



News Release
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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VIETNAM WAR MISSING IN ACTION SERVICEMEN IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of two U.S. Army officers, missing in action from the Vietnam War, have been identified and returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

They are Colonel Sheldon J. Burnett of Pelham, N.H. and Warrant Officer Randolph J. Ard of West Pensacola, Fla. Burnett is to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery on Wednesday. Ard was buried last month in Alabama.

On March 7, 1971, Ard flew his OH-58A *Kiowa* helicopter from South Vietnam to transport three passengers, including Burnett, to an area on the Vietnam-Laos border. As the helicopter approached a landing zone, it was hit by enemy antiaircraft fire and crashed in Savannakhet Province, Laos. Two of the passengers survived the crash and evaded capture as enemy forces attacked. When they reached friendly lines, the two reported that Burnett and Ard were still alive but badly injured.

After 11 days of heavy resistance, South Vietnamese ground forces reached the crash site but found no trace of the missing men or any graves.

Between 1989 and 1996, joint U.S.-Lao teams, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) conducted five separate field investigations which met with negative results. Then in 2002, U.S. specialists interviewed four former North Vietnamese soldiers, three of which had seen the bodies of the two unaccounted-for U.S. officers. The fourth soldier had drawn a sketch of the area shortly after the incident and all volunteered to assist U.S. investigators in Laos.

In 2003, the four Vietnamese witnesses and local Lao villagers guided the team to the crash site in Laos where they found some aircraft wreckage but no human remains. Then in Aug.-Sept. 2004, JPAC and Lao specialists excavated the crash site and two nearby graves where they found human remains, U.S. military clothing and personal effects, including Ard's identification tag.

After extensive analysis of the remains and teeth recovered during the excavation, JPAC scientists identified both Ard and Burnett.

Of the 88,000 Americans missing in action from all conflicts, 1,836 are from the Vietnam War, with 375 of those within the country of Laos. Another 747 Americans have been accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War.

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 703-699-1169.