

## MEMORANDUM FOR CORRESPONDENTS

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The remains of three American servicemen previously unaccounted-for from Southeast Asia have been identified and were returned to their families for burial in the United States.

They are identified as Maj. Glenn A Belcher, of Fessendon, N.D.; Maj. Ronald N. Sittner, of South Euclid, Ohio, both U.S. Air Force; and 1st Lt. Brent E. Davis, U.S. Marine Corps, of Santa Clara, Calif.

On Dec. 31, 1967, Belcher was leading an armed reconnaissance mission over Laos when others in his flight observed the A-1E Skyraider roll several times before striking the ground near an enemy gun position. A search of the area revealed no evidence to demonstrate that Belcher had survived the crash.

In 1994 and 1995, joint U.S.-Lao teams investigated a suspected crash site believed to be that of Belcher. The teams recovered several bone fragments, some personal effects, pilot related artifacts, and aircraft wreckage. The remains were subsequently identified as Belcher's.

On Aug. 23, 1967, Sittner and the aircraft commander were flying an F-4D Phantom on a strike mission over North Vietnam. Their aircraft was hit by air-to-air missiles and crashed over Thai Nguyen Province. The aircraft commander was captured by the Vietnamese and later released during Operation Homecoming in 1973.

Joint U.S.-Vietnamese teams investigated this incident three times between 1990 and 1992. Local villagers were able to accurately recall the shootdown and described finding the remains of a pilot hanging in a tree. They reportedly buried the body nearby. A team excavated a suspected burial site and found remains and crew-related items. The remains were determined to be those of Sittner.

On March 18, 1966, Davis and a crewmember were providing electronic countermeasures for an air strike over Nghe An Province, North Vietnam when his EF-10B Skynight exploded in midair. No contact with either man after the explosion was ever established. The cause of the explosion remains unknown, however, it is probable that the aircraft was struck by an enemy surface-to-air missile.

In 1993, a joint U.S.-Vietnamese team traveled to Nghe An Province and interviewed local villagers who provided information on this incident. They reported that one American had ejected from the burning aircraft but his shoot failed to open. The other pilot was found dead at the crash site. A villager turned over to U.S. authorities remains he claimed to have recovered from the crash site.

In 1995 and 1997, U.S.-Vietnamese joint teams excavated the crash area and recovered suspected bone fragments and wreckage material. The suspected human remains are currently undergoing forensic analysis at the U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii. Mitochondria DNA testing performed on the bone fragment turned over in 1993 confirmed the identification as that of Davis. His crewmate is still unaccounted for.

With the identification of these three servicemen, 2,099 Americans remain unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War.

The U.S. government welcomes and appreciates the cooperation of the governments of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Lao People's Democratic Republic which resulted in the accounting of these servicemen. 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.