

IMMEDIATE RELEASE**VIETNAM WAR MIA IDENTIFIED**

Remains of a U.S. Air Force pilot missing in action from the Vietnam War have been identified and are being returned to his family. The formerly missing serviceman is Air Force Maj. Victor J. Apodaca, Jr. of Englewood, Colo.

"Achieving the fullest possible accounting of Americans missing in action is of the highest national priority," said Alan Liotta, acting deputy assistant secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs. "The support we received from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam enabled us to identify this serviceman, and we look forward to continued cooperation."

On June 8, 1967, Apodaca and Capt. Jon T. Busch were flying an armed reconnaissance mission over Quang Binh province, North Vietnam, when their F-4C Phantom was struck by enemy fire. Other U.S. aircrews in the area reported receiving a radio transmission from Apodaca that he had lost use of the hydraulic system on his aircraft. Soon after, a weak emergency beeper signal was heard, but no aircrew saw where Apodaca's plane might have crashed. A visual and electronic search of the area continued into the next day without results.

In July 1988, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam turned over to the United States 25 boxes of remains believed to be those of missing American servicemen. Among those were remains associated with Apodaca and Busch as well as an identification tag for Maj. Apodaca. From those remains, Busch was later identified, but not Apodaca.

Later that year, a joint U.S.-Vietnamese team led by the Joint Task Force-Full Accounting interviewed inhabitants of Quang Binh province who described a 1967 crash which appeared to correlate to the loss of Apodaca and Busch. One of the witnesses said he had earlier in the year turned over some remains and an identification tag to local authorities. Those were included in the remains repatriated in July 1988. The joint team traveled to the suspected crash site, but was unable to confirm its exact location.

In April 1989, the Vietnamese turned over another 21 boxes of remains and their records indicated that Apodaca's was among them. Another joint team in 1991 examined documents in Quang Binh province that added more detail about the crash, as well as burial information on the two crew members. Over the course of the next decade, search teams continued to investigate leads while scientists worked with the remains that had been turned over by the Vietnamese.

In 1999, CILHI scientists completed a forensic analysis of the remains that were turned over by the Vietnamese in 1989, and confirmed Apodaca's identification through the use of mitochondrial DNA.

Apodaca's remains will returned to his family for burial with full military honors.