



**News Release**  
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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**AIR FORCE OFFICER MIA FROM VIETNAM WAR IS IDENTIFIED**

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

He is Air Force Lt. Col. Darel D. Leetun of Hettinger, N.D. Leetun will be buried with full military honors on July 8 at Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C.

On September 17, 1966, Leetun led a bombing mission over Lang Son province, North Vietnam when his F-105D *Thunderchief* aircraft was hit by enemy fire. Other pilots in the flight observed the aircraft crash, but did not receive emergency beeper signals nor observe a parachute.

Vietnamese and U.S. specialists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) conducted three investigations between 1991 and 1995 as they sought information on Leetun's crash site. During one of the investigations, Vietnamese villagers led investigators to a hillside location where human remains were found.

Additionally, in 1999, the U.S. requested that Vietnam conduct a unilateral investigation on the case, but it yielded no new evidence.

A joint team led by JPAC excavated one of the sites in 2004. It was consistent with the approximate location of Leetun's crash, but it found no evidence that could be associated with the case.

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

Of those Americans unaccounted-for from all conflicts, 1,833 are from the Vietnam War, with 1,397 of those within the country of Vietnam. Another 750 Americans have been accounted for in Southeast Asia since the end of the Vietnam War. Of the Americans identified, 524 are from within Vietnam.

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

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