



## News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### AIRMEN MISSING IN ACTION FROM WWII IDENTIFIED

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

They are Capt. Lewis J. Geerlings, 36, Fremont, Mich.; 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Ray F. Fletcher, 27, Westboro, Mass.; Staff Sgt. Edwin Elliott, 24, Mattoon, Ill.; Cpl. Richard H. Loring, 31, New York; and American Red Cross civilian Carolyn Chapin. The remains representing the entire group will be buried in a single casket today in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C.

On May 10, 1944, the five were aboard a B-25C Mitchell bomber which took off from Ajaccio, Corsica, on a courier mission to Ghisonaccia, Corsica. They failed to reach the destination and were officially reported missing on May 13, 1944. Two days later French police reported finding aircraft wreckage on the island's Mount Cagna.

The U.S. Army's Graves Registration Command visited the crash site in 1944 and reported remains were not recoverable.

In May 1989, Corsican authorities notified U.S. Army Memorial Affairs Activity-Europe that they had found wreckage of an American WWII-era aircraft and turned over human remains collected at the mountainous location. They sent a survey team to the site and determined the terrain was too rugged to support a recovery effort. In 2003 and 2004, two French nationals provided U.S. authorities crew-related equipment recovered from the crash site.

A team from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) excavated the location in September 2005 and recovered additional human remains as well as more crew-related equipment.

Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used mitochondrial DNA—which matched that of some of the crewmembers' families—in the identification of the remains.

Of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II, more than 400,000 died. At the end of the war, the U.S. government was unable to recover and identify approximately 79,000 Americans. Today, more than 74,000 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) 699-1420.

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