

MEMORANDUM FOR CORRESPONDENTS

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Remains believed to be from a group of 18 U.S. Marines killed in action on Butaritari Island during World War II's Makin Atoll Raid in August, 1942, will be repatriated at a ceremony on Hickam Air Force Base, at 3 p.m. Hawaii time, Friday, Dec. 17.

The Marines were from the famous 2nd Raider Battalion, and the remains are believed to include those of Sgt. Clyde Thomason, the first enlisted Marine awarded the Medal of Honor during World War II. The medal was presented posthumously for his actions on Butaritari.

The U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii spearheaded the recovery effort, which began in August 1998. According to CILHI officials, the recovery of remains on Butaritari represents the largest and potentially the most significant to date.

Personally led by one of the founders of the Raiders, then-Maj. Evans Carlson, two companies of Marine Raiders battled the Japanese force holding Butaritari, leaving at least 83 enemy dead and destroying two seaplanes. The son of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Maj. James Roosevelt, also participated in the raid, and, along with the other surviving Marine Raiders, successfully withdrew by rubber boats to awaiting U.S. Navy submarines.

While the remains are believed to be those of the Marines killed in action on Butaritari, positive identification will still need to be carried out by CILHI. According to officials at CILHI, positive identification can take up to a year to complete.

Media and interested parties are invited to attend the repatriation ceremony. For more information on the ceremony, please contact Capt. Chris Hughes of the Marine Forces Pacific Public Affairs Office at (808) 477-8314.