



News Release
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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KOREAN WAR MISSING IN ACTION SERVICEMAN IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Korean War, have been identified and are being returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

He is Cpl. Leslie R. Heath, of Bridgeport, Illinois. His interment is scheduled for August 20 in Bridgeport.

On the morning of April 23, 1951, Heath and more than 80 members of the A Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Regimental Combat Team were captured by the Chinese Communist forces. They were held in a temporary POW camp known as Suan Camp Complex, in North Hwanghae Province, North Korea. A former American POW who was returned to the U.S. through Operation Little Switch recounted that Heath died in June 1951 while imprisoned.

On July 16, 1993, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea returned 17 boxes of remains to the U.S. from the Korean War. One of the boxes contained remains of several individuals and two of Heath's identification tags. Scientists of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) conducted years of forensic examinations of the remains and associated evidence until they made an identification two months ago.

Information provided by the North Koreans about the recovered remains was consistent with the approximate location where Heath was believed held captive and died. Artifacts in the boxes were those of a soldier in the U.S. Army infantry at the time of the war.

JPAC submitted skeletal remains on 11 occasions to the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory for analysis. Heath's mitochondrial DNA sequence matched that of two of his maternal relatives.

Of the 88,000 Americans unaccounted-for from World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War, the Vietnam War and Desert Storm, more than 8,100 are from the Korean War. More than 2,000 of those were held as prisoners of war.

For additional information on the Department of Defense's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the DPMO website at www.dtic.mil/dpmo or call 703-699-1169.

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