



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AIR FORCE PILOT MISSING FROM VIETNAM WAR IS 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 Vietnam War, have been identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

He is Maj. Benjamin F. Danielson, U.S. Air Force, of Kenyon, Minn. He will be buried Saturday in Kenyon.

On Dec. 5, 1969, Danielson and his co-pilot, 1st Lt. Woodrow J. Bergeron, Jr., were on a strike mission over Khammouan Province, Laos, when their F-4C was struck by enemy ground fire. Both ejected from the aircraft with minor injuries, landing safely on opposite sides of the Nam Ngo River.

Both men evaded capture the first night and maintained radio contact with search and rescue personnel. Bergeron was rescued on the third day; however, enemy forces apparently located Danielson soon after light on the second day. Bergeron said that he heard enemy activity, including gun shots, near Danielson's position and presumed that the enemy located and shot Danielson.

This was the largest search and rescue effort during the Vietnam War, involving 15 attempts before Bergeron was found. Each of these efforts was driven off by intense ground fire, which heavily damaged several aircraft and killed a door gunner on one of the rescue helicopters. Heavy enemy presence in the loss location prevented further efforts to locate Danielson.

Between 1993 and 2006, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) led seven joint and two unilateral investigations in Vietnam, four joint investigations in Laos, one trilateral investigation and one excavation. Team members found aircraft wreckage consistent with an F-4 at the crash site, but found no human remains or evidence of a burial along the river.

In 2003, Danielson's identification tags, a survival knife, a portion of a survival vest and human remains were turned over to U.S. officials. They were said to be obtained from a Laotian source who found them while fishing along the banks of the Nam Ngo River.

Although an excavation conducted near the river in 2006 yielded no remains or evidence of a burial, JPAC used other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence in Danielson's identification. Scientists from the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA to help identify the remains previously turned in by the Laotian source.

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