



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SOLDIER MISSING FROM WWII IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing since World War II, have been identified and are being returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

Army Pvt. William Yawney, 23, of Freemansburg, Pa., will be buried on May 25, in Bethlehem, Pa. On June 15, 1944, as part of an Allied strategic goal to secure the Mariana Islands, U.S. forces were ordered to occupy Saipan. After a month of intense fighting, enemy forces conducted a final attack on the 105th Infantry Regiment (IR), 27th Infantry Division's (ID) position. During these attacks, elements of the 105th IR sustained heavy losses, killing and injuring more than 900 servicemen. As a result of these attacks Yawney was reported killed in action.

After the battle, Yawney's family received a letter from his commanding officer stating that he had been buried in a military cemetery on Saipan; however, after the war U.S. Army Graves Registration Services exhumed and relocated all of the cemetery graves on Saipan, but found no grave for Yawney. In December 1948, a military review board investigated Yawney's loss and concluded his remains were non-recoverable.

On Sept. 3, 2011, a private archaeological company excavated land near Achugao Village, Saipan, and uncovered human remains. The remains were taken into custody by the Division of Historic Preservation, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Department of Community and Cultural Affairs and handed over to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC).

To identify the remains, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools such as dental comparisons and mitochondrial DNA, which matched Yawney's brother.

Of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II, more than 400,000 died. Today, more than 73,000 are unaccounted-for from the conflict.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the DPMO web site at <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> or call (703) 699-1169.

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