

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

affords the president access to all information relating to the whereabouts and status of each person covered by the inquiry.

(3) One member of each board appointed under this subsection shall be an individual who—

(A) has an occupational specialty similar to that of one or more of the persons covered by the inquiry; and

(B) has an understanding of and expertise in the type of official activities that one or more such persons were engaged in at the time such person or persons disappeared.

(4) The Secretary who appoints 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, with the same qualifications as specified in section 1503(c)(4) of this title.

(e) DUTIES OF BOARD.—A board appointed under this section to conduct an inquiry into the whereabouts and status of a person shall—

(1) review the reports with respect to the person transmitted under section 1502(a)(2) of this title and submitted under section 1503(h) of this title;

(2) collect and evaluate any document, fact, or other evidence with respect to the whereabouts and status of the person that has become available since the determination of the status of the person under section 1503 of this title;

(3) draw conclusions as to the whereabouts and status of the person;

(4) determine on the basis of the activities under paragraphs (1) and (2) whether the status of the person should be continued or changed; and

(5) submit to the Secretary concerned a report describing the findings and conclusions of the board, together with a recommendation for a determination by the Secretary concerning the whereabouts and status of the person.

(f) COUNSEL FOR MISSING PERSONS.—(1) When the Secretary concerned appoints a board to conduct an inquiry under this section, the Secretary shall appoint counsel to represent each person covered by the inquiry. 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) A person appointed as counsel under this subsection shall meet the qualifications and have the duties set forth in section 1503(f) of this title for a missing person's counsel appointed under that section.

(3) The review of the report of a board on an inquiry that is submitted by such counsel shall be made an official part of the record of the board with respect to the inquiry.

(g) ATTENDANCE OF FAMILY MEMBERS AND CERTAIN OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS AT PROCEEDINGS.—(1) With respect to any person covered by an inquiry under this section, the primary next of kin, other members of the immediate family, and any other previously designated person of the person may attend the proceedings of the board during the inquiry.

(2) The Secretary concerned shall take reasonable actions to notify each individual referred to in paragraph (1) of the opportunity to attend the proceedings of a board. Such notice shall be provided not less than 60 days before the first meeting of the board.

(3) An individual who receives notice under paragraph (2) shall notify the Secretary of the intent, if any, of that individual to attend the proceedings of the board not later than 21 days after the date on which the individual receives the notice.

(4) Each individual who notifies the Secretary under paragraph (3) of the individual's intent to attend the proceedings of the board—

(A) in the case of an individual who is the primary next of kin or the previously designated person, may attend the proceedings of the board with private counsel;

(B) shall have access to the personnel file of the missing person, to unclassified reports, if any, of the board appointed under section 1503 of this title to conduct the inquiry into the whereabouts and status of the person, and to any other unclassified information or documents relating to the whereabouts and status of the person;

(C) shall be afforded the opportunity to present information at the proceedings of the board that such individual considers to be relevant to those proceedings; and

(D) subject to paragraph (5), shall be given the opportunity to submit in writing an objection to any recommendation of the board under subsection (i) as to the status of the missing person.

(5)(A) Individuals who wish to file objections under paragraph (4)(D) to any recommendation of the board shall—

(i) submit a letter of intent to the president of the board not later than 15 days after the date on which the recommendations are made; and

(ii) submit to the president of the board the objections in writing not later than 30 days after the date on which the recommendations are made.

(B) The president of a board shall include any objections to a recommendation of the board that are submitted to the president of the board under subparagraph (A) in the report of the board containing the recommendation under subsection (i).

(6) An individual referred to in paragraph (1) who attends the proceedings of a board under this subsection shall not be entitled to reimbursement by the United States for any costs (including travel, lodging, meals, local transportation, legal fees, transcription costs, witness expenses, and other expenses) incurred by that individual in attending such proceedings.

(h) AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION TO BOARDS.—

(1) In conducting proceedings in an inquiry under this section, a board may secure directly from any department or agency of the United States any information that the board considers necessary in order to conduct the proceedings.

(2) Upon written request from the president of a board, the head of a department or agency of the United States shall release information cov-

ered by the request to the board. In releasing such information, the head of the department or agency shall—

(A) declassify to an appropriate degree classified information; or

(B) release the information in a manner not requiring the removal of markings indicating the classified nature of the information.

