



## News Release

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

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### AIRMEN MISSING FROM VIETNAM WAR IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office announced today that the remains of two U.S. servicemen, missing in action from the Vietnam War, have been identified and will be buried, as a group, with full military honors.

Air Force Col. Wendell Keller, 34, of Fargo, N.D., and Capt. Virgil K. Meroney III, 25, of Fayetteville, Ark., will be buried as a group, in a single casket representing the crew, on Oct. 19 in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. Meroney was interred individually on June 9, in his hometown.

On March 1, 1969, Keller and Meroney were the crew of an F-4D Phantom II aircraft that crashed while carrying out a nighttime strike mission in Khammouan Province, Laos. Nearby U.S. aircrews reported seeing the aircraft hit by enemy fire. No parachutes were seen after the aircraft was hit. Heavy enemy presence in the area prevented recovery efforts.

From 1994 to 2011, joint U.S./Lao People's Democratic Republic (L.P.D.R.) teams, led by Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), conducted several investigations and excavations of the crash site in Khammouan Province, Laos. The teams located human remains, military equipment, a military identification card, and aircraft wreckage of an F-4, including an engine data plate and radio call-sign plate. During the 17 years, analysts evaluated the material evidence and the accounts of more than 40 eyewitnesses to confirm the information correlated with the crew's loss location.

To identify the remains, scientists from JPAC used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools including dental comparisons and radiograph comparisons.

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.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, call (703) 699-1169 or visit the DPMO Web site at [www.dtic.mil/dpmo](http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo).

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