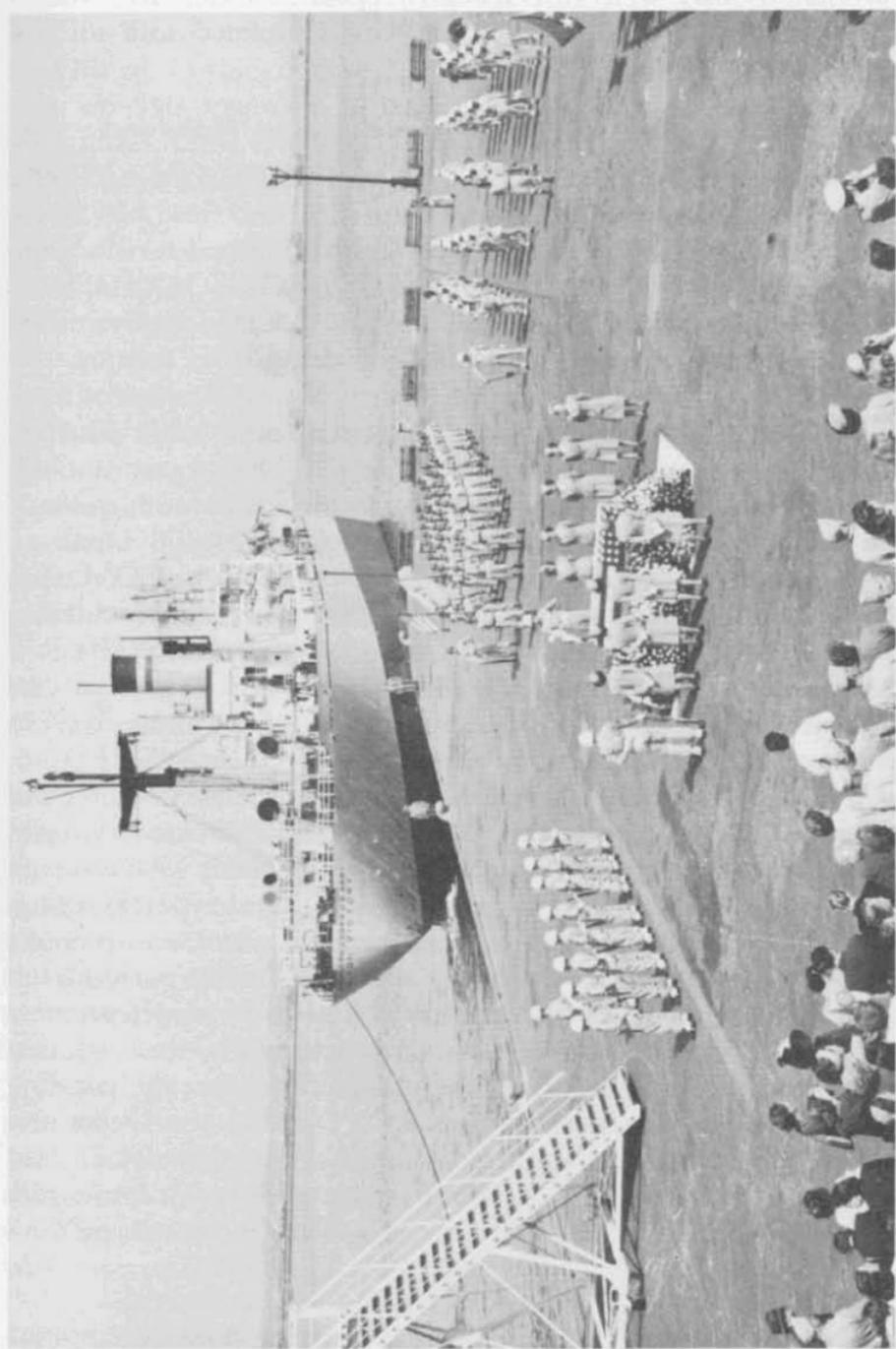


FIGURE 32. Ceremony at Yokohama for first war dead to be returned to native soil from Japan.

ence for overseas burial. The others were transported to San Francisco.⁸⁵ About 986 of the deceased still in Japan, including some 247 cremated dead, were subsequently repatriated on cargo vessels in small increments as identification was completed and as ship space became available.