(3)(A) If a request for information under paragraph (2) covers classified information that cannot be declassified, or if the classification markings cannot be removed before release from the information covered by the request, or if the material cannot be summarized in a manner that prevents the release of classified information, the classified information shall be made available only to the president of the board making the request and the counsel for the missing person appointed under subsection (f).

(B) The president of a board shall close to persons who do not have appropriate security clearances the proceeding of the board at which classified information is discussed. Participants at a proceeding of a board at which classified information is discussed shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations relating to the disclosure of classified information. The Secretary concerned shall assist the president of a board in ensuring that classified information is not compromised through board proceedings.

(i) RECOMMENDATION ON STATUS.—(1) Upon completion of an inquiry under this section, a board shall make a recommendation as to the current whereabouts and status of each missing person covered by the inquiry.

(2) A board may not recommend under paragraph (1) that a person be declared dead unless in making the recommendation the board complies with section 1507 of this title.

(j) REPORT.—A board appointed under this section shall submit to the Secretary concerned a report on the inquiry carried out by the board, together with the evidence considered by the board during the inquiry. The report may include a classified annex.

(k) ACTIONS BY SECRETARY CONCERNED.—(1) Not later than 30 days after the receipt of a report from a board under subsection (j), the Secretary shall review—

(A) the report;

(B) the review of the report submitted to the Secretary under subsection (f)(3) by the counsel for each person covered by the report; and

(C) the objections, if any, to the report submitted to the president of the board under subsection (g)(5).

(2) In reviewing a report under paragraph (1) (including the objections described in subparagraph (C) of that paragraph), the Secretary concerned 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 con-

cerning the status of each person covered by the report.

(l) REPORT TO FAMILY MEMBERS AND OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS.—Not later than 60 days after the date on which the Secretary concerned makes a determination with respect to a missing person under subsection (k), the Secretary shall—

(1) provide the report reviewed by the Secretary in making the determination to the primary next of kin, the other members of the immediate family, and any other previously designated person of the person; and

(2) in the case of a person who continues to be in a missing status, inform each individual referred to in paragraph (1) that the United States will conduct a further investigation into the whereabouts and status of the person as specified in section 1505 of this title.

(m) TREATMENT OF DETERMINATION.—Any determination of the status of a missing person under subsection (k) shall supersede the determination of the status of the person under section 1503 of this title and 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. 341; amended Pub. L. 104-201, div. A, title V, § 578(a)(3), Sept. 23, 1996, 110 Stat. 2536; Pub. L. 105-85, div. A, title V, § 599(a)(3), (d)(1), title X, § 1073(a)(30), Nov. 18, 1997, 111 Stat. 1767, 1769, 1902.)

#### AMENDMENTS

1997—Subsec. (d)(1). Pub. L. 105-85, § 599(a)(3)(A), substituted “as follows:” and subpars. (A) to (C) for “who are officers having the grade of major or lieutenant commander or above.”

Subsec. (d)(4). Pub. L. 105-85, § 599(a)(3)(B), substituted “section 1503(c)(4)” for “section 1503(c)(3)”.

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. (i)(1). Pub. L. 105-85, § 1073(a)(30), substituted “this section” for “this subsection”.

1996—Subsec. (d)(1). Pub. L. 104-201, § 578(a)(3)(A), added text of par. (1) and struck out former text of par. (1) which read as follows: “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 em-

ployee 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.”

Subsec. (d)(4), Pub. L. 104-201, § 578(a)(3)(B), substituted “section 1503(c)(3)” for “section 1503(c)(4)”.

### § 1505. Further review

(a) **SUBSEQUENT REVIEW.**—The Secretary concerned shall conduct subsequent inquiries into the whereabouts and status of any person determined by the Secretary under section 1504 of this title to be in a missing status.

(b) **FREQUENCY OF SUBSEQUENT REVIEWS.**—The Secretary concerned shall conduct inquiries into the whereabouts and status of a person under subsection (a) upon receipt of information that may result in a change of status of the person. The Secretary concerned shall appoint a board to conduct such inquiries.

