



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AIR FORCE PILOT MISSING FROM VIETNAM WAR IDENTIFIED

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

Air Force Maj. Thomas J. Beyer, 27, of Fargo, N.D., will be buried on Dec. 18 in his hometown. On July 30, 1968, he flew out of Chu Lai on a reconnaissance and forward air controller mission in an O-2A Skymaster over a target area in South Vietnam. He made initial radio contact with his ground controllers while headed for Quang Tri sector, but later was more than two hours overdue with a radio check-in. Ground troops reported seeing his aircraft fly over their position, headed west toward Kham Duc. Moments later they heard an explosion which they assumed was his aircraft. Search and rescue flights for six days failed to locate his aircraft, or to pick up any distress signals from Beyer.

Between 1993 and 1998, joint U.S.-Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S.R.V.) teams, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), analyzed numerous leads, interviewed villagers, and attempted to locate the last known position of the aircraft but found no evidence of the crash site.

In September 2009, an S.R.V. team, investigating an unrelated case, was informed of human remains and military-related equipment—including an identification tag for Thomas J. Beyer—that residents had turned over to local officials in the 1980s. The remains had been reportedly buried at that time near a district police station and forgotten. In December 2009, the remains and equipment were given to U.S. officials.

Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA – which matched that of his sister -- in the identification of Beyer's remains.

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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