

ment, or grant, only for the purposes of section 552a of title 5 (relating to maintenance of records on individuals).”

Subsecs. (e), (f). Pub. L. 115–232, § 523(b)(1), (2), added subsec. (e) and redesignated former subsec. (e) as (f). Former subsec. (f) redesignated (g).

Subsec. (g). Pub. L. 115–232, § 523(b)(1), (3), redesignated subsec. (f) as (g) and added par. (3).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2021 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 116–283 effective Jan. 1, 2022, with additional provisions for delayed implementation and applicability of existing law, see section 1801(d) of Pub. L. 116–283, set out as a note preceding section 3001 of this title.

§ 1502. Missing persons: initial report

(a) PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATION BY COMMANDER.—After receiving information that the whereabouts and status of a person described in section 1501(c) of this title is uncertain and that the absence of the person may be involuntary, the commander of the unit, facility, or area to or in which the person is assigned shall make a preliminary assessment of the circumstances. If, as a result of that assessment, the commander concludes that the person is missing, the commander shall—

(1) recommend that the person be placed in a missing status; and

(2) not later than 10 days after receiving such information, transmit a report containing that recommendation to the Secretary concerned in accordance with procedures prescribed under section 1501(b) of this title.

(b) TRANSMISSION OF ADVISORY COPY TO THEATER COMPONENT COMMANDER.—When transmitting a report under subsection (a)(2) recommending that a person be placed in a missing status, the commander transmitting that report shall transmit an advisory copy of the report to the theater component commander with jurisdiction over the missing person.

(c) SAFEGUARDING AND FORWARDING OF RECORDS.—A commander making a preliminary assessment under subsection (a) with respect to a missing person shall (in accordance with procedures prescribed under section 1501 of this title) safeguard and forward for official use any information relating to the whereabouts and status of the missing person that results from the preliminary assessment or from actions taken to locate the person.

(Added Pub. L. 104–106, div. A, title V, § 569(b)(1), Feb. 10, 1996, 110 Stat. 338; amended Pub. L. 104–201, div. A, title V, § 578(b)(1), Sept. 23, 1996, 110 Stat. 2536; Pub. L. 105–85, div. A, title V, § 599(b)(1), Nov. 18, 1997, 111 Stat. 1768.)

AMENDMENTS

1997—Subsecs. (b), (c). Pub. L. 105–85 added subsec. (b) and redesignated former subsec. (b) as (c).

1996—Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 104–201, § 578(b)(1)(A), substituted “10 days” for “48 hours” and “Secretary concerned” for “theater component commander with jurisdiction over the missing person”.

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 104–201, § 578(b)(1)(D), struck out at end “The theater component commander through whom the report with respect to the missing person is transmitted under subsection (b) shall ensure that all pertinent information relating to the whereabouts and status of the missing person that results from the preliminary assessment or from actions taken to locate

the person is properly safeguarded to avoid loss, damage, or modification.”

Pub. L. 104–201, § 578(b)(1)(B), (C), redesignated subsec. (c) as (b) and struck out former subsec. (b) which read as follows: “TRANSMISSION THROUGH THEATER COMPONENT COMMANDER.—Upon reviewing a report under subsection (a) recommending that a person be placed in a missing status, the theater component commander shall ensure that all necessary actions are being taken, and all appropriate assets are being used, to resolve the status of the missing person. Not later than 14 days after receiving the report, the theater component commander shall forward the report to the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary concerned in accordance with procedures prescribed under section 1501(b) of this title. The theater component commander shall include with such report a certification that all necessary actions are being taken, and all appropriate assets are being used, to resolve the status of the missing person.”

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 104–201, § 578(b)(1)(C), redesignated subsec. (c) as (b).

§ 1503. Actions of Secretary concerned; initial board inquiry

(a) DETERMINATION BY SECRETARY.—Upon receiving a recommendation under section 1502(a) of this title that a person be placed in a missing status, the Secretary receiving the recommendation shall review the recommendation and, not later than 10 days after receiving such recommendation, shall appoint a board under this section to conduct an inquiry into the whereabouts and status of the person.

(b) INQUIRIES INVOLVING MORE THAN ONE MISSING PERSON.—If it appears to the Secretary who appoints a board under this section that the absence or missing status of two or more persons is factually related, the Secretary may appoint a single board under this section to conduct the inquiry into the whereabouts and status of all such persons.

(c) COMPOSITION.—(1) A board appointed under this section to inquire into the whereabouts and status of a person shall consist of at least one individual described in paragraph (2) who has experience with and understanding of military operations or activities similar to the operation or activity in which the person disappeared.

(2) An individual referred to in paragraph (1) is the following:

(A) A military officer, in the case of an inquiry with respect to a member of the armed forces.

(B) A civilian, in the case of an inquiry with respect to a civilian employee of the Department of Defense or of a contractor of the Department of Defense.

(3) An individual may be appointed as a member of a board under this section only if the individual has a security clearance that affords the individual access to all information relating to the whereabouts and status of the missing persons covered by the inquiry.

