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MIA Search Team Deploys to Laos

CAMP H.M. SMITH, Hawaii - A team of 53 mostly Hawaii-based U.S. military specialists leave for Laos Wednesday (Mar. 7) evening with hopes of recovering remains that may lead to the identification of American servicemen listed as missing in action since the Vietnam War.

On Mar. 11, members from Joint Task Force-Full Accounting, the U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii and the Joint Field Operating Base, Hawaii (Stony Beach), will join technical representatives from the Lao People's Democratic Republic to begin joint investigations and remains recovery operations in four Lao provinces and cities. Up to 29 cases involving aircraft and ground losses are scheduled for investigation during the 30-day operation. There are three primary excavation sites and eight alternate locations.

Since 1973, the remains of 596 American service members, formerly listed as unaccounted-for, have been identified and returned to their families. There are currently 1,987 Americans still unaccounted-for from the war in Southeast Asia, 418 in Laos.

The 53 team members will be comprised of 34 Army, six Air Force, five Marine and five Navy personnel, as well as three Department of Defense civilians.