



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SOLDIERS MISSING IN ACTION FROM VIETNAM WAR IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office announced today that the remains of two 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 1st Lt. Paul G. Magers of Sidney, Neb., and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Donald L. Wann of Shawnee, Okla., both U.S. Army. Magers is to be buried Aug. 27 in Laurel, Mont., and Wann's funeral is on Aug. 21st in Fort Gibson, Okla. Representatives from the Army's mortuary office met with the next-of-kin of these men to explain the recovery and identification process and to coordinate interment with military honors on behalf of the Secretary of the Army.

On June 1, 1971, both men were flying aboard an AH-1 Cobra gunship in support of an emergency extraction of an Army Ranger team in Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam. After the Rangers were extracted, helicopters were ordered to destroy claymore mines which had been left behind in the landing zone. During this mission their helicopter was hit by ground fire, crashed and exploded. The ordnance aboard the aircraft began to detonate, tearing the aircraft apart. Pilots who witnessed the explosions concluded that no one could have survived the crash and explosions. Enemy activity in the area precluded a ground search.

In 1990, analysts from DPMO, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command and their predecessor organizations interviewed both American and Vietnamese witnesses and produced leads for field investigations. In 1993 and 1998, two U.S.-Socialist Republic of Vietnam teams, led by JPAC, surveyed the suspected crash site and found artifacts and debris consistent with a Cobra gunship. In mid-1999, another joint team excavated the site, but it stopped for safety reasons when the weather deteriorated. No remains were recovered, but the team did find wreckage associated with the specific crash they were investigating.

The Vietnamese government subsequently declared the region within Quang Tri Province where the aircraft crashed as off-limits to U.S. personnel, citing national security concerns. As part of an agreement with JPAC, a Vietnamese team unilaterally excavated the site and recovered human remains and other artifacts in 2008. The Vietnamese returned to the site in 2009, expanded the excavation area and discovered more remains and additional evidence.

Forensic analysis, circumstantial evidence and the mitochondrial DNA match to the Magers and Wann families by the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory confirmed the identification of the 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.