

MEMORANDUM FOR CORRESPONDENTS

No. 110-M
June 30, 1998

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

They are identified as U.S. Marine Corps Capt. John B. Sherman of Darien, Conn., and U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Robert F. Preiss Jr., of Cornwall, N.Y.

On March 25, 1966, Sherman was dive-bombing enemy positions in Quang Ngai Province, South Vietnam when his F-8E Crusader was struck by enemy ground fire. The aircraft crashed in Quang Nam-Da Nang Province. A ground search for his remains was not possible because of enemy activity in the area.

In April and May 1993, a joint team of U.S./Socialist Republic of Vietnam investigators interviewed several local informants in Quang Nam-Da Nang Province who provided information about the crash of a U.S. aircraft. The U.S. team, led by the Joint Task Force Full Accounting, reported that two of the informants recalled an incident in March or April 1966 in which they buried the body of an American pilot near a crash site. Two other witnesses reported they disinterred the remains in 1990, which they turned over to the joint team.

The joint team surveyed the crash and burial sites indicated by the local informants and found aircraft wreckage as well as pilot-related items. The remains and other items were returned to the U. S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii, where laboratory analysis confirmed the identification.

On May 12, 1970, Preiss was the leader of a reconnaissance team that came under enemy fire in Laos. He suffered a mortal wound but because of enemy action and difficult terrain his body could not be recovered. Six days later, a recovery team failed to locate Preiss' body. The team reported that a rock slide had covered the body with large boulders.

In March and April of 1995, a joint U.S./Lao People's Democratic Republic team investigated Preiss' loss in Xekong Province. The team conducted a ground search along the banks of the stream in the vicinity of the loss location with negative results. In May 1995, another joint team interviewed villagers nearby and persuaded them to take the team to a place where remains allegedly had been seen. The team did recover some personal equipment and possible human remains.

A third trip was made to the area in April 1997. This team recovered material evidence, however no remains or personal effects were found during this investigation. In early 1998, another joint team excavated the site where they recovered possible human remains and personal effects.

Anthropological analysis of the remains and other evidence by CILHI confirmed the identification of Preiss. With the identification of these two servicemen, 496 Americans have been accounted for since the end of the war in Southeast Asia, with 2,087 still unaccounted-for.

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 that 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.