



Friday November 3, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **Family Member Take Matters into Own Hands to Identify the USS Arizona Unknowns**

*While the US Government says it's not cost effective to identify 85 unknown American Service Members from the USS Arizona, one civilian family member took on the job and the financial burden to prove them wrong.*

**Fairfax County, Virginia** – In a display of dedication and patriotism, Springfield, VA resident Kevin Kline, the grandnephew of a U.S. Navy sailor who perished aboard the U.S.S. Arizona during the infamous attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, has embarked on a remarkable mission. In November 2022, Kline initiated an inquiry with the US Navy into the fate of over 85 unidentified service members from the U.S.S. Arizona, whose remains were buried in commingled graves labeled only as "USS Arizona unknown" at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, (Punchbowl) located just 10 miles from Pearl Harbor.

This revelation shattered the long-held belief of Kline and many other families, that their loved ones rested within the sunken USS Arizona ship, beneath the iconic USS Arizona Memorial. The shock was further compounded when Kevin Kline, spurred by hearing of the success of identifying nearly 400 unknowns from the USS Oklahoma, questioned the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) regarding the lack of efforts to identify the USS Arizona unknowns.

Kline was informed that the task of locating surviving family members and obtaining DNA Family Reference Samples would be prohibitively cumbersome, costly, and time-consuming for the DPAA. The mission, a fundamental duty of the DPAA, was deemed "not cost-effective" as it would only result in identifying a fraction of the 1,072 missing service members, since only 85 were separated from the ship and buried together as "unknown" in a local cemetery.

On April 6, 2023, Kline launched "Operation 85," aimed at locating all surviving family members of the missing USS Arizona crew members and persuading them to provide DNA Family Reference Samples to the US Navy and US Marine Corps Casualty Offices. Remarkably, he has fully funded this monumental project himself; temporarily putting his local Virginia real estate business on the sidelines for over seven months, all in an unwavering commitment to fulfilling the duty he believes the US Government and the DPAA owe to these fallen heroes.

Since April of this year, Kline and three dedicated volunteers have tracked down nearly 600 family members, with over 450 of those family having the viable yDNA & mtDNA reference samples needed by the Armed Forces Medical Examiner's System. The Department of Defense & the DPAA have a policy requirement of obtaining 60% DNA representation of the USS Arizona missing crew before they would begin identification of the 85 unknowns at the Punchbowl, and Kline's team efforts have reached almost the halfway point of the goal in just 7 months.

What is both inspiring and concerning is that "Operation 85" has become a civilian-driven initiative, shouldering the responsibility that the US Government and the DPAA should rightfully bear. The US Navy, US Marine Corps, the Pentagon, the Armed Forces Medical Examiner's System, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and the DPAA are now all collaborating with "Operation 85" and Kline's initiative, but the funding and labor have remained the burden and financial responsibility of Kline himself, a northern Virginia business owner, husband, and father of 2 little girls. Since inception, Kline admits he has spent upwards of \$15,000 of his own money to fund the project. He estimates between 800–1000 manhours have been used between himself and his volunteers so far but pointed out that each day they become more efficient in their process.

Kline stated, *"It's certainly been a learning curve, but our success has come with having efficiency in our methods. We've proven a small, dedicated team without bureaucratic distractions, can move mountains and accomplish the impossible in a very cost-effective manner."* *We're proving the government wrong in some ways, but we're also not wanting to point fingers. We hope the DPAA leadership sees the efficiency within our methods and incorporates them into all their projects. There are only 85 unknowns from the Arizona, but there are still tens of thousands of missing American service members from a multitude of different conflicts and wars around the world. We can always do better."*

**We implore you to help us raise awareness of "Operation 85" in an effort to connect with more family members who can contribute to the identification of the USS Arizona unknowns. With December 7th, the 81st anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor just around the corner, there is no better time to share this story of dedication and honor.**

For more information about "Operation 85," and DAILY UPDATED STATS of our progress..... please visit our website at [www.USSArizona.navy](http://www.USSArizona.navy).

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**OPERATION 85 VIDEO LINK:** <https://youtu.be/Z-82puIMWe8?si=gFmI3KCufOICVok>

