

NEWS RELEASE  
JOINT TASK FORCE-FULL ACCOUNTING PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
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September 29, 1998

RELEASE NO. #98-43

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HAWAII MIA SEARCH TEAM DEPLOYS TO LAOS

CAMP H.M. SMITH, HAWAII - A team of 43 mostly Hawaii-based U.S. military specialists left for Laos Sunday night with hopes of recovering human remains that may lead to the identification of unaccounted-for American servicemen from the war in Southeast Asia.

On Thursday, members from Joint Task Force-Full Accounting at Camp Smith and the U.S. Army's Central Identification Lab at Hickam Air Force Base will join technical representatives from the Lao People's Democratic Republic to begin joint investigations and remains recovery operations in three Laotian provinces. Twenty-four cases involving aircraft and ground losses will be investigated during the 30-day operation. As many as eight sites will be excavated.

There were 2,583 unaccounted-for Americans at the end of the war in 1973. Today, 504 formerly unaccounted-for Americans have been identified and returned to their families. Yet, 2,079 Americans still remain unaccounted-for from the war in Southeast Asia, 444 in Laos. Seeking the fullest accounting of American service members is a high national priority for the United States, which welcomes and appreciates the cooperation and assistance of the Lao government in these investigative and recovery operations.

This will be the 40th Joint Field Activity conducted in Laos, and the 93rd overall JFA in the tri-country region of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia since Joint Task Force-Full Accounting was formed in January 1992 at Camp Smith.

Leading the American team is U.S. Army Lt. Col. Bob Gahagan, commander of JTF-FA's Detachment Three in Vientiane.