



## News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### MARINES MISSING IN ACTION FROM WWII IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of seven U.S. servicemen, missing in action from World War II, have been identified and are being buried with full military honors.

Marine Corps 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Laverne A. Lallathin, 22, of Raymond, Wash.; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Dwight D. Ekstam, 21, of Moline, Ill.; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Walter B. Vincent, Jr., 21, of Tulsa, Okla.; Tech. Sgt. James A. Sisney, 19, of Redwood City, Calif.; Cpl. Wayne R. Erickson, 19, of Minneapolis; Cpl. John D. Yeager, 23, of Pittsburgh, Pa.; and Pfc. John A. Donovan, 20, of Plymouth, Mich.; will be buried as a group, in a single casket representing the crew, on Oct. 4 in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. Six of the Marines were identified and buried as individuals previously this year. Lallathin, also individually identified, will be interred individually at Arlington on the same day as the group interment.

On April 22, 1944, the Marines were aboard a PBJ-1 aircraft that failed to return from a night training mission over the island of Espiritu Santo, in what is known today as Vanuatu. None of the seven crew members were recovered at that time, and in 1945 they were officially presumed deceased.

In 1994, a group of private citizens notified the U.S. that aircraft wreckage had been found on the island of Espiritu Santo. Human remains were recovered from the site at that time and turned over to the Department of Defense.

In 1999, a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) survey team traveled to the location. The crash site was located at an elevation of 2,600 ft., in extremely rugged terrain, and the team determined that specialized mountain training would be necessary to safely complete a recovery mission. From 2000 to 2011, multiple JPAC recovery teams excavated the site and recovered human remains, aircraft parts and military equipment.

To identify the remains, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) evaluated circumstantial evidence and mitochondrial DNA – which matched that of the Marines' family members.

More than 400,000 of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II died. Today, more than 73,000 Americans remain unaccounted-for from the conflict.

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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