



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 6, 2011

AIR FORCE PILOT MISSING FROM VIETNAM WAR 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.

Air Force Maj. Richard G. Elzinga, 27, of Shedd, Ore., will be buried on July 8 in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington D.C. On March 26, 1970, Elzinga and his co-pilot went missing when their O-1G Birddog aircraft failed to return to base from a familiarization flight over Laos. Fifteen minutes after the last radio contact, a communication and visual search showed no sign of the men or their aircraft. Search and rescue missions continued for two days with no results.

Between 1994 and 2009, joint U.S.-Lao People's Democratic Republic (L.P.D.R.) teams led by JPAC, analyzed leads, interviewed villagers and surveyed possible crash site locations. During several joint field surveys, teams recovered human remains, aircraft wreckage, and crew-related equipment.

Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA – which matched that of his aunt and cousin-- in the identification of Elzinga's 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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