



News Release

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Airmen Missing From WWII Accounted For

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office announced today that the remains of U.S. servicemen, missing in action from World War II, have been accounted for and are being returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

Army Air Forces 1st Lts. William D. Bernier, 28, of Augusta, Mont., Bryant E. Poulsen, 22, of Salt Lake City, Utah, and Herbert V. Young Jr., 23, of Clarkdale, Ariz., and Tech Sgts. Charles L. Johnston, 20, of Pittsburgh, Penn., and Hugh F. Moore, 36, of Elkton, Md., Staff Sgt. John E. Copeland, 21, of Dearing, Kan., and Sgt. Charles A. Gardner, 32, of San Francisco, Calif., have been accounted for and will be buried with full military honors. Bernier will be buried on Sept. 19 in his hometown, and the other service members will be buried at a date and locations still to be determined.

On April 10, 1944, Bernier, along with 11 other B-24D Liberator crew members took off from Texter Strip, Nazdab Air Field, New Guinea, on a mission to attack an anti-aircraft site at Hansa Bay. The aircraft was shot down by enemy anti-aircraft fire over the Madang Province, New Guinea. Four of the crewmen were able to parachute from the aircraft, but were reported to have died in captivity.

Following World War II, the Army Graves Registration Service (AGRS) conducted investigations and recovered the remains of three of the missing airmen. In May 1949, AGRS concluded the remaining nine crew members were unrecoverable.

In 2001, a U.S.-led team located wreckage of a B-24D that bore the tail number of this aircraft. After several surveys, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) teams excavated the site and recovered human remains and non-biological material evidence.

To identify Bernier's remains, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, including, mitochondrial DNA, which matched Bernier's cousins.

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

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