



## News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### AIRMAN 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.

Air Force Lt. Col. Clarence F. Blanton, 46, of El Reno, Okla., will be buried Sept. 15, in his hometown. In 1968, Blanton and 18 other men were assigned to Lima Site 85, a tactical air navigation radar site on a remote, 5,600-foot mountain peak known as Phou Pha Thi in Houaphan Province, Laos. In the early morning of March 11, the site was overrun by Vietnamese commandos, causing the Americans to seek safety on a narrow ledge of the steep mountain. A few hours later, under the protective cover of A-1 Skyraider aircraft, U.S. helicopters were able to rescue eight of the men. Blanton, who was the U.S. commander of the site, and 10 other Americans were killed in action and unable to be recovered.

In 1994, a joint U.S./Lao People's Democratic Republic (L.P.D.R.) recovery operation, led by Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), took place near the top of Phou Pha Thi with negative results. A second recovery operation, in 2003, resulted in the discovery of remains which were subsequently identified as one of the missing U.S. servicemen—Tech Sgt. Patrick L. Shannon. Since that time, JPAC has evaluated the feasibility of conducting recoveries on Phou Pha Thi but logistics and safety concerns precluded further attempts.

From 1994 to 2009, in cooperation with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S.R.V.) and L.P.D.R., teams pursued multiple leads from dozens of witnesses interviewed, including those involved with the attack. In 2005, a Laotian citizen provided U.S. officials an identification card bearing Blanton's name and human remains purportedly found at the base of Phou Pha Thi.

Scientists from the JPAC and the AFDIL determined the identity of the remains using circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, such as mitochondrial DNA—which matched Blanton's sister.

Today, 1,660 Americans remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam War. Since 1973, 986 servicemen have been accounted for from that conflict, and returned to their families for burial with military honors. 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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