

MEMORANDUM FOR CORRESPONDENTS

No. 220-M
November 25, 1997

The remains of two American servicemen previously unaccounted-for from Southeast Asia have been identified and were returned to their families for burial in the United States.

One is identified as Capt. Robert M. Young, U.S. Army, of New Alexandria, Pa. The name of one U.S. Air Force airman lost in Laos is not being released at the request of his family

On May 2, 1970, Young was one of a crew of eight aboard a UH-1H Huey helicopter flying in logistical support of the Katum Fire Support Base in South Vietnam. Shortly after take-off, the pilot was forced to alter his course to avoid a heavy rainstorm. The helicopter came under hostile fire which caused an on-board fire and damaged its hydraulic system. The pilot made an emergency landing in a rice paddy in Kratie Province, Cambodia.

Four crewmembers were captured by communist forces. One was able to evade and made it back to friendly lines. Three others were believed to have been killed at the crash site.

Two of the captured Americans were subsequently released during Operation Homecoming in 1973. They reported that Young and the other individual lost in that incident had died while in captivity. The Vietnamese acknowledged the capture and death of these two men.

In 1989, the Vietnamese unilaterally repatriated remains believed to be those of U.S. servicemen. One of the boxes was determined to contain the remains of the service member who died in captivity with Young. Analysis of different remains by the Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii resulted in a putative association with Young, however, records were too limited to conclusively identify them as his.

By 1996, through advances in mitochondrial DNA technology, the remains previously turned over in 1989 were determined to be those of Young.

With the identification of these two servicemen, 2,102 Americans remain unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War.

The U.S. government welcomes and appreciates the cooperation of the governments of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Lao People's Democratic Republic which resulted in the accounting of these servicemen. We hope that such cooperation will bring increased results in the future. Achieving the fullest possible accounting for these Americans is of the highest national priority.