



## News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **AIRMEN MISSING IN ACTION FROM VIETNAM WAR ARE IDENTIFIED**

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

They are Lt. Col. James H. Ayres, of Pampa, Texas, and Lt. Col. Charles W. Stratton, of Dallas, Texas, both U.S. Air Force. Ayres will be buried Aug. 10 in Pampa, and Stratton's burial date is being set by his family.

On Jan. 3, 1971, these men crewed an F-4E Phantom II aircraft departing Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base on a nighttime strike mission of enemy targets in Savannakhet Province, Laos. Shortly after Ayres initiated a target run, the crew of other aircraft in the flight observed a large explosion. No one witnessed an ejection or heard beeper signals, and communication was lost with the aircraft. Hostile activity in the area prevented search and rescue attempts.

In 2001, a joint U.S./Lao People's Democratic Republic (L.P.D.R.) team, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), traveled to Savannakhet Province and interviewed Laotian citizens about their knowledge of aircraft crash sites. One of the men led the team to what was believed to be the Ayres and Stratton crash site.

Later that year, another U.S./L.P.D.R team began excavating the site. The team recovered human remains and aircrew-related items. Between 2002 and 2005, joint teams visited the site six more times to complete the excavation, recovering more human remains and crew-related items.

Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA in the identification of the remains.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the DPMO web site at [www.dtic.mil/dpmo](http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo) or call (703) 699-1169.

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