



## News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### AIRMAN 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. airman, 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. Col. Earl P. Hopper, Jr., U.S. Air Force, of Phoenix, Ariz. He is to be buried on April 3 at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona in Phoenix.

On January 10, 1968, Hopper and Capt. Keith Hall were flying an F-4D Phantom near Hanoi, North Vietnam, as part of a four-ship MiG combat air patrol. Before they reached the target, an enemy surface-to-air missile exploded slightly below their aircraft. Hall radioed that he and Hopper were ejecting. He told Hopper to eject, but when he heard no response, he repeated "Earl get out!" Hopper replied, "I've pulled on it and it [the ejection seat] did not go," followed by "you go!" Hall then pulled on his primary ejection handle but it failed to initiate, forcing him to use the alternate. Hall was captured and held as a prisoner of war until 1973, but Hopper was unable to get out of the aircraft.

Between 1993-1998, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) conducted three joint investigations and five excavations at the crash site in Son La Province, west of Hanoi. The team interviewed four informants who had knowledge of the site. The excavations recovered numerous skeletal fragments and crew-related items which were ultimately used in the forensic identification process.

Among other forensic tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists used extensive 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 or (703) 699-1420.

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