



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AIRMEN MIA FROM VIETNAM WAR IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of 14 U.S. servicemen, missing in action from the Vietnam War, have been identified and will be returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

They are Lt. Col. Henry P. Brauner, Franklin Park, N.J.; Lt. Col. Richard Castillo, Corpus Christi, Texas; Lt. Col. Irving B. Ramsower II, Mathis, Texas; Lt. Col. Howard D. Stephenson, Bolton, Mass.; Maj. Curtis D. Miller, Palacios, Texas; Maj. Barclay B. Young, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; Capt. Richard C. Halpin, San Diego, Calif.; Capt. Charles J. Wanzel III, New York, N.Y.; Chief Master Sgt. Edwin J. Pearce, Milford, Penn.; Senior Master Sgt. James K. Caniford, Brunswick, Md.; Senior Master Sgt. Robert E. Simmons, DeRuyter, N.Y.; Senior Master Sgt. Edward D. Smith, Jr., Red Creek, N.Y.; Master Sgt. Merlyn L. Paulson, Fargo, N.D.; and Master Sgt. William A. Todd, Mahopac, N.Y. All were U.S. Air Force. Remains that could not be individually identified are included in a group which will be buried together Thursday in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. The individually-identified remains of several of the airmen were previously returned to their families for burial.

On March 29, 1972, the men were aboard an AC-130A Spectre gunship that took off from Ubon Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, on an armed reconnaissance mission over southern Laos. The aircraft was struck by an enemy surface-to-air missile and crashed. Search and rescue efforts were stopped after a few days due to heavy enemy activity in the area.

In 1986, joint U.S.- Lao People's Democratic Republic teams, lead by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), surveyed and excavated the crash site in Savannakhet Province, Laos. The team recovered human remains and other evidence including two identification tags, life support items and aircraft wreckage. From 1986 to 1988, the remains were identified as those of nine men from this crew. Between 2005 and 2006, joint teams resurveyed the site and excavated it twice. They found more human remains, personal effects and crew-related equipment, leading to the identification of the rest of the aircrew.

Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA – which matched that of the crewmembers' families – as well as dental comparisons in the identification of the remains.

Since late 1973, the remains of 931 Americans killed in the Vietnam War have been accounted-for and returned to their families with 1,715 service members still missing.

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

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