



NAVY MEDICINE *FAST FACTS*

September 2025

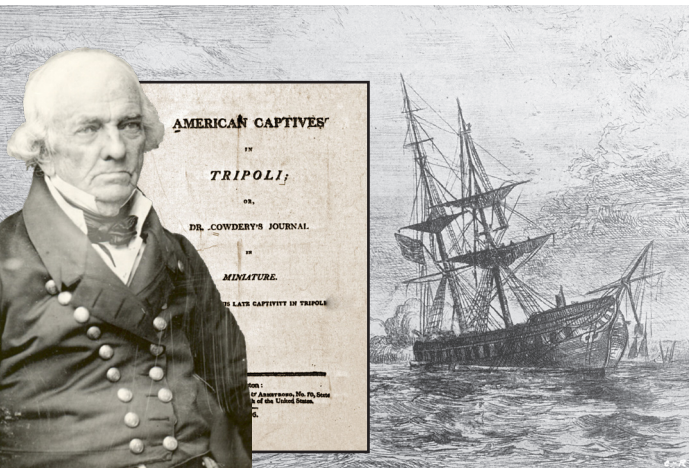


POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY



Remembering the many sacrifices made to defend our Nation

- Since 1803, **329** members of Navy Medicine have been held as prisoners of war. Of these, **156 Navy medical personnel died in captivity**. These include 132 hospital corpsmen, 13 physicians, six hospital corps officers, and five dentists.
- Over **80,000 American service members from past conflicts are still missing**, and it's believed that around 38,000 could be recovered.
- Since 1979, the third Friday of every September has been designated as **National POW / MIA Recognition Day** to honor all Americans who were prisoners of war or are still missing in action.



THE FIRST NAVY MEDICAL POWs

- On Oct. 31, 1803, Surgeon Jonathan Ridgeley, Surgeon's Mates Nicholas Harwood and Jonathan Cowdery, and Loblolly Boy John Domyn were **captured by Tripolitan pirates** after the USS Philadelphia ran aground in Tripoli Harbor.
- During their captivity, Dr. Cowdery not only cared for his fellow prisoners but also **demonstrated his medical acumen** by successfully treating one of the Bashaw's children.
- In 1806, he published his journal as **American captives in Tripoli; or Dr. Cowdery's journal in miniature kept during his late captivity in Tripoli**.

DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY (DPAA)

- The Defense POW / MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) was **created in 2015**, combining the Defense POW / Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) and the Joint POW / MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and selected functions of the U.S. Air Force's Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory (LSEL).
- DPAA's primary mission is to provide the **"fullest possible accounting for U.S. military personnel missing from past conflicts"** by conducting search and recovery missions globally, including in Asia, the Pacific, and Europe.
- The agency's teams regularly **include medical personnel** from the Navy, Army, and Air Force.



UNACCOUNTED FOR SERVICE PERSONNEL

~81,000

American service personnel from WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, the Cold War, and the Gulf Wars / other conflicts who remain missing.

Percent of unaccounted for military personnel who are in the Indo-Pacific, including those presumed lost at sea (i.e. ship losses, known aircraft water losses, etc.).

75%

364

Number of service personnel who perished in the Battle of Tarawa and remain unaccounted for—this includes 11 hospital corpsmen.

Source: Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (www.dpaa.mil)



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NAVY MEDICINE POWs BY THE NUMBERS

591

The number of Vietnam veterans repatriated as part of Operation Homecoming in 1973. Many of these POWs would be sent to the Naval Hospital San Diego, California, for follow up care.

The number of hospital corpsmen who died in captivity as POWs.

132



81



The number of psychological evaluations the Navy Medical Neuropsychiatric Research Unit (precursor to today's Naval Health Research Center) conducted in 1969 on former POWs from USS Pueblo (AGER 2).

The percentage of Navy medical POWs at the Bilibid Prison who died while in captivity.

65%

50

The number of Navy medical personnel who perished while transported to Japan aboard the prison ship ("hell ship") SS Oryoku Maru in 1944.

The number Medical Service Corps plankowners who were former POWs.

11



ROBERT E. MITCHELL CENTER FOR REPATRIATED POW STUDIES (REMC)

- REMC is a program under the Naval Aerospace Medical Institute (NAMI), headquartered at Naval Air Station Pensacola that provides follow-up medical evaluations to **study the long-term effect of captivity on America's RPOWs.**
- REMC also conducts research on the **impact of long-term isolation.**
- Today, REMC is the **only DoD-sanctioned program** that continues to conduct annual medical evaluations of RPOWs.

THE SAGA OF THE NORTHCOTTS

- The **Northcott brothers—John, Robert and Thomas—served as hospital corpsmen.** They enlisted in the Navy in January 1941 and were assigned to USS Vaga (YT-116), a tug used for patrolling the Filipino coastline from the Cavite Navy Yard to the island of Corregidor.
- When the Japanese invaded the Philippines in December 1941, the Northcotts helped scuttle the Vaga off Corregidor and joined a naval unit attached to the 4th Marine Regiment in defense of Corregidor until captured on May 6, 1942. Along with fellow defenders of Corregidor, the **Northcotts were transferred to the Bilibid prison.**
- On Oct. 21, 1943, John, Robert, and Thomas were among 228 Bilibid prisoners **"drafted" for work detail on an old rice farm in Cabanatuan,** 90 miles north of Manila. There the brothers remained working in malaria-rife conditions until they were finally broken up. John and Thomas were sent to mainland Japan aboard the "hell ship" Oryoko Maru. Robert remained at Cabanatuan. **The brothers would be liberated in 1945.**
- John, Robert, and Thomas remained in the Navy after the war and each reached the **rank of Chief Hospital Corpsman (HMC).**

