

IMMEDIATE RELEASENo. 246-01
June 6, 2001**WORLD WAR II AIRMEN RECOVERED IN TUNISIA**

Remains believed to be those of the six-man crew of a World War II bomber have been located in Tunisia and will be repatriated today in ceremonies in Tunis.

The aircraft wreckage was discovered in November 2000 during a dredging operation of Lake Tunis, near the capital city of Tunis. The aircraft was under approximately six feet of silt and mud. The government of Tunisia halted the dredging operation and contacted U.S. authorities. The U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI), mounted underwater excavations in November and January, recovering remains, personal effects and aircraft debris. U.S. Navy specialists in underwater salvage operations and unexploded ordnance assisted the CILHI team. The teams received the full support of the Tunisian government during all phases of the recovery work.

The bomber, a Martin Marauder B-26, crashed in the water after having been struck by enemy anti-aircraft fire during a raid on El Aouina air base in December 1942. Based on serial numbers from the aircraft, the Army has made a tentative association with a specific aircraft, and has located most of the surviving family members of the crew.

Today's repatriation ceremony will include officials of the Tunisian government, U.S. Ambassador Rust Deming and other U.S. officials, including three members of the staff of the CILHI. The remains are to be flown to the CILHI laboratory in Hawaii, where the forensic identification process will begin.

During the past 28 years, CILHI teams have recovered remains believed to be those of 389 World War II servicemen from areas throughout the world. More than 250 of these have been identified and returned to their families for burial with full military honors.