

# Missing In America Project

## Veterans Recovery Program



### Mission Statement:

The purpose of the MIA Project is to locate, identify and inter the unclaimed cremated remains of American veterans through the joint efforts of private, state and federal organizations. To provide honor and respect to those who have served this country by securing a final resting place for these forgotten heroes.

The Missing in America Project (MIAP) is a registered 501(c) 3 Non-profit Corporation. Launched in 2007.

The initial focus of the MIA Project will be a massive, nation-wide effort to locate, identify and inter the unclaimed remains of forgotten veterans. This task will be executed through the combined, cooperative efforts of members of the American Legion, other volunteer service and veteran organizations, local Funeral Homes, State Funeral Commissions, State and National Veterans Administration Agencies, and the State and National Veterans Cemetery Administrations. Local, state and national laws must be followed in the identification, claiming process and proper interment of the unclaimed remains of forgotten veterans.



The second phase of the MIA Project will be the creation of a network of individuals working with local Funeral Homes, State, and National Agencies to ensure that, from now on, the cremated remains of any unclaimed veteran will be identified, claimed and interred in a timely manner. This will be an ongoing project and will most likely be a cooperative effort between many voluntary service organizations.



As of 11-8-2012 there have been 8 Missions in the State of AZ. 73 Veterans have been buried with Honors. First Mission was completed in April 2011.

Funds raised through donations in Arizona STAY in Arizona, with the exception of a small stipend we send to National MIAP to help cover insurance costs, web page maintenance, and small incidentals.

There are NO salaries; volunteers perform ALL work.



Funeral Homes Visited:

- Nationally over 2,800
- **Arizona 21**

Cremains Found:

- Nationally over 16,000
- **Arizona over 400**

Veterans Cremains Identified:

- Nationally over 2,050
- **Arizona 82**

Veterans Interred (Inurned):

- Nationally 1,854
- **Arizona 73**

**Arizona Structure:**

- Jim Fuller, State Coordinator
- Kathy Laurier, Central and Northern AZ Coordinator
- Ed Torres, Southern AZ Coordinator
- Marilyn Fuller, Data and Financial
- Bryan Haver, Cremains Transfer
- Michael Nelson, Arizona State Escort Team Leader
- Natalya Nelson, Media Coordinator
- Ray Stephenson, Confederation of Clubs Point of Contact
- Shaun Pfund, Law Enforcement Liaison
- Gary and Liz Bartel, State Chaplains

Only 4 people involved in the MIAP project in AZ see personal information about the cremated Veteran. A privacy statement is signed as well as non-disclosure statements.

MIAP is NOT a motorcycle club, but we are dependent upon and have strong relationships with various clubs throughout the State of AZ. These clubs ride in support of MIAP Missions.

MIAP is NOT a political organization. Politicians support us, but when they are at a MIAP event, they are never permitted to campaign, speechify, or speak of politics. They represent the Veteran Community.

MIAP AZ works closely with the VA at the Regional Office, National Cemetery in Cave Creek AZ, and the Southern Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Sierra Vista.

MIAP AZ works closely with the various County Indigent Burial Services and County Fiduciaries (each County calls them by a different name).

MIAP is endorsed by the American Legion (Resolution 24).

MIAP AZ is endorsed by the Arizona Funeral Home, Cemetery and Cremation Association (AFCCA).

## Our Procedures:

It must be made absolutely clear that the Funeral Homes and the Funeral Home Association (AFCCA) are our friends and allies. They help us whenever and wherever they can. They truly recognize the unfortunate circumstances of unclaimed human remains (cremains), and especially the unclaimed Cremains of American Veterans. We have the Endorsement of the AFCCA and the strong assistance of its members. Unclaimed cremains are in no way a reflection on any funeral home, crematory or cemetery. Unfortunately life happens, and many people outlive relatives, die indigent or without located friends knowing they have passed. MIAP steps in to help the Veterans.

After establishing a relationship with an individual funeral home, MIAP is invited by that funeral home to share in the information they have on unclaimed cremains. We sign a privacy statement and we do not share information concerning the unclaimed, except with the Veteran Administration. Never more than 4 people in the MIAP organization have access to the personal information about the cremated remains.



We submit the names of the unclaimed to the Veterans Administration. They are set up to handle requests but as you might imagine, in today's world the wheels churn slowly so nationally we try not to over burden them. MIAP is respectful of their time and help.

When we receive the names of known Veterans back from the VA, we complete more paperwork where we actually take responsibility for the Cremains and act as their surrogate family. This paperwork is kept on file at MIAP National as well as with the local funeral home and the Veterans Administration. Shortly thereafter MIAP takes care custody and control of the cremains and they are respectfully moved, usually by the participating funeral homes, to a staging funeral home in market segments. The cremains are respectfully stored there until we have a number that will warrant an HONOR MISSION. In AZ we try to do our Missions in the early Spring and early Fall.



Traditionally we will have over 125 motorcycle riders from clubs all over the State of AZ, and many from our bordering States. In addition we usually expect over 30 cars/pick up trucks, etc. There are always 3 flag lines, one while loading the Cremains into the hearse, one while removing for placement in the Place of Honor and a third prior to being placed in their INDIVIDUAL proper burial vault.

Military from across the State participate, an Honor Detail carries the cremains from the funeral home to the hearse, and a Military Honor Guard carries from the hearse to the Place of Honor and then to the cremains vault. The VA and various Veteran organizations are present to help as well as many civic groups volunteering their services on Mission Day.

Cremains come to us in cans, bags, and cardboard boxes. They are buried in beautiful urns (see our facebook page) with the deceased Veteran's name, date of birth, date of death, and branch of service engraved on their urn.

[www.facebook.com/ArizonaMIAP](http://www.facebook.com/ArizonaMIAP)

[www.MIAPArizona.org](http://www.MIAPArizona.org)

[www.MIAP.us](http://www.MIAP.us)



***Missing In America Project – It's The Right Thing To Do!***