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MIA SEARCH TEAM DEPLOYS TO LAOS

CAMP H.M. SMITH, HAWAII - A team of 50 mostly Hawaii-based U.S. military specialists leaves for Laos Thursday, May 31, with hopes of recovering remains that may lead to the identification of American servicemen listed as missing in action since the Vietnam War.

On June 4, members from Joint Task Force-Full Accounting and the U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii will join technical representatives from the Lao People's Democratic Republic to begin joint investigations and remains recovery operations in four Lao provinces and cities. Up to 29 cases involving aircraft and ground losses are scheduled for investigation during the 30-day operation. There are four primary excavation sites and eight alternate locations.

Since 1973, the remains of 612 American service members, formerly listed as unaccounted-for, have been identified and returned to their families. There are currently 1,973 Americans still unaccounted-for from the war in Southeast Asia, 417 in Laos.

The 50 team members will be comprised of 28 Army, ten Air Force, four Marine and four Navy personnel, as well as four Department of Defense civilians.