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Repatriation Ceremony Held In Papua New Guinea  
For Fallen American WWII Servicemen

**HICKAM AFB, Hawaii --** A repatriation ceremony will be held Feb. 15, 5 p.m., at Jackson International Airport in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea for what is believed to be the remains of at least 13 American servicemen who died during World War II.

The ceremony will include two U.S. Army pallbearer teams and a Papua New Guinea Defence Force honor guard. The U.S. Ambassador to Papua New Guinea Susan Jacobs will speak at the ceremony. Following the repatriation ceremony, the remains will be transported to the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI) located at Hickam Air Force Base, where the largest anthropological forensic staff in the world will analyze the remains for potential identification. There will not be a ceremony at Hickam AFB due to the arrival time of the aircraft.

Two CILHI Search and Recovery Teams recently recovered the remains while deployed to Papua New Guinea for approximately 30 days. The remains were recovered from the mountainous jungles in the Lae region near the village of Kunukio from two B-24 crash sites.

Both B-24s and their crews disappeared on April 16, 1944. One of the aircraft belonged to the 5th Air Force, 22nd Bomb Group, which departed Nadzab, Papua New Guinea, to conduct a bombing mission over Hollandia, Papua New Guinea. A crew of 11 operated the aircraft: a pilot, co-pilot, navigator, bombardier, observer, engineer, assistant engineer, radio operator, assistant radio operator and two gunners. Following the completion of its mission, the B-24 was returning to Nadzab in a five-aircraft formation. It was reported the aircraft departed the formation near Madang.

The last sighting of the aircraft was off the coast of Saidor. Following the aircraft disappearance, the military conducted several searches all ending without a trace of the aircraft or crew.

The other B-24, of the 43rd Bombardment Group (H), 403rd Bomber Squadron (H), also departed Nadzab to conduct a bomb strike mission over Hollandia. A crew of 10 operated the aircraft: a pilot, co-pilot, navigator, bombardier, aerial engineer, assistant aerial engineer, radio operator, assistant radio operator, and two aerial gunners. Following the mission, the B-24 began its return trip to Nadzab as part of a four-aircraft formation. Because of inclement weather, the formation was forced to breakup. The B-24 never arrived at Nadzab and was last seen 35 miles west of Madang. A search failed to locate any trace of the aircraft or crew.

It was believed that the aircraft crashed due to inclement weather or fuel exhaustion. Since 1979, the Papua New Guinea government has been instrumental in working with the United States to recover, as well as unilaterally turn over, remains of World War II American service members who died in Papua New Guinea. There have been approximately 109 service members identified by CILHI who were recovered in Papua New Guinea. More than 250 American World War II aircraft crash sites are believed to be located in Papua New Guinea.

Additionally, there are still more than 78,000 American service members unaccounted for from

World War II. Since 1973, the CILHI has identified and returned to their families more than 1,030 American servicemen formerly listed as unaccounted for from previous wars. While the recovery and identification process may take years, the CILHI remains committed to the fullest possible accounting of all service members from previous wars and bringing home those killed defending their country.