

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REMAINS OF WORLD WAR II BOMBER CREW IDENTIFIED AND RETURNED

The remains of a ten-man U.S. Army Air Corps bomber crew, missing in action from World War II, have been recovered, identified and returned to their families in the United States.

The crew members of the B-24D Liberator are identified as: 2nd Lieutenants Raymond J. Drewelow, Waterloo, Iowa; Edward M. Sparks, Alton, Kan.; James H. Nelson, Tallulah, La.; George R. Ellison, Danville, Va.

Also, Staff Sergeants Joel G. Williams, Meadows of Dan, Va.; Salvatore J. Elhai, Brooklyn, N.Y.; William E. Van Camp, South Bend, Ind.; Arthur J. Swartz Jr., Aurora, Ill.; Sergeants Gilbert F. Smith, Princeton, Ind.; and Anthony G. Scaccia, New Orleans, La.

On March 5, 1944, Drewelow was piloting the B-24 on a bombing mission against Japanese targets over the Hansa Bay area of Papua New Guinea. The aircraft and crew disappeared on that mission in heavy thunderstorms.

No radio transmissions were ever received from the crew, and subsequent searches did not locate them. After the war, U.S. Army graves registration teams conducted wide searches in New Guinea without success.

In early 1989, the former curator of the Air War Museum in Port Moresby, New Guinea, notified the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii (CILHI), that wreckage of a B-24 had been located in Tauta, Mandang Province.

Between July 1989 and August 1990, three CILHI teams located, investigated and excavated the site, recovering remains and artifacts associated with the crash. The remains were transported to CILHI where the forensic process included the use of mitochondrial DNA to confirm the identification of each of the crewmembers.

Of the more than 88,000 American service members still missing in action from all conflicts, 78,000 are from World War II.