



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AIRMEN MISSING IN ACTION FROM VIETNAM WAR ARE IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of two U.S. servicemen, missing in action from the Vietnam War, have been identified and will be returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

They are Col. Norman D. Eaton, of Weatherford, Okla., and Lt. Col. Paul E. Getchell, of Portland, Maine, both U.S. Air Force. Eaton will be buried April 25 at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C., and Getchell is scheduled to be buried later this spring at Arlington.

On Jan. 13, 1969, Eaton and Getchell crewed a B-57B Canberra bomber participating in a nighttime attack on targets in Salavan Province, Laos. The target area was illuminated by flares from a C-130 flare ship; however the flares dimmed as the B-57 began its third bombing run on the target. The crew was low on fuel, but decided to continue the attack run without illumination. The C-130 crew received a radio transmission indicating that the B-57 was off target and seconds later, the plane crashed. Eaton and Getchell could not be recovered at the time of the incident.

In 1995, a joint U.S.-Lao People's Democratic Republic (L.P.D.R.) team, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), investigated the incident and interviewed a Laotian citizen who recalled the crash. Another joint U.S.-L.P.D.R. team surveyed the site and found wreckage and crew-related materials consistent with the citizen's reported location.

In 2003, a joint U.S.-L.P.D.R. team excavated the crash site and recovered Eaton's identification tag. The team was unable to complete the recovery and subsequent teams re-visited the site five more times between 2004 and 2005 before the recovery was complete. As a result, the teams found Getchell's identification tag, human remains and additional crew-related items.

Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA in the identification of the remains.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the DPMO web site at or call (703) 699-1169.

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