



News Release

Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (Public Affairs)
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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MISSING WWII AIRMEN ARE IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of 11 U.S. servicemen, missing in action from World War II, have been identified and will be returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

They are Capt. Robert L. Coleman, of Wilmington, Del.; 1st Lt. George E. Wallinder, of San Antonio, Texas; 2nd Lt. Kenneth L. Cassidy, of Worcester, Mass.; 2nd Lt. Irving Schechner, of Brooklyn, N.Y.; 2nd Lt. Ronald F. Ward, of Cambridge, Mass.; Tech. Sgt. William L. Fraser, of Maplewood, Mo.; Tech. Sgt. Paul Miecias, of Piscataway, N.J.; Tech. Sgt. Robert C. Morgan, of Flint, Mich.; Staff Sgt. Albert J. Caruso, of Kearny, N.J.; Staff Sgt. Robert E. Frank, of Plainfield, N.J.; and Pvt. Joseph Thompson, of Compton, Calif; all U.S. Army Air Forces. The dates and locations of the funerals are being set by their families.

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 Dec. 3, 1943, these men crewed a B-24D Liberator that departed Dobodura, New Guinea, on an armed-reconnaissance mission over New Hanover Island in the Bismarck Sea. The crew reported dropping their bombs on target, but in spite of several radio contacts with their base, they never returned to Dobodura. Subsequent searches failed to locate the aircraft.

In 2000, three Papua New Guineans were hunting in the forest when they came across aircraft wreckage near Iwaia village. The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) was notified and began planning an investigation. In 2002, a JPAC team traveled to Deboin Village to interview two individuals who said they knew where the crash site was, however the witnesses could not relocate the site.

In 2004, the site was found about four miles from Iwaia village in Papua New Guinea where a JPAC team found an aircraft data plate that correlated to the 1943 crash.

Between 2004 and 2007, JPAC teams conducted two excavations of the site and recovered human remains and non-biological material including some crew-related artifacts such as identification tags.

Among dental records, other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA and dental comparisons 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 <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> or call (703) 699-1169.

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