



News Release
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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 30, 2010

U.S. SOLDIER MIA FROM KOREAN WAR IDENTIFIED

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

He is Sgt. Charles P. Whitler, U.S. Army. He will be buried Thursday in his hometown of Cloverport, Ky.

Representatives from the Army met with Whitler's next-of-kin to explain the recovery and identification process, and to coordinate interment with military honors on behalf of the Secretary of the Army.

In early November 1950, Whitler was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, occupying a defensive position near the town of Unsan by the Kuryong River known as the "Camel's Head." Two enemy elements attacked the U.S. forces, collapsing their perimeter and forcing a withdrawal. Whitler's unit was involved in fighting which devolved into hand-to-hand combat around the 3rd Battalion's command post. Almost 400 men were reported missing or killed in action following the battle.

In late November 1950, a U.S. soldier captured during the battle of Unsan reported, during his debriefing, that he and nine American soldiers were moved to a house near the battlefield. The POWs were taken to an adjacent field and shot. Three of the 10 Americans survived, though one later died. He provided detailed information on the incident location.

Analysts from DPMO developed case leads with information spanning more than 58 years. Through interviews with eyewitnesses, experts evaluated circumstances surrounding the soldier's captivity and death and researched wartime documentation of his loss.

In May 2004, a joint U.S.-North Korean team, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, excavated a mass grave near the "Camel's Head." An elderly North Korean national reported he had witnessed the death of seven or eight U.S. soldiers near that location and provided the team with a general description of the burial site.

The excavation team recovered human remains and other personal artifacts, ultimately leading to the identification of seven soldiers from that site, one of whom was Whitler.

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

More than 2,000 servicemen died as prisoners of war during the Korean War. With this accounting, 8,022 service members still remain missing from the conflict.

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) 699-1420.

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