

# ARMED FORCES MEDICAL EXAMINER SYSTEM

**Dover AFB, Delaware**



- INVESTIGATE DEATHS
- IDENTIFY THE FALLEN
- IMPROVE READINESS

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# HISTORY

The organization evolved over a 30-year period, as the field of forensic science began and expanded. It can trace its beginnings to the now closed Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, which in the early 1960s created a Division of Aerospace Pathology that focused on injuries from military aircraft accidents. Gradually, this expanded to include forensic pathology in deaths from other causes, such as criminal activity and unexplained deaths.

In 1988, the Department of Defense (DOD) Directive 6010.16 instituted the Division of Forensic Sciences and created the position of Armed Forces Medical Examiner at AFIP. The authority to conduct scientific forensic investigations was codified into federal law October 5, 1999, establishing 10 United States Code § 1471. This law explained and expanded the Armed Forces Medical Examiner's jurisdiction, provided direction for divisions in the Medical Examiner System and addressed support to non-DOD federal organizations.

In 1992, the DOD DNA Registry, to include the DNA reference repository and Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, were established and integrated into the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System. The organization was further expanded in 2003 through DOD Instruction 5154.30, which called for creation of a mortality registry.

The AFMES is committed to being the DOD's leader in providing medical-legal services and emerging technologies essential for the readiness, sustainability and survivability of our service members.



The AFMES is the only medical examiner system authorized to support DOD and other federal agencies' missions. It also works closely with the investigative arms of all military branches, to conduct forensic investigations of crime scenes upon request.



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MISSIONS

# FORENSIC TOXICOLOGY

The Division of Forensic Toxicology (FORTOX) is responsible for executing four distinct, yet synergistic missions. The Post-Mortem and Human Performance Laboratory is the DOD's centralized laboratory which performs routine toxicological examinations on: All military aircraft, ground and ship mishaps and fatalities; selected military autopsies; biological specimens from the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service criminal investigations, blood for legal alcohol and drug tests in DUI and DWI medico-legal determinations, blood and urine in fitness-for-duty interrogations and selected cases of national interest.

Also within the division is the DOD Drug Detection Quality Assurance Laboratory which provides quality assurance oversight for the DOD Drug Demand Reduction Program (DDRP). This laboratory is responsible for performing staff assistance visits, technical and administrative inspections, and provides quality assurance services including comprehensive proficiency testing for the six DDRP drug testing facilities.

The Special Forensic Toxicology Drug Testing Laboratory is the sole drug surveillance laboratory for the DOD and only confirmation testing facility in the DDRP for selected drugs of abuse. It is responsible for identifying and tracking emerging synthetic drugs and develops drug testing protocols using novel analytical techniques and instrumentation to provide a credible deterrent for the DDRP.

