

MEMORANDUM FOR CORRESPONDENTS

No. 112-M
July 07, 1999

UNACCOUNTED-FOR SERVICEMAN IDENTIFIED

The remains of an American serviceman previously unaccounted-for from the war in Southeast Asia have been identified and are being returned to his family for burial in the United States.

He is identified as Army Specialist 4th Class Roger L. Smith of South Point, Ohio.

On Oct. 3, 1968, Smith was the crew chief aboard a UH-1H Huey helicopter flying on a command-and-control mission. While over Tay Ninh Province, South Vietnam, the aircraft was hit by enemy ground fire and crashed, catching fire almost immediately. Two of the crewmembers were rescued, but two others perished. Onsite attempts to locate Smith's body among the smoke and aircraft wreckage were unsuccessful.

In November 1993, a joint U.S./Vietnam team, led by the Joint Task Force-Full Accounting, interviewed several villagers in Tay Ninh Province who supplied information about the wreckage of a U.S. helicopter. One of the villagers said she had found the burned wreckage of a helicopter in 1977 or 1978 and observed what she believed to be human remains. She led the team to the crash site where they confirmed the presence of the wreckage and recovered small pieces of wreckage and two boot fragments.

In October and November 1994 a joint U.S./Vietnam team excavated the crash site surveyed the previous year. The team recovered bone fragments as well as crew-related artifacts amid the wreckage.

Anthropological analysis of the remains and other evidence by the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii confirmed Smith's identification. With the accounting of this serviceman, the remains of 523 servicemen have been identified since the end of the war. There are currently 2,060 Americans still unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War.

The U.S. government welcomes and appreciates the cooperation of the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which resulted in the accounting of this serviceman. 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.