



OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2000

JUL 14 2009

POLICY

William H. Bell, Colonel, USAF Ret.
2322 Shadow Hill Drive
Riverside, CA 92506-3462

Dear Colonel Bell,

Thank you for your recent letter requesting information on Air Force First Lieutenant Donald J. Drama, a fellow aviation classmate of yours. I am pleased to provide you the following information that we have on his case.

On September 16, 1950, Lieutenant Drama was piloting an RF-80 Shooting Star on a reconnaissance mission over Korea when contact with his aircraft was lost. Subsequent searches for his aircraft produced negative results and he was never seen or heard from again. I have enclosed a case summary detailing Lieutenant Drama's loss and the U.S. Government's efforts to determine his fate.

Thank you for your long-time support and concern for your friend, Don. I hope you will find it helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles A. Ray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Charles A. Ray
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
POW/Missing Personnel Affairs



Donald J. Drama
First Lieutenant
U.S. Air Force

Unfortunately no information on 1Lt Drama was found. Excavations by CILHI/JPAC in North Korea, between 1996 and 2005, have thus far resulted in the recovery and repatriation of remains of more than 220 U.S. servicemen. This effort is expected to continue through the coming years.

In September 2006 and May 2007 meetings, Chinese officials offered to conduct searches in their archives for information on U.S. losses. They have assembled a team to look for such records throughout China. In February and April 2008, DPMO and China's Ministry of National Defense signed arrangements that, for the Chinese, authorized researchers to release this documentation. We hope the anticipated multi-year effort will shed more light on our missing men. Also, a combined DPMO/JPAC team has investigated the purported crash site and related graves from an RB-29 shot down on 12 January 1953. A JPAC team plans to return to China to excavate this site.

In 2004 and 2005, our North Korean recovery operations took place in Unsan County and the Chosin Reservoir area. Recent work in South Korea began around Seoul and the Pusan Perimeter, with follow-on searches conducted for air losses and along POW march routes. Teams have returned to South Korea in 2008 and this work continues in 2009. We continue to actively seek information about 1Lt Drama loss, including regular dialogue with Korean War veterans groups, in the hopes of developing new leads. We will forward discoveries to family members through the U.S. Air Force Casualty Office.

23 June 2009



Donald J. Drama
First Lieutenant
U.S. Air Force



Personal Information: First Lieutenant (1Lt) Donald J. Drama, service number AO-1908412, served as a pilot assigned to the 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing. He was listed as missing in action (MIA) on 16 September 1950. Absent evidence of continued survival, the Air Force issued a presumptive finding of death on 31 December 1953. His name does not appear on the "Johnnie Johnson List" or in the "Missing in Action, Captivity" report compiled from returning POWs.¹ Field Search Case 0741A.

Circumstances of Loss: 1Lt Drama departed Itazuke Air Base (AB) Japan, piloting an RF-80² Shooting Star, tail number 45-8368A, at 0810I (Korea time) on 16 September 1950. The briefed mission was a visual reconnaissance operation of the roads between Chunchon and Chechon, with photo coverage of Wonju at 5000 feet mean sea level (msl). At 0839I, 1Lt Drama made contact with "Mellow Control," the tactical air control center at Taegu AB (K-2) and reported that he was inbound to target. This was the last contact with this aircraft. After three hours had passed (the endurance of an RF-80) the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing reported to Fifth Air Force Joint Operations Center (JOC) that the aircraft overdue and began a search of all friendly air strips where the missing aircraft might have made an emergency landing. Weather prevented search operations by 1Lt Drama's wing. However, five low altitude visual searches of the suspected area of loss were conducted over the following seven days with negative results. It is not known if the aircraft ever reached the target area, and Air Force never correlated any plane wreckage to the aircraft.

As is often the case on single-ship missions such as this, the first indication that there was a problem on 1Lt Drama's flight was when the aircraft was overdue returning to base. The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) has no evidence that he ever was alive at any known holding point, interrogation center, hospital, or permanent POW camp.

