

## **NEWS RELEASE #01-003**

Media Advisory

September 07, 2001

### **CILHI Team Returns from Russia with Possible WWII Remains**

**HICKAM AFB, Hawaii --** A 10-man team is slated to return to Hawaii late Sunday, Sept. 9, after recovering possible human remains from a World War II bomber wreck site in Russia. The U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii team left Aug. 5 to excavate the remains in a wreckage of a US Navy PV-1 Ventura patrol bomber that was located in mountainous terrain in the far eastern peninsula of Kamchatka, Russia. The team consisted of a linguist, an explosive ordnance technician, three mortuary affairs specialists, a photographer, a medic, an anthropologist, a team leader and a noncommissioned officer in charge. An investigative team from CILHI surveyed the wreckage in August 2000 and recovered some remains assumed to be crewmembers. The team recently closed the site after recovering human remains, as well as all personal items in the area believed to belong to the seven crewmembers who were on the bomber. The team recovered American coins dating back to World War II, a personal wallet, and pieces of military garments. The CILHI can not determine the definite number of human remains until they are processed through the laboratory where forensic anthropologists and odontologists will attempt to establish individual identities. The recovery mission was unique for CILHI, with team members cutting through the wreckage before they could start the evacuation process. The CILHI team worked with approximately 25 Russian counterparts setting up a base camp three kilometers downhill from the wreckage. The camp started with 21 tents and closed with 15 due to weather conditions. The weather at the recovery site ranged from temperatures in the 80s to the 40s and included heavy rain and fog. The wreckage is believed to be that of a Navy bomber missing since March 25, 1944. On that date five planes took off from Attu, Alaska in the Aleutian Islands. The planes were on "Empire Express," a reconnaissance and bombing mission over the Japanese bases on the northern Kurile Islands. During the bomber's mission, bad weather and hazardous flying conditions contributed to the planes becoming widely separated and only one flight completed its mission. Of the other planes on the mission, one crashed soon after takeoff, two were unable to reach the target area and returned to base, and one failed to return. Thus far in the year 2001, CILHI has identified 26 World War II unaccounted for service members. In the year 2000, CILHI identified 39 World War II unaccounted for service members.