



## News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### MARINE MISSING IN ACTION FROM WWII IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) 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.

Marine Corps Cpl. Wayne R. Erickson, 19, of Minneapolis, will be buried May 24, in Fort Worth, Texas. Erickson was a crewmember 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 crew was recovered 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 survey team traveled to the site, which was located at an elevation of 2,600 ft. in extremely rugged terrain, and determined that recovery teams would need specialized mountain training to safely complete a recovery mission. In 2000, a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) team visited the site and recovered human remains. From 2009 to 2011, multiple JPAC recovery teams excavated the site and recovered additional remains, aircraft parts and military equipment.

Scientists and analysts from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used circumstantial evidence, dental records and mitochondrial DNA – which matched that of Erickson's niece – in the identification of his remains.

More than 400,000 of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II died. At the end of the war, the U.S. government was unable to recover, identify and bury approximately 79,000 as known persons. 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 or (703) 699-1420.

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