



DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY

2300 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2000

28 November 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

From: Camillia Rodgers, Historian, Asia-Pacific Operations; Paul Emanovsky, Anthropologist; Laboratory, DPAA

To: Science Director and Asia-Pacific Director, DPAA

Subj: DISINTERMENT OF FOUR UNKNOWNNS ASSOCIATED WITH COMMON GRAVE
822 CABANATUAN CAMP #1 CEMETERY

1. Executive Summary

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) is recommending the disinterment of four unknowns associated with individuals purportedly buried in Cabanatuan Camp #1 Cemetery, Common Grave (CG) 822, for comparison with the four unresolved U.S. casualties associated with this grave (Table 1). The four unknowns proposed in this memorandum include United States Armed Forces (USAF) Cemetery Manila #2 Unknowns X-470, X-471, X-472, and X-473. According to the reports of death, each of the unresolved casualties, potentially associated with these unknowns, died in the Philippine Islands as a Prisoner of War (POW) on 1 January 1942. The “Cabanatuan Death Report” indicated that based on the casualties’ recorded dates and times of death, they were buried in CG 822.¹ At this time, it is recommended that the initial casualty associations be limited to those unresolved casualties correlated with CG 822 (Table 1). There are no resolved casualties associated with this common grave (Table 2). This case exceeds the 60% threshold for group remains, supporting the conclusion that it is more likely than not that the DOD can identify the unknown remains associated with CG 822, if exhumed.² Therefore, it is recommended that the unknowns associated with CG 822 be exhumed from the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial (MACM) for transport to the DPAA Laboratory for forensic analysis.

Table 1. Casualties Associated with Common Grave 822. Summary of Analytical Options for the Individuals.				
Name	Historical Analysis	Anthropological Analysis	Dental Analysis	Chest Radiograph
Morgan, Robert R.	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Pruitt, Blanchard E.	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Schopp, Erwin H.	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Walker, James M.	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A

Green shade = line of testing has evidence present to support possible association, yellow shade = line of testing may become possible and/or may be probative.



Figure 1. Map of Cabanatuan Camp No. 1 Cemetery created by the 111th Quartermaster Graves Registration Platoon in August 1945, with CG 822 circled in red.

2. Cabanatuan Camp #1

Cabanatuan Prison Camp—which was actually three separate camps—was located sixty miles north of Manila and several miles east of the city of Cabanatuan. Camp #1 was the largest camp for American POWs during the war.³ Initially, Cabanatuan burial details interred all POWs who died within a given twenty-four-hour period in one mass grave. Between 3 June 1942 and 25 September 1942, one burial day was defined as occurring from noon on one day until the following noon. Between 26 September and 19 October 1942, a burial day occurred from 5:00 PM on one day to 5:00 PM the following day. Eventually, from 19 October 1942 until

the camp closed, a burial day occurred from midnight to midnight. Japanese guards at Cabanatuan did not initially allow POW burial details to erect markers on the shallow graves, nor did the captive Americans inter remains in any organized plot structure or particular order. Burial details were unable to record numerous deaths, burials, and graves during the camp's early months.⁴

Captain Robert E. Conn, a POW who served as Graves Registration Officer at Cabanatuan from November 1942 until 16 October 1944, created what is now known as the "Death Report, Cabanatuan." After August 1942, Japanese guards allowed the Americans to bury their dead in a systematic order; they also permitted them to erect grave markers. Record-keeping seemed to improve thereafter. Captain Conn interviewed POWs who had served on earlier burial details in an effort to obtain information about previous grave locations and burials. Successive investigations, both by POWs during the war and the American Graves Registration Service (AGRS) after the Japanese surrender, had a difficult time locating and delineating the boundaries and burial dates of specific plots. Attempts to associate individuals reported to have died within a twenty-four-hour burial period with a specific grave revealed numerous inconsistencies and errors. Captain Conn believed that he could somewhat confidently confirm burial reports only from August 1942 onwards.⁵ The numerous discrepancies in the documentary record have encouraged the DPAA to pursue disinterment of all Cabanatuan unknowns, as was done in the USS *Oklahoma* case.

