

IMMEDIATE RELEASE**WWII, KOREAN WAR REMAINS DISINTERRED IN HAWAII**

Four sets of remains believed to be those of missing in action servicemen from World War II and the Korean War were disinterred yesterday from Hawaii's National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

The cemetery, known as the Punch Bowl, is the resting-place of more than 800 "unknown" remains from the Korean War, and more than 2,000 from WWII. Most of the Korean War remains were received by the U.S. at the ceasefire in 1953. Another 204 were turned over by the North Koreans between 1991 and 1994 and are currently in the possession of the Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii (CILHI).

The disinterment was supervised by CILHI specialists who will then apply forensic identification techniques, including mitochondrial DNA, to seek to identify the remains. The Punch Bowl Cemetery is part of the National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs.

In September, 1999, CILHI disinterred two sets of remains believed to be those of Korean War soldiers. Since that time, the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) has carried out hundreds of tests on these remains, but has been unable to establish a reliable "sequence" of test results. Scientists at AFDIL have theorized that a preservative chemical used in the 1950s may be blocking the extraction of the DNA.

These two sets of remains were thought to have the highest probability of identification, and potential family members of these unknowns were contacted to obtain DNA information.

The additional four sets of remains disinterred yesterday are also viewed by CILHI scientists as offering a high probability of identification. Family members believed to be associated with these remains have also been contacted.

Following the disinterment, CILHI will request that AFDIL conduct mitochondrial DNA tests to compare to family samples. AFDIL and CILHI were the two agencies who successfully identified 1st Lt. Michael Blassie from the Tomb of the Unknowns in 1998. Blassie's remains now rest at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis.