



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AIRMAN MISSING IN ACTION FROM THE VIETNAM WAR IS IDENTIFIED

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

He is Capt. Stephen A. Rusch, U.S. Air Force, of Lambertville, N.J. He will be buried on Nov. 30 at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C.

On March 7, 1972, Rusch was the weapons systems officer in an F-4E Phantom II aircraft attacking enemy targets in Salavan Province, Laos. The plane was the number two aircraft in a flight of two. When Rusch's aircraft was cleared to begin its second run over enemy targets, the flight leader of the number one aircraft lost sight of Rusch's plane and observed enemy ground fire followed by a large explosion. An immediate search was begun, but all attempts to establish radio contact and later search efforts were unsuccessful.

In 1995, a joint U.S./Lao People's Democratic Republic (L.P.D.R.) team, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), investigated the incident and interviewed several Laotian citizens. The team surveyed the crash site identified by one of the citizens and found aircraft wreckage.

In 2001, a U.S. citizen, acting as an intermediary for a Laotian citizen, turned over to U.S. officials a bone fragment and a photocopy of Rusch's military identification tag. The bone fragment proved not to be from Capt. Rusch.

In 2002-2003, joint teams conducted two excavations of the crash site. The teams recovered human remains and non-biological evidence including U.S. coins and life support equipment.

Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA and dental comparisons 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 <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> or call (703) 699-1169.

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