

MEMORANDUM FOR CORRESPONDENTS

No. 195-M
December 27, 1999

The remains of an American serviceman previously unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War have been identified and are being returned to his family for burial in the United States.

He is identified as Air Force Colonel Robert M. Elliot of Springfield, Mass.

On Feb. 14, 1968, Elliot was flying his F-105D *Thunderchief* on a strike mission over Hanoi, North Vietnam, when he was hit by a surface-to-air missile. He radioed to the other pilots in the flight that he had been hit and they witnessed his crash. None of the other pilots saw any ejection attempt nor heard any emergency beeper signals, but one reported seeing a streaming (unopened) parachute at approximately 3,000 feet.

In April 1988, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam turned over remains to the United States that they attributed to Elliot. Returned with those remains was his military identification card. Then in 1992, Vietnam provided to U.S. officials several documents related to U.S. losses during the war. One entry was for Elliot. The description indicated that he died from his injuries.

In 1994, a joint U.S.-Vietnamese team interviewed residents of the province where Elliot's plane crashed. They took the team to the spot where they had buried his remains in 1968 and subsequently turned them over to their government for repatriation to the United States.

With the accounting of Elliot, 2,031 servicemen are missing in action from the Vietnam War. Another 552 have been identified and returned to their families since the end of the war. Analysis of the remains and other evidence by the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii confirmed the identification of Elliot.

The U.S. government welcomes and appreciates the cooperation of the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam that resulted in the accounting of this serviceman. 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.