



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AIRMAN MISSING IN ACTION FROM WWII 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 are being returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

Army Staff Sgt. Marvin J. Steinford, of Keystone, Iowa, will be buried on June 21 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. On March 24, 1945, Steinford, along with nine other crew members, bailed out of their B-17G Flying Fortress bomber over Gic, Hungary. It had been hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire while on a bombing mission over Germany. Steinford and another crew member were struck by small arms fire while parachuting into a firefight between Soviet and German forces. The remains of the other crew member were found after the war where they had been buried by Hungarian villagers. The remaining eight members of the aircrew were captured by the Germans, held as POWs, and released at the end of the war.

According to accounts gathered by U.S. Army Graves Registration Service personnel in the late 1940s, Steinford's body was seen beside a German tank near Gic, but no further details about his exact whereabouts were recorded. Growing tensions in Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe closed off further U.S. access to Hungary.

In January 2003, in an effort to develop archival leads in Hungary from the Vietnam War, Korean and Cold Wars and World War II, a U.S. commissioner with the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs met with Hungarian officials in Budapest. Additional follow-up in Hungary by a DPMO researcher began to uncover specific information related to Steinford's loss. A second DPMO staff member, assisted by Hungarian academics and researchers, discovered archives and interviewed villagers who related first-hand information about the B-17G crash. Shortly thereafter the U.S. Embassy in Budapest notified DPMO that a local cemetery director had information directly related to Steinford.

He related that during a 2004 excavation and transfer of Soviet soldiers' remains at a war memorial and grave site in the city of Zirc, Hungarian workers discovered remains with a set of identification tags that bore Steinford's name. The dog tags were removed and all remains were transferred to another site on the outskirts of Zirc. What was believed to be Steinford's remains were marked with the Hungarian word "Cedulas," [the one with the tags] and reburied. The dog tags were returned to U.S. officials in March 2005.

From 2005 through late 2007, DPMO facilitated negotiations between U.S., Hungarian and Russian officials. Finally, in December 2007, the U.S. chairman of the commission secured agreement with the Russian first deputy minister of defense to allow a July 2009 exhumation from the war memorial site by specialists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command.

Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC used dental comparisons in the identification of Steinfeld's 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 73,000 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) 699-1169.

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