



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Airman Missing From WWII Accounted For

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

U.S. Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Gerald V. Atkinson, 21, of Ramer, Ala., will be buried Aug. 16 in Chattahoochee, Fla. On April 10, 1945, Atkinson and eight other crew members aboard a B-17G, were assigned to the 303rd Bombardment Group (Heavy). Atkinson was assigned as a spot jammer aboard the aircraft that departed Molesworth, England on a bombing mission over Oranienburg, Germany. During the mission the aircraft crashed and Atkinson was reported missing.

Atkinson's aircraft, along with 38 other aircraft from the 303rd Bombardment Group, were flying in a formation as part of a major allied bombing operation against targets in Germany. After successfully dropping their ordnance, Atkinson's aircraft was attacked by six to eight German ME-262 jets. The aircraft crashed into the Groß Glasow Lake near Groß Schonebeck, Germany. Of the crew of nine, only one crewmember survived.

In 1946 and 1947, German nationals recovered remains from Groß Glasow Lake believed to be the remains of American airmen and they were buried as unknowns in a local community cemetery. In August 1947, the remains were exhumed by the U.S. Army Graves Registration Command (AGRC) and reinterred as unknowns in Nueville en Condroz, Belgium.

In December 1948, the remains were again exhumed for possible identification and it was determined the remains were members of Atkinson's crew; however, the AGRC could not conclusively establish individual identifications and the unidentified remains were reinterred as unknowns in the Brittany American Cemetery and Memorial in St. James, France in November 1951.

In 2012, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) re-examined the AGRC's records and concluded that the possibility of identification of the unknown remains now exist. To identify Atkinson's remains, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence and mitochondrial DNA, which matched Atkinson's cousin.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for Americans, who went missing while serving our country, visit the DPMO web site at www.dtic.mil/dpmo or call (703) 699-1169.

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