



## News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### AIRMAN 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 returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

Army Air Forces 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Emil T. Wasilewski, 22, of