When the 111th Quartermaster Graves Registration Platoon disinterred Cabanatuan between December 1945 and March 1946, it discovered that the camp cemetery was situated in an area with a high water table. The condition of the remains, consequently, was extremely poor. Platoon members examined remains upon disinterment and created tooth charts. All remains were then moved to Manila #2, which was located twelve miles north of Manila.⁶ From Manila #2, remains were transferred to the Manila Mausoleum and Central Identification Point (CIP) at Nichols Field, where AGRS personnel conducted further analyses and processed remains for a more permanent burial. There was evidence of some commingling among the remains, and investigators noted discrepancies between the graves from which resolved individuals had been identified and the graves in which they expected them to be interred based on the reported time of death.⁷ When the Memorial Division rejected proposed identifications, or the AGRS concluded that the remains were unidentifiable, the AGRS permanently interred the unidentified Cabanatuan remains as unknowns in the MACM.⁸

3. Common Grave 822

The "Cabanatuan Roster of Burials" noted that four remains were buried in CG 822 at the Cabanatuan POW Camp Cemetery, however, the "Cabanatuan Death Report" recorded that five remains were buried in CG 822.⁹ According to both the "Roster of Burials U.S. Military Cemeteries Overseas" and the "Cabanatuan Death Report," five individuals died in Camp #1 on 1 January 1943, between the hours of 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM.¹⁰ On that date, a burial day should have lasted from 12:00 AM one day, until 12:00 AM the next day. Accordingly, the five casualties' dates and times of death would associate them with CG 822. However, American Graves Registration Service officials recovered only four unknown remains from CG 822, Unknowns X-470, X-471, X-472, and X-473.¹¹ The fifth set of remains buried on 1 January 1943, was reportedly buried in, and recovered from, CG 836 and identified as Private First Class (Pfc) Allen W. Wood.¹² The four unidentified casualties associated with CG 822 are as follows:

Private (Pvt) Robert R. Morgan, Pvt Blanchard E. Pruitt, Pvt Erwin H. Schopp, and Corporal (Cpl) James M. Walker.¹³

The four unknowns recovered from CG 822 were originally recommended for group identification as the remains of the unidentified casualties, however the recommendation was disapproved because of discrepancies between the Army dental records of the deceased and the dental charts for the unknowns.¹⁴ The AGRS personnel concluded from the dental record comparisons that the remains of Cpl James M. Walker, Pfc Blanchard E. Pruitt, and Pvt Erwin H. Schopp were not in the group. Private Robert Morgan’s name was not specifically mentioned like the other three. The AGRS was not able to associate these casualties with any other remains recovered from the Cabanatuan POW Camp Cemetery.¹⁵

On 31 December 1945, the AGRS interred the four associated unknowns from CG 822 in the USAF Cemetery Manila #2, and assigned them Manila #2 unknown numbers X-470, X-471, X-472, and X-473 (Table 3 below indicates the original Manila #2 X-numbers and subsequent Manila Mausoleum X-numbers).¹⁶ American Graves Registration Service personnel disinterred the remains from the USAF Cemetery Manila #2 on 17 December 1947. The AGRS personnel processed, examined, stored, and completed dental and skeletal charts at the Manila Mausoleum CIP for the four unknowns.¹⁷ In the “Report of Interment,” AGRS personnel noted that the unknowns could possibly be any one of the four casualties listed above.¹⁸ The AGRS examined the remains again in 1949, but individual or group identifications could not be made. Correspondence dated 18 October 1949, from the headquarters of AGRS, noted that X-470, X-471, X-472, and X-473 were being processed as unidentifiable. The AGRS personnel recommended that the associated casualties be considered non-recoverable.¹⁹ Between 20 and 21 Feb 1950, cemetery personnel interred X-470, X-471, X-472, and X-473 at the MACM.²⁰

4. Present Investigation

Current research has reviewed the unknown files believed to be associated with CG 822, which include personnel records of the four unidentified casualties believed to be associated with CG 822, and archival documents providing a historical background for the burial and processing of remains from Cabanatuan. This research indicates that the four individuals in Table 2 should be considered as casualties potentially associated with CG 822. At this time, it is recommended that the initial casualty associations be limited to those correlated with CG 822, as the research does not directly suggest other casualty or grave associations for the four unresolved casualties other than CG 822.

Name	Service Number	Rank	Service	Common Grave	Status
Morgan, Robert R.	18025313	Pvt	USAAF	822	Unresolved
Pruitt, Blanchard E.	18060257	Pvt	USA	822	Unresolved
Schopp, Erwin H.	17012216	Pvt	USA	822	Unresolved
Walker, James M.	R-2368077	Cpl	USA	822	Unresolved

Current research supports that there are four unknowns associated with Cabanatuan Camp #1 Cemetery, CG 822, which are interred under their Manila #2 unknown number in the MACM (Table 3). Review of the biological and dental evidence purported to be associated with

these unknowns show that there is a significant amount of potentially probative material available for anthropological and dental analyses.