(4) A Secretary appointing a board under this subsection shall, for purposes of providing legal counsel to the board, assign to the board a judge advocate, or appoint to the board an attorney, who has expertise in the law relating to missing persons, the determination of death of such persons, and the rights of family members and dependents of such persons.

(d) DUTIES OF BOARD.—A board appointed to conduct an inquiry into the whereabouts and

status of a missing person under this section shall—

(1) collect, develop, and investigate all facts and evidence relating to the disappearance or whereabouts and status of the person;

(2) collect appropriate documentation of the facts and evidence covered by the board's investigation;

(3) analyze the facts and evidence, make findings based on that analysis, and draw conclusions as to the current whereabouts and status of the person; and

(4) with respect to each person covered by the inquiry, recommend to the Secretary who appointed the board that—

(A) the person be placed in a missing status; or

(B) the person be declared to have deserted, to be absent without leave, or (subject to the requirements of section 1507 of this title) to be dead.

(e) BOARD PROCEEDINGS.—During the proceedings of an inquiry under this section, a board shall—

(1) collect, record, and safeguard all facts, documents, statements, photographs, tapes, messages, maps, sketches, reports, and other information (whether classified or unclassified) relating to the whereabouts and status of each person covered by the inquiry;

(2) gather information relating to actions taken to find the person, including any evidence of the whereabouts and status of the person arising from such actions; and

(3) maintain a record of its proceedings.

(f) COUNSEL FOR MISSING PERSON.—(1) The Secretary appointing a board to conduct an inquiry under this section shall appoint counsel to represent each person covered by the inquiry or, in a case covered by subsection (b), one counsel to represent all persons covered by the inquiry. Counsel appointed under this paragraph may be referred to as "missing person's counsel" and represents the interests of the person covered by the inquiry (and not any member of the person's family or other interested parties). The identity of counsel appointed under this paragraph for a missing person shall be made known to the missing person's primary next of kin and any other previously designated person of the person.

(2) To be appointed as a missing person's counsel, a person must—

(A) have the qualifications specified in section 827(b) of this title (article 27(b) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice) for trial counsel or defense counsel detailed for a general court-martial;

(B) have a security clearance that affords the counsel access to all information relating to the whereabouts and status of the person or persons covered by the inquiry; and

(C) have expertise in the law relating to missing persons, the determination of the death of such persons, and the rights of family members and dependents of such persons.

(3) A missing person's counsel—

(A) shall have access to all facts and evidence considered by the board during the proceedings under the inquiry for which the counsel is appointed;

(B) shall observe all official activities of the board during such proceedings;

(C) may question witnesses before the board; and

(D) shall monitor the deliberations of the board.

(4) A missing person's counsel shall assist the board in ensuring that all appropriate information concerning the case is collected, logged, filed, and safeguarded. The primary next of kin of a missing person and any other previously designated person of the missing person shall have the right to submit information to the missing person's counsel relative to the disappearance or status of the missing person.

(5) A missing person's counsel shall review the report of the board under subsection (h) and submit to the Secretary concerned who appointed the board an independent review of that report. That review shall be made an official part of the record of the board.

(g) ACCESS TO PROCEEDINGS.—The proceedings of a board during an inquiry under this section shall be closed to the public (including, with respect to the person covered by the inquiry, the primary next of kin, other members of the immediate family, and any other previously designated person of the person).

(h) REPORT.—(1) A board appointed under this section shall submit to the Secretary who appointed the board a report on the inquiry carried out by the board. The report shall include—

(A) a discussion of the facts and evidence considered by the board in the inquiry;

(B) the recommendation of the board under subsection (d) with respect to each person covered by the report; and

(C) disclosure of whether classified documents and information were reviewed by the board or were otherwise used by the board in forming recommendations under subparagraph (B).

(2) A board shall submit a report under this subsection with respect to the inquiry carried out by the board not later than 30 days after the date of the appointment of the board to carry out the inquiry. The report may include a classified annex.

(3) The Secretary of Defense shall prescribe procedures for the release of a report submitted under this subsection with respect to a missing person. Such procedures shall provide that the report may not be made public (except as provided for in subsection (j)) until one year after the date on which the report is submitted.

(i) DETERMINATION BY SECRETARY.—(1) Not later than 30 days after receiving a report from a board under subsection (h), the Secretary receiving the report shall review the report.

(2) In reviewing a report under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall determine whether or not the report is complete and free of administrative error. If the Secretary determines that the report is incomplete, or that the report is not free of administrative error, the Secretary may return the report to the board for further action on the report by the board.

(3) Upon a determination by the Secretary that a report reviewed under this subsection is complete and free of administrative error, the

Secretary shall make a determination concerning the status of each person covered by the report, including whether the person shall—

- (A) be declared to be missing;
- (B) be declared to have deserted;
- (C) be declared to be absent without leave;

or

- (D) be declared to be dead.

