



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AIRMAN MISSING FROM WWII IDENTIFIED

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

Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Samuel E. Lunday, 20, of Marianna, Fla., will be buried Sept. 28, at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. On April 24, 1943, Lunday and four other U.S. servicemen were flying a C-87 Liberator Express aircraft over the Himalayan mountains, from Yangkai, China, to their home base in Chabua, India. After losing radio communications following take-off, the crew was never heard from again. Eleven aerial search missions were unable to locate the aircraft or crew due to intense snows on the mountains at high altitudes, and dense jungle growth at lower altitudes.

As part of the war effort against the Japanese, U.S. Army Air Forces cargo planes based in India continually airlifted critical supplies over the high mountain ranges that comprise the Himalayas – known as “The Hump” – in support of American airbases in China. The amount of materiel flown over the Himalayas was a logistical achievement unparalleled at the time.

Almost 60 years later, in 2003, an American citizen discovered the wreckage of the C-87 aircraft while trekking in the mountains, approximately 100 miles from Chabua, near the Burmese border. He recovered the aircraft’s identification plate, military equipment and human remains. The artifacts and remains were turned over to U.S. officials for analysis. Attempts to excavate the site are being negotiated with the Indian government.

To determine the identity of the remains, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used circumstantial evidence and mitochondrial DNA – which matched that of Lunday’s nephews.

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

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.

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