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Recovery Teams Leave for Papua New Guinea to Bring Home American WWII Servicemen

**HICKAM AFB, Hawaii** -- Two search and recovery teams from the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii, will leave for Papua New Guinea March 14, on 45-day missions to recover American service members who are accounted for as a result of World War II.

The U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory teams will head to two aircraft crash sites in Papua New Guinea. One of the 10-person teams will deploy to the mountainous jungles in the Lae region, where a B-24 aircraft, of the 408<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, 22<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group, crashed in 1944. A CILHI investigative team recently visited the site in January and February 2002. The team gathered enough evidence to believe that remains are present at the site.

The other 10-person search and recovery team will deploy along the mountains of the Kokoda Pass, where a B-25 aircraft, of the 405<sup>th</sup> Bomber Squadron, 38<sup>th</sup> Bomber Group, which disappeared in 1942. In 1995 and 2001, the CILHI excavated the site recovering possible crew remains and personal effects. Because of the inability to adequately drain the water in the crash site area, further recoveries had to be postponed until now.

The two deploying CILHI teams consists of service members from all branches with specialized skills. The teams are led by a military officer, a noncommissioned officer-in-charge and a civilian anthropologist. The teams deploying to Papua New Guinea will also have three mortuary affairs specialists, a photographer, a medic, a communications technician and an unexploded ordnance disposal technician.

Since 1978, there have been approximately 113 service members identified by CILHI who were recovered in Papua New Guinea. CILHI analysts believe there are more than 250 American World War II aircraft crash sites still 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.