(j) REPORT TO FAMILY MEMBERS AND OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS.—Not later than 30 days after the date on which the Secretary concerned makes a determination of the status of a person under subsection (i), the Secretary shall take reasonable actions to—

- (1) provide to the primary next of kin, the other members of the immediate family, and any other previously designated person of the person—

- (A) an unclassified summary of the unit commander's report with respect to the person under section 1502(a) of this title; and

- (B) the report of the board (including the names of the members of the board) under subsection (h); and

- (2) inform each individual referred to in paragraph (1) that the United States will conduct a subsequent inquiry into the whereabouts and status of the person on or about one year after the date of the first official notice of the disappearance of the person, unless information becomes available sooner that may result in a change in status of the person.

(k) TREATMENT OF DETERMINATION.—Any determination of the status of a missing person under subsection (i) shall be treated as the determination of the status of the person by all departments and agencies of the United States.

(Added Pub. L. 104-106, div. A, title V, §569(b)(1), Feb. 10, 1996, 110 Stat. 338; amended Pub. L. 104-201, div. A, title V, §578(a)(2), (b)(2), Sept. 23, 1996, 110 Stat. 2536; Pub. L. 105-85, div. A, title V, §599(a)(2), (d), Nov. 18, 1997, 111 Stat. 1767, 1769.)

AMENDMENTS

1997—Subsec. (c)(1). Pub. L. 105-85, §599(a)(2)(A), substituted “one individual described in paragraph (2)” for “one military officer”.

Subsec. (c)(2) to (4). Pub. L. 105-85, §599(a)(2)(B), (C), added par. (2) and redesignated former pars. (2) and (3) as (3) and (4), respectively.

Subsec. (f)(1). Pub. L. 105-85, §599(d)(1), inserted at end “The identity of counsel appointed under this paragraph for a missing person shall be made known to the missing person's primary next of kin and any other previously designated person of the person.”

Subsec. (f)(4). Pub. L. 105-85, §599(d)(2), inserted at end “The primary next of kin of a missing person and any other previously designated person of the missing person shall have the right to submit information to the missing person's counsel relative to the disappearance or status of the missing person.”

1996—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 104-201, §578(b)(2), substituted “section 1502(a)” for “section 1502(b)”.

Subsec. (c)(1). Pub. L. 104-201, §578(a)(2)(A), substituted “one military officer” for “one individual described in paragraph (2)”.

Subsec. (c)(2) to (4). Pub. L. 104-201, §578(a)(2)(B), (C), redesignated pars. (3) and (4) as (2) and (3), respectively, and struck out former par. (2) which read as follows: “An individual referred to in paragraph (1) is the following:

- “(A) A military officer, in the case of an inquiry with respect to a member of the armed forces.

“(B) A civilian, in the case of an inquiry with respect to a civilian employee of the Department of Defense or of a contractor of the Department of Defense.”

§ 1504. Subsequent board of inquiry

(a) ADDITIONAL BOARD.—If information that may result in a change of status of a person covered by a determination under section 1503(i) of this title becomes available within one year after the date of the transmission of a report with respect to the person under section 1502(a)(2) of this title, the Secretary concerned shall appoint a board under this section to conduct an inquiry into the information.

(b) DATE OF APPOINTMENT.—The Secretary concerned shall appoint a board under this section to conduct an inquiry into the whereabouts and status of a missing person on or about one year after the date of the transmission of a report concerning the person under section 1502(a)(2) of this title.

(c) COMBINED INQUIRIES.—If it appears to the Secretary concerned that the absence or status of two or more persons is factually related, the Secretary may appoint one board under this section to conduct the inquiry into the whereabouts and status of such persons.

(d) COMPOSITION.—(1) A board appointed under this section shall be composed of at least three members as follows:

- (A) In the case of a board that will inquire into the whereabouts and status of one or more members of the armed forces (and no civilians described in subparagraph (B)), the board shall be composed of officers having the grade of major or lieutenant commander or above.

- (B) In the case of a board that will inquire into the whereabouts and status of one or more civilian employees of the Department of Defense or contractors of the Department of Defense (and no members of the armed forces), the board shall be composed of—

- (i) not less than three employees of the Department of Defense whose rate of annual pay is equal to or greater than the rate of annual pay payable for grade GS-13 of the General Schedule under section 5332 of title 5; and

- (ii) such members of the armed forces as the Secretary considers advisable.

- (C) In the case of a board that will inquire into the whereabouts and status of both one or more members of the armed forces and one or more civilians described in subparagraph (B)—

- (i) the board shall include at least one officer described in subparagraph (A) and at least one employee of the Department of Defense described in subparagraph (B)(i); and

- (ii) the ratio of such officers to such employees on the board shall be roughly proportional to the ratio of the number of members of the armed forces who are subjects of the board's inquiry to the number of civilians who are subjects of the board's inquiry.

(2) The Secretary concerned shall designate one member of a board appointed under this section as president of the board. The president of the board shall have a security clearance that