(c) **ACTION UPON DISCOVERY OR RECEIPT OF INFORMATION.**—(1) Whenever any United States intelligence agency or other element of the Government finds or receives information that may be related to a missing person, the information shall promptly be forwarded to the Secretary of Defense.

(2) Upon receipt of information under paragraph (1), the Secretary of Defense shall as expeditiously as possible ensure that the information is added to the appropriate case file for that missing person and notify (A) the designated missing person’s counsel for that person, and (B) the primary next of kin and any previously designated person for the missing person of the existence of that information.

(3) The Secretary of Defense, with the advice of the missing person’s counsel notified under paragraph (2), shall determine whether the information is significant enough to require a board review under this section.

(d) **CONDUCT OF PROCEEDINGS.**—If it is determined that such a board should be appointed, the appointment of, and activities before, a board appointed under this section shall be governed by the provisions of section 1504 of this title with respect to a board appointed under that section.

(Added Pub. L. 104-106, div. A, title V, § 569(b)(1), Feb. 10, 1996, 110 Stat. 345; amended Pub. L. 104-201, div. A, title V, § 578(c), Sept. 23, 1996, 110 Stat. 2536; Pub. L. 113-291, div. A, title IX, § 916(c), Dec. 19, 2014, 128 Stat. 3478; Pub. L. 114-328, div. A, title IX, § 953(b), Dec. 23, 2016, 130 Stat. 2376.)

#### AMENDMENTS

2016—Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 114-328 substituted “Secretary of Defense” for “designated Agency Director” in pars. (1), (2), and (3).

2014—Subsec. (c)(1). Pub. L. 113-291, § 916(c)(1), substituted “the designated Agency Director” for “the office established under section 1501 of this title”.

Subsec. (c)(2), (3). Pub. L. 113-291, § 916(c)(2), substituted “designated Agency Director” for “head of the office established under section 1501 of this title”.

1996—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 104-201 reenacted heading without change and amended text generally. Prior to amendment, text read as follows:

“(1) In the case of a missing person who was last known to be alive or who was last suspected of being alive, the Secretary shall appoint a board to conduct an inquiry with respect to a person under this subsection—

“(A) on or about three years after the date of the initial report of the disappearance of the person under section 1502(a) of this title; and

“(B) not later than every three years thereafter.

“(2) In addition to appointment of boards under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall appoint a board to conduct an inquiry with respect to a missing person under this subsection upon receipt of information that could result in a change of status of the missing person. When the Secretary appoints a board under this paragraph, the time for subsequent appointments of a board under paragraph (1)(B) shall be determined from the date of the receipt of such information.

“(3) The Secretary is not required to appoint a board under paragraph (1) with respect to the disappearance of any person—

“(A) more than 30 years after the initial report of the disappearance of the missing person required by section 1502 of this title; or

“(B) if, before the end of such 30-year period, the missing person is accounted for.”

### § 1506. Personnel files

(a) **INFORMATION IN FILES.**—Except as provided in subsections (b), (c), and (d), the Secretary concerned shall, to the maximum extent practicable, ensure that the personnel file of a missing person contains all information in the possession of the United States relating to the disappearance and whereabouts and status of the person.

(b) **CLASSIFIED INFORMATION.**—(1) The Secretary concerned may withhold classified information from a personnel file under this section. If the Secretary concerned withholds classified information from a personnel file, the Secretary shall ensure that the file contains the following:

(A) A notice that the withheld information exists.

(B) A notice of the date of the most recent review of the classification of the withheld information.

(2)(A) If classified information withheld under this subsection refers to one or more unnamed missing persons, the Secretary shall ensure that notice of that withheld information, and notice of the date of the most recent review of the classification of that withheld information, is made reasonably accessible to the primary next of kin, members of the immediate family, and the previously designated person of all missing persons from the conflict or period of war to which the classified information pertains.

(B) For purposes of subparagraph (A), information shall be considered to be made reasonably accessible if placed in a separate and distinct file that is available for review by persons specified in subparagraph (A) upon the request of any such person either to review the separate file or to review the personnel file of the missing person concerned.

(c) **PROTECTION OF PRIVACY.**—The Secretary concerned shall maintain personnel files under this section, and shall permit disclosure of or access to such files, in accordance with the provisions of section 552a of title 5 and with other applicable laws and regulations pertaining to the privacy of the persons covered by the files.