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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF IDENTIFICATION
PROCESS FOR THE FORMER VIETNAM UNKNOWN**

The Armed Forces Identification Review Board (AFIRB) approved late yesterday the identification by the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory of the remains interred in 1984 as the Vietnam Unknown in the Tomb of the Unknowns. The remains are those of U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Michael Joseph Blassie. The identification was made possible by the use of mitochondrial DNA comparison and forensic examination using state-of-the-art technology not available in 1984. The AFIRB determination is the last step in the established identification process.

Prior to the AFIRB's determination today, the report documenting the work of the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, and the Defense Prisoner of War Missing Personnel Office and the resulting recommended identification was reviewed independently and confirmed by three outside consultants with acknowledged expertise in forensic science. On July 7, the report was conveyed personally to the primary next-of-kin, Mrs. George C. Blassie, for her review.

The remains will be released to the custody of the U.S. Air Force for conveyance to the Blassie family in St. Louis, Mo. For information concerning movement of the remains, and memorial and funeral arrangements, contact Air Force Public Affairs at (703)695-0640.