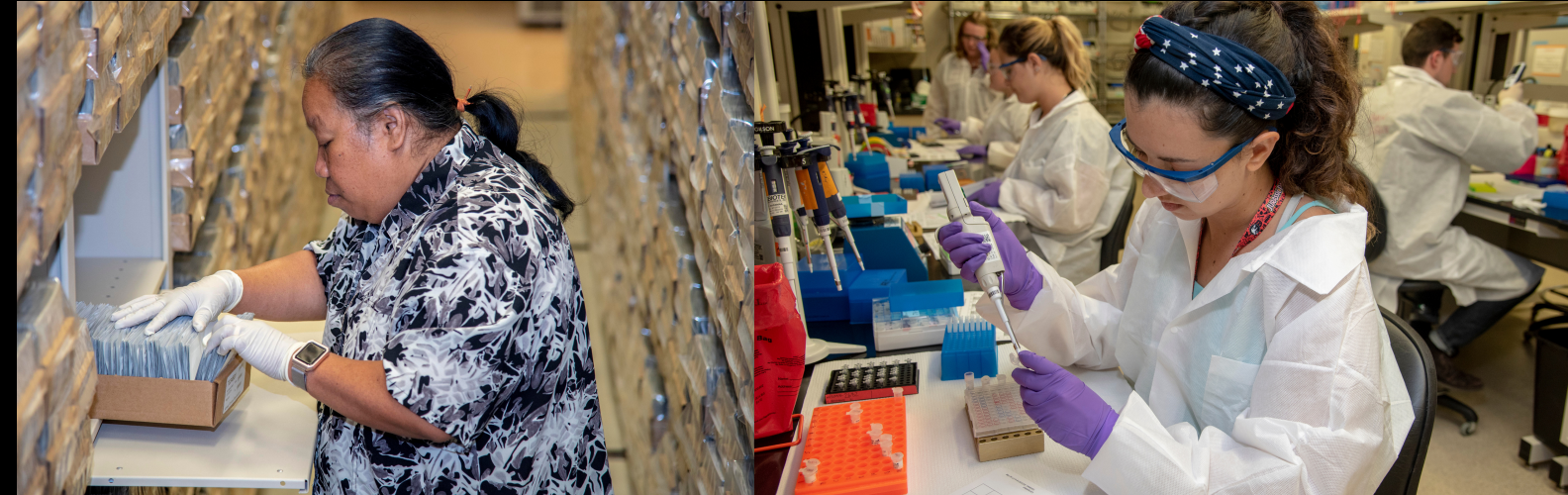
The Military Working Dog (MWD) Program laboratory manufactures military working dog training aids and provides comprehensive administrative support for the DOD's effort to restrict the presence and transport of illegal drugs on military bases world-wide. The MWD training aids contain scheduled drugs of abuse and are shipped to DOD kennels across the world. Inventory of these training aids are carefully tracked and managed to final disposition in compliance with Federal agency regulation.



# DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE DNA OPERATIONS

The DOD DNA Operations provides the DOD and other federal agencies with DNA mission support in the areas of personnel accounting; defense, national security and intelligence; law enforcement; and humanitarian missions. It's comprised of two subdivisions: The Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) and the Armed Forces Repository of Specimen Samples for the Identification of Remains (AFRSSIR).

The AFDIL is the sole DOD DNA laboratory tasked with current and past conflicts human remains identification efforts. It also provides scientific consultation, emerging technologies and educational services in the field of forensic DNA analysis to other federal and international agencies.



The Current Day Operation section is responsible for supporting AFMES with current medicolegal death investigation identification requirements, the Past Accounting Operation section provides DNA testing and reporting services to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) for use in the scientific identification of service members missing from previous American armed conflicts and the Family Reference-Laboratory Automation section is responsible for processing all mitochondrial DNA and nuclear DNA family references for use in the DPAA accounting process.

The AFRSSIR is responsible for managing, coordinating, protecting privacy, and maintaining the collection of DNA reference specimens for all active duty, reserve, and National Guard service members, deployable DOD civilians, Coast Guard and select Department of State and contractor personnel. Collection from all services members is mandatory under procedures established by the Military Services.



# FORENSIC PATHOLOGY INVESTIGATIONS

The Forensic Pathology Investigations (FPI) division is the center of medical-legal investigations for the DOD. It is authoritatively responsible for determining the cause and manner of death for all active duty military members, their dependent relatives, persons of interest to the U.S. government who die within federal jurisdiction and for scientifically identifying the decedent.

Working closely with investigative arms of each military branch; forensic investigation of crime scenes are conducted upon request. The organization also supports a variety of additional federal agencies. Operational deployment can be accomplished worldwide without advanced notice. Board certified forensic pathologists, forensic anthropologists, medical-legal death investigators, mortuary affairs specialists and histotechnicians all support this key function.



In addition, the division is the acknowledged expert in the area of military aircraft mishaps and deploy to the mishap site for recovery, identification, re-association and return of remains to the families of the deceased. Positive scientific identification of an individual is made in nearly 100 percent of cases investigated.

The FPI personnel dedicated to medical mortality surveillance are focused on rapidly detecting mortality due to unexplained circumstances or infectious diseases. They analyze all U.S. active duty military deaths for trends, preventable or modifiable risk factors and provide information which improves warfighter survivability.