Continuing Efforts: In an effort to achieve the fullest possible accounting of missing U.S. servicemen, DPMO and the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), formerly the Army's Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI), have negotiated with the government of North Korea for access to crash sites, battlefields, and prison camp cemeteries. The North Koreans have authorized limited access to their main military museum and national library in Pyongyang for POW/MIA-related research. The North Koreans provided our researchers with a selection of documents and artifacts from these archives for review during visits in 1997-1999. DPMO also reviewed information from Chinese sources, including recent searches of their main Korean War museum in Dandong, their Army Publishing House, and other Chinese museums.

¹ The "Johnnie Johnson List" was compiled by Army SGT Wayne A. "Johnnie" Johnson, who was captured in July 1950 and repatriated in August 1953. His list had nearly 500 names, of the so-called "Tiger Group" (mostly from 24th Inf Div) who were captured early in the war. The men on this list died at or en route to North Korean POW camps. The "Missing in Action, Captivity" report was created from the debriefings of almost every POW who returned to military control during Operation Little Switch (some gaps) and Operation Big Switch (pretty complete). They were asked to review MIA rosters and to point out everyone whom they remembered as POWs, or whose loss they recalled just prior to capture.

² The F-80, designated the "Shooting Star," was a single seat aircraft, equipped with an ejection and powered by a single turbojet engine. It was armed with six .50 cal machine guns mounted in the nose and could carry eight 5" aerial rockets, 2,000 pounds of bombs, or two napalm tanks on under-wing pylons.

Donald J Drama
First Lieutenant
U.S. Air Force



KORWALD Loss Incident Summary

Date of Loss: 500916
 Tail Number: 45-8386
 Aircraft Type: RF-80A
 Wing or Group: 543rd Tac Spt Gp
 Squadron: 8th Tac Recon Sq
 Circumstances of Loss: Departed Itazuke AB, Japan on recon mission over central Korea, last contact as he approached the coast of Korea, lost on low-level recon mission btwn Chechon-Chonchon

Crewmembers Associated With This Loss				
Name (Last, First Middle)	Rank	Service	Status	Comments
DRAMA, Donald J.	ILT	USAF	MIA	



You searched for **Donald J. Drama** born in Usa

WWI, WWII, and Korean War Casualty Listings

Name:	Donald John Drama
Birth Date:	23 Mar 1928
Birth City:	Aurora
State Registered:	Minnesota
Death Date:	16 Sep 1950
Death Country:	Korea
Death Description:	Missing in Action - Presumed Dead
War:	Korean War
Title:	First Lieutenant, U.S. Air Force
Rank:	First Lieutenant
Service:	U.S. Air Force
Service ID:	AO1908412
Notes:	First Lieutenant Drama was the pilot of a RF-80A Lockheed Shooting Star photo reconnaissance aircraft with the 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 543rd Tactical Support Group. On September 16, 1950, while on a low level reconnaissance mission between Chechon and Chonchon, South Korea, contact with his plane was lost. He was listed as Missing in Action and was presumed dead on December 31, 1953. First Lieutenant Drama was a member of awarded the Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Purple Heart, the Korean Service Medal, the United Nations Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Korean Presidential Unit Citation and the Republic of Korea War Service Medal.
Data Source:	Korean War Veterans Honor Roll

Source Information:

Ancestry.com. *WWI, WWII, and Korean War Casualty Listings* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2005. Original data: American Battle Monuments Commission. *World War I Listing; World War II Listing; Korean War Listing*. American Battle Monuments Commission.

Description:

The American Battle Monuments Commission is responsible for twenty-four American cemeteries located in foreign countries. The Commission keeps a listing of casualties buried at these cemeteries and recorded on these memorials including those who were reported as Missing in Action from both World Wars and the Korean and Vietnam Wars. This database is a partial copy of this listing, including records from each of the twenty-four cemeteries, the Honolulu Memorial, and the East Coast Memorial. The following information may be available for some records: name of serviceman, birth year or date, war served in, rank, service number, location entered service from, cause of death, death date, death place, and cemetery name. [Learn more...](#)

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