

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TEAM TO RECOVER REMAINS OF WORLD WAR II U.S. AIRMEN IN RUSSIA

A team of 10 specialists left Hawaii for Russia yesterday to bring home the remains of seven Navy airmen missing in action from World War II.

The wreckage of a U.S. Navy PV-1 Ventura bomber was discovered on Russia's Kamchatka peninsula in 1999. The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, working closely with the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, led a small survey team in August 2000 to the isolated crash site on the slopes of a volcano. There, the team confirmed that the Navy aircraft was one missing from a March 25, 1944, mission from Alaska to the Kurile Islands, south of the Kamchatka peninsula, to bomb Japanese targets.

The survey team found large pieces of aircraft debris and unexploded 500-pound bombs in the wreckage. The team also recovered some human remains and brought them to the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI). During the past year, the U.S. Navy has located family members of all but one of the crewmembers. The Navy also obtained blood samples from the families should DNA comparisons prove necessary if additional remains are recovered.

The anthropologist who participated in the August survey leads this recovery team for what is expected to be a 30-day excavation. Harsh weather conditions on the Kamchatka peninsula limit the ability to conduct operations to about one 30-day period per year.

The remains will be flown back to CILHI's lab at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, where the forensic identification process will take place.

Since 1978, CILHI scientists have identified the remains of nearly 300 servicemen missing in action from World War II.