



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MISSING WWII AIRMEN ARE IDENTIFIED

The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that three airmen missing in action from World War II have been identified and are being returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

They are 2d Lt. David J. Nelson, Chicago, Ill.; Tech. Sgt. Henry F. Kortebein, Maspeth, N.Y.; and Tech. Sgt. Blake A. Treece, Jr., Marshall, Ark., all U.S. Army Air Forces. These men are to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. on Thursday, as are the group remains of their aircrew which was lost during World War II.

Representatives from the Army met with the next-of-kin of these men in their hometowns to explain the recovery and identification process and to coordinate interment with military honors on behalf of the Secretary of the Army.

On August 8, 1944, Nelson, Kortebein and Treece departed an allied air base in England in their B-17G Flying Fortress with six other crewmen aboard. Their mission was to bomb enemy targets near Caen, France. The aircraft was seen to explode and crash after being struck by enemy flak near the village of Lonlay l'Abbaye, south of Caen. The other six members of the crew were 1st Lt. Jack R. Thompson; 2nd Lts. Charles Bacigalupa and Charles Sherrill; and Sgts. Richard R. Collins, Gerald F. Gillies and Warren D. Godsey. The hometowns of these six are not available.

German forces and French villagers living near the crash site recovered some of the remains of the crew and buried them nearby. Advancing U.S. forces found additional remains of the rest of the crew. Six of the nine crewmen ultimately were identified, but Nelson, Kortebein and Treece remained unaccounted-for.

In August 2002, a team from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) operating in Luxembourg was informed that a local French aircraft wreckage hunting group (*Association Normande du Souvenir Aerien 39/45*) had located a crash site near Lonlay l'Abbaye. The JPAC team surveyed the site, excavated it in July 2004 and recovered human remains, personal effects and crew-related materials from amid the wreckage¹⁷. Also found were six unexploded 250-pound bombs.

Later that year, a French explosive ordnance disposal team turned over a bone fragment to the U. S. Defense Attaché in Paris. It was found by French technicians working to secure the site where the bombs had been found.

Among other forensic identification tools, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA in the identification of the remains of the three, matching DNA sequences from maternal relatives.

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.

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