



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MARINE MISSING FROM VIETNAM WAR IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office announced today that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing from the Vietnam War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

Marine Corps Pfc. James J. Jacques, 18, of Denver, will be buried Oct. 9, in his hometown. On May 12, 1975, Khmer Rouge gunboats captured the S.S. Mayaguez in the Gulf of Thailand, approximately 60 nautical miles off the coast of Cambodia. The vessel was taken to Koh [island] Tang. Alerted to the capture, U.S. Navy and Air Force aircraft began surveillance flights around the island. After efforts to secure the release of the ship and its crew failed, U.S. military forces were ordered to undertake a rescue mission.

Three days after the Mayaguez seizure, six Air Force helicopters were dispatched to the island. One of the helicopters came under heavy enemy fire as it approached the eastern beach of the island. The aircraft crashed into the surf with 26 men on board. Half were rescued at sea, leaving Jacques and 12 other service members unaccounted-for.

The United States, Cambodian and Vietnamese government efforts to resolve the cases of these unaccounted-for service members was massive. Between 1991 and 2008, U.S. and Cambodian investigators conducted multiple joint investigations, led by Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC).

Additionally, on three occasions Cambodian authorities unilaterally turned over remains believed to be those of American servicemen. In 1995, U.S. and Cambodian specialists conducted an underwater recovery of the helicopter crash site where they located remains, personal effects and aircraft debris associated with the loss. The U.S.S. Brunswick, a Navy salvage vessel, enabled the specialists to conduct their excavation off shore.

In the identification of the recovered remains, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) analyzed circumstantial evidence and used forensic identification tools, such as mitochondrial DNA—which matched Jacques' brother.

Today, 1,655 Americans remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam War. The U.S. government continues to work closely with the governments of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to recover Americans lost during the Vietnam War.

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