Table 3. Present Burial Location of CG 822 Unknowns in the MACM.²²		
Current Unknown Number	Unknown Number at Manila Mausoleum	Current Burial Location at MACM
X-470 Manila #2	X-4094	Plot C, Row 12, Grave 83
X-471 Manila #2	X-4095	Plot N, Row 6, Grave 187
X-472 Manila #2	X-4096	Plot N, Row 11, Grave 65
X-473 Manila #2	X-4097	Plot N, Row 13, Grave 187

5. Summary and Conclusions

The DPAA has copies of all the IDPFs for the unresolved individuals. Based on the aforementioned historical and scientific information, to include FRS collection, this case exceeds the 60% threshold for group remains, supporting the conclusion that it is more likely than not that the DOD can identify the unknown remains associated with CG 822, if exhumed. It is recommended that the unknowns associated with CG 822 be exhumed from the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial (MACM) for transport to the DPAA Laboratory for forensic analysis.

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 Camillia Rodgers, PhD
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Regional Director Recommendation:

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Science Director Recommendation:

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Endnotes

¹ “Roster of Burials U.S. Cemeteries Overseas,” 84. Folder Title: 293 GRS Pacific (Cabanatuan), Chronological Listing of Graves; “Cabanatuan Death Reports, Prison Camps,” 45. Folder Title: 293 GRS Pacific (Cabanatuan) Death Reports, Prison Camps (B). Record Group (RG 92): Entry 1894A, Box 619, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA II) College Park, Maryland.

³ Heather Harris and Lisa Beckenbaugh, Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), “Casualties of Cabanatuan Prisoner of War Camp #1 and the history of their burials,” 13 October 2005 (Revised 20 February 2014), 4-5.

⁴ Ibid., 7-8.

⁵ Ibid. 8-9.

⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁷ Ibid., 13-14.

⁸ Ibid., 20.

⁹ “Cabanatuan Death Reports, Prison Camps,” 45.

¹⁰ “Roster of Burials U.S. Cemeteries Overseas,” 83-84.

¹¹ R.C. Barrett, WD QMC 1042, “Report of Interment,” 29 January 1946, in Unknown X-471 Manila #2 File. RG 92: Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Washington National Records Center (WNRC) Suitland, MD. Headquarters, American Graves Registration Service, PHILCOM Zone, APO 900, “Case History for Remains Considered Non-Recoverable,” 19 October 1949, in Individual Deceased Personnel File (IDPF) for Blanchard Pruitt.

¹² T.H. Metz, QMGMT 293 “Subject: Identification of World War II Deceased,” 26 May 1949; L.S. Panopio, “Identification Data,” 30 March 1948, in IDPF for Allen Wood. RG 92: Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Washington National Records Center (WNRC) Suitland, MD.

¹³ “Roster of Burials U.S. Cemeteries Overseas,” 84, and “Cabanatuan Death Reports, Prison Camps,” 45. T.H. Metz, QMGMT 293 “Subject: Identification of World War II Deceased,” 26 May 1949. R.C. Barrett, WD QMC 1042, “Report of Interment,” 29 January 1946, in Manila #2 X-470, X-471, X-472, and X-473 files.

¹⁴ Wilbur Hobbs, Harold B. McNemar, and John Shypula, Headquarters, American Graves Registration Service, PHILCOM Zone, APO 900, “Case History for Remains Considered Non-Recoverable,” 19 October 1949, in Individual Deceased Personnel File (IDPF) for Blanchard Pruitt. T.H. Metz, Department of the Army, Office of the Quartermaster General, Washington 25, D.C., “Subject: Identification of World War II Deceased,” 26 May 1949.

¹⁵ Ibid., T.H. Metz, QMGMT 293, “Subject: Identification of World War II Deceased,” 26 May 1949, IDPF for James M. Walker.

¹⁶ R.C. Barrett, WD QMC Form 1042, “Report of Interment,” 29 January 1946, in Manila #2 X-470, X-471, X-472, and X-473 files.

¹⁷ L.S. Panopio, OQMC Form 1044, “Identification Data,” 30 March 1948, in Manila #2 X-470, X-471, X-472, and X-473 files. Paul R. Nichols, OQMC Form 1044, “Identification Data,” 20 October 1949, in Manila #2 X-470, X-471, X-472, and X-473.

¹⁸ V.C. Aquino, WD QMC Form 1042, “Report of Interment,” 7 April 1948, in Manila #2 X-473 file.

¹⁹ Harold B. McNemar Headquarters, American Graves Registration Service, PHILCOM Zone, "Subject: Unidentifiable Remains," 18 October 1949; in Manila #2 X-473 file.

²⁰ L.W. Richardson, "Disinterment Directive," 9 February 1950, in Unknown files X-470, X-471, X-472, and X-473 files.

²¹ "Chronological Listing of Cabanatuan Graves," 84. The FRS status was checked using the DPAA Family Reference Sample Tracker on 12 August 2017.

²² Burial information derived from Manila #2 X-Files and "Department of the Army Office of the Quartermaster General: Electronic Accounting Machine Report," 15 August 1952.