



News Release
Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (Public Affairs)
Washington, DC 20301-2400

Phone: (703) 699-1169

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fax (703) 602-4375

August 9, 2005

TWELVE MIAS FROM VIETNAM WAR ARE IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of five U.S. servicemen, missing in action from the Vietnam War, have been identified and are being returned to their families for burial. An additional seven servicemen will be buried as a group in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C.

The men who were individually identified are: Cpl. Gerald E. King, of Knoxville, Tenn.; Lance Cpls. Joseph F. Cook, of Foxboro, Mass.; Raymond T. Heyne, of Mason, Wis.; Donald W. Mitchell, of Princeton, Ky.; and Thomas W. Fritsch, of Cromwell, Conn., all U.S. Marine Corps. Additional group remains are those of: Pfc. Thomas J. Blackman, of Racine, Wis.; Paul S. Czerwonka, of Stoughton, Mass.; Barry L. Hempel, of Garden Grove, Calif.; Robert C. Lopez, of Albuquerque, N.M.; William D. McGonigle, of Wichita, Kan.; and Lance Cpl. James R. Sargent, of Anawalt, W. Va., all U.S. Marine Corps. Additionally, the remains of U.S. Army Sgt Glenn E. Miller, of Oakland, Calif. will be included in the group burial.

The Marines were part of an artillery platoon airlifted to provide support to a unit under threat of attack from North Vietnamese forces near Kham Duc in South Vietnam. On May 9, 1968, this 11th Mobile Strike Force had been directed to reconnoiter an area known as Little Ngok Tavak Hill near the Laos-Vietnam border, in the Kham Duc Province. Their base came under attack by North Vietnamese Army troops, and after a ten-hour battle, all of the survivors were able to withdraw from the area.

Six investigations beginning in 1993, and a series of interviews of villagers and former Vietnamese soldiers led the teams in 1994, 1997 and 1998 to specific defensive positions within the large battle site. Maps provided by American survivors helped to locate some key areas on the battlefield. Three excavations by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) in 1998 and 1999 yielded human remains, personal effects, and other material evidence.

JPAC scientists and Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory specialists used mitochondrial DNA as one of the forensic tools to help identify the remains.

Of the 88,000 Americans missing in action from all conflicts, 1,815 are from the Vietnam War, with 1,381 of those within the country of Vietnam. Another 768 Americans have been accounted for in Southeast Asia since the end of the war. Of those, 540 are from within Vietnam.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the DPMO Web site at <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> or call (703) 699-1169.

-END-