



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WWII PEARL HARBOR SAILOR IDENTIFIED

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

He is Fireman Third Class Gerald G. Lehman, of Hancock, Mich., U.S. Navy. He will be buried Saturday in Hancock.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941, the battleship *USS Oklahoma* suffered multiple torpedo hits and capsized. As a result, 429 sailors and Marines died. Following the attack, 36 of these servicemen were identified and the remaining 393 were buried as unknowns in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii.

In 2003, an independent researcher contacted the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) with information he believed indicated that one of the *USS Oklahoma* casualties who was buried as an unknown could be positively identified. After reviewing the case, JPAC exhumed the casket and discovered that it contained Lehman's remains.

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

More than 400,000 of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II died. At the end of the war, the U.S. government was unable to recover, identify and bury approximately 79,000 as known persons. They include those buried with honor as unknowns, those lost at sea, and those missing in action. That number also includes the 1,100 sailors entombed in the *USS Arizona* Memorial in Pearl Harbor. Today, more than 72,000 Americans remain unaccounted-for from WW II.

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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