Repatriation from PHILRYCOM and Asiatic Mainland

Plans for returning American dead from PHILRYCOM had been underway for several months before the USAT *Lt. George W. Boyce* departed in May 1948 with the first group of remains. In January 1948, Col. Everett Busch, Memorial Division, OQMG, indicated to the Commanding General, PHILRYCOM, the desirability of repatriating a minimum of 6,500 deceased from this area by 30 June 1948, the target date for the return of 50,000 remains from the former war theaters. He announced that over 5,800 disinterment directives had been sent to PHILRYCOM and that enough additional ones would be forwarded to meet the minimum quota.⁸⁶

On 28 January, General Horkan, Chief, Memorial Division, OQMG, informed the Commanding General, PHILRYCOM, that disinterment directives covering remains from the five Finschhafen cemeteries and from Manila No. 1 would be released to PHILRYCOM Headquarters by 1 March 1948. He pointed out that casketing operations should be performed during March and April in accordance with the Schedule for the Return of World War II Dead, dated 1 November 1947. In the spring of 1948, then, the tempo of graves registration activities in PHILRYCOM increased sharply. All efforts centered on meeting schedules. The AGRS Mausoleum at Nichols Field installed processing lines for final-type casketing, and with slight operational changes, it became possible to increase daily casketing of remains from 200 to 600. In the period from April through September, disinterment directives for approximately 8,191 deceased were received. These remains were processed, casketed, and turned over to the Remains Depot for storage pending shipment or permanent overseas burial.⁸⁷ The Remains Depot also served as a Distribution Center. During its entire existence, it received approximately 33,000 remains from temporary cemeteries throughout PHILRYCOM and from other Pacific commands.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Interv, Maj Robert G. Lay, Registration Br, Mem Div, OQMG, 13 Nov 53.

⁸⁶ Ltr, Busch to CG, PHILRYCOM, 27 Jan 48, sub: Target for Return of Remains through 30 June 1948; KCRC-AGRS-Far East, 293.

⁸⁷ (1) Hist, AGRS-PZ, 1 Apr to 30 Sep 48, p. 1; KCRC-AGRS-PHILRYCOM, 314.7. (2) The Remains Depot was established in May 1948 for all casketed remains awaiting either burial or repatriation.

⁸⁸ Same as ft. 87 (1).

In May 1948, the first repatriation ship, the USAT *Lt. George W. Boyce*, arrived at Manila. After routine loading operations, a solemn ceremony honored the 4,459 deceased aboard the vessel. Wreaths lined part of the ship's rail and a huge American flag hung amidships, to the right of the low catafalque on the pier. Many high officials attended, including President Quirino of the Philippines, Maj. Gen. George F. Moore, CG, PHILRYCOM. Rear Admiral Christie, Commander, United States Naval Forces in the Philippines, and Brig. Gen. Oliver, Deputy Commander, 13th Air Force.⁸⁹ After the ceremony, as the USAT *Lt. George W. Boyce* moved away from the pier, six Piper Cubs of the Philippine Air Force dropped floral wreaths and a 21-gun salute rang out. Four PHILRYCOM enlisted men escorted their fallen comrades to the United States for final interment.

Three more repatriation shipments followed within a comparatively short period. On 9 June, the *Morris E. Crain* departed for San Francisco, carrying 1,941 American deceased. On 17 July, the *Dalton Victory* sailed with 3,961 American remains. The *Morris E. Crain* returned to Manila on 10 August, unloaded 7,200 empty caskets and departed for San Francisco on 20 August, with 3,539 deceased aboard.⁹⁰ During the period from May through September, the four shipments carried a total of some 13,900 remains.

While these repatriation activities were being consummated, final concentrations were completed. These involved the disinterment and removal of remains from Manila No. 2 Cemetery to the AGRS Mausoleum at Nichols Field, and the transfer of all deceased from Ft. McKinley Post Cemetery to a new Post Cemetery at Ft. Stotsenburg. The removal of dead from Ft. McKinley Post Cemetery, which began in January and ended in May 1948, emanated from the decision of the OQMG to establish on its site, the new permanent American National Cemetery, which later became known as Manila American or Ft. McKinley Cemetery.⁹¹

It will be recalled that Manila No. 2 constituted the last burial ground scheduled for disinterment and transfer of its dead to the Manila Mausoleum.⁹² Exhumations averaged about 250 remains daily, and the project ended on 20 July 1948. The last deceased were removed to the Mausoleum on the following day, when the flag was lowered for the last time, after having flown continuously over this point since 7 April 1945.⁹³ All temporary burial places in

⁸⁹ Hist, AGRS-PZ, p. 31.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁹² See Ch. XIII, p. 416.

⁹³ Final Historical Rpt of USAF Cemetery Manila No. 2, AGRS-PZ, pp. 5-6.

