



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NAVY PILOT MISSING IN ACTION FROM THE 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 will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

He is Lt. Cmdr. Ralph C. Bisz, U.S. Navy, of Miami Shores, Fla. His funeral arrangements are being set by his family.

On Aug. 4, 1967, Bisz took off in an A-4E Skyhawk from the USS *Oriskany* to bomb an enemy petroleum depot near Haiphong, Vietnam. As he neared the target, his aircraft was struck by an enemy surface-to-air missile and crashed near the town of Hai Duong in Hai Hung Province. No parachute was observed and no emergency beeper signal was received.

In 1988, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S.R.V.) repatriated to the United States human remains from Hai Hung Province, which they attributed to Bisz on the basis of their historical records of the shutdown as well as documentation of his burial.

Between 1988 and 2004, joint U.S./S.R.V. teams, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), conducted several investigations of the incident and surveyed the crash site. A team found aircraft wreckage at the site which was consistent with an A-4E Skyhawk. Teams also interviewed witnesses who recalled the crash and burial of the pilot in a nearby cemetery. Additionally, one witness indicated that he oversaw the exhumation of the American's remains from the cemetery, and their turnover to district officials.

Between 1993 and 2004, 25 samples from the remains turned over in 1988 were submitted to several laboratories for mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) analysis, but yielded inconclusive results. In 2007, the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used refined DNA collection techniques and succeeded in obtaining verifiable mtDNA.

Using forensic identification tools, circumstantial evidence, mtDNA analysis and dental comparisons, scientists from JPAC identified the remains as those of Bisz.

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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