PHILRYCOM now were closed, just over two months after the first repatriation vessel had left Manila. Homeward shipments of the deceased continued, meanwhile, and by the autumn of 1949, this activity neared completion. For all practicable purposes, a long, burdensome, and somber task had ended in the widespread Far East Zone.

Since removal of all located American deceased in the China Zone occurred in the spring of 1947, as previously related, the only remaining repatriation operations on the Asiatic Mainland occurred in the India-Burma Zone. It will be recalled that all recovered American dead in this Zone had been moved into the Barrackpore Mausoleum by late November 1947.⁹⁴ This group, numbering about 3,500, rested there until the arrival of the repatriation ship, the *Albert M. Boe*.

During this waiting period, the staff at Hq, AGRS-IBZ, prepared final rosters, which covered the deceased from both Kalaikunda and Barrackpore cemeteries—the last two large burial grounds disinterred before removing all American war dead to the Barrackpore Mausoleum. These rosters were checked against the shipping boxes containing the stored remains in the Mausoleum.⁹⁵

The *Albert M. Boe* arrived at Calcutta on 23 December, six days ahead of schedule. After receipt of a message from the OQMG giving instructions as to the disposition of property on hand, it became necessary for both military and civilian personnel to work overtime in order to meet a sailing deadline of 15 January 1948. During the movement of remains from the Mausoleum to shipside, rank was forgotten as officers and enlisted men worked side by side to load the dock-bound convoys. Two handlings were necessary at shipside—one, when the caskets were placed on pallets before being lowered into the hold; and another, when they were stored on the ship. AGRS officials believed that the operation would be more successful if curiosity seekers were oblivious to the proceedings. This work, in consequence, was done under cover of darkness, and the local inhabitants did not interfere in any way. Two nights—28 and 29 December—were needed to complete the loading operations, during which all available employees were pressed into service.⁹⁶

Graves registration personnel spent the early part of January 1948 loading necessary supplies and equipment aboard the *Albert M. Boe*. This assignment was not a simple one, for it demanded the segregation of the cargo according to destination. After segrega-

⁹⁴ See Ch. XIII, p. 441.

⁹⁵ Hist, AGRS-IBZ, Sec. II, Ch. VII, p. 36.

⁹⁶ (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39. (2) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-IBZ, 31 Dec 47.

tion, the task of packing and crating supplies confronted the workers. On 13 January, the last supply trucks moved to the docks where final loading took place.

That same day, the *Albert M. Boe* left Calcutta and stopped nearby for refueling before continuing its journey on 15 January, the date originally set for departure. The sailing of this vessel marked the end of the lengthy task of removing all recovered World War II dead from the Asiatic Mainland. These Americans, who had lost their lives in the faraway India-Burma Zone, would now finally rest either in their own native soil, or eventually in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Honolulu, often referred to as the "Punchbowl."⁹⁷

The work that had been performed by mortuary personnel received warm praise from the Naval Commander of the *Albert M. Boe*. He asserted that "I have never seen Army personnel on shore-side work so diligently, consistently, and effectively to a given end as I have at this port."⁹⁸

Recapitulation

The problems and activities in repatriating the dead from the vast Pacific area have been traced, beginning with the central Pacific and ending on the mainland of Asia. The plan to return the war dead to the United States for permanent burial met with general approval. A sizable majority of the next of kin expressed their preference for repatriation rather than for overseas interment. Of approximately 86,000 remains recovered through June 1951 from the Pacific area commands and the Asiatic Mainland, a total of 54,692 received final interment in their native soil.⁹⁹

This accomplishment, together with a similar achievement in Europe, constituted a great feat. Before the American repatriation program was undertaken, no nation had ever made so tireless and costly an effort to locate, identify, and repatriate its war dead. Never had a nation demonstrated so high a consideration for the families of those who gave their lives in battle. The Return of the Dead Program of World War II in the former Pacific war theaters has provided a proud chapter in American history, and particularly in the annals of the Quartermaster Corps.

⁹⁷ Because the "Punchbowl" was not ready for interments until early 1949, the India-Burma remains destined for permanent overseas burial were placed in a Mausoleum in Hawaii pending final disposition.

⁹⁸ Ltr, Cmdr H. E. Randall, USNR to CO, AGRS, Camp Knox, Calcutta, 15 Jan 48, sub: Appreciation, cited in Hist, AGRS-IBZ, Sec. II, Ch. VII, pp. 40-41.

⁹⁹ Statistical Review of Permanent Disposition of World War II Dead, D/A, OQMG, pp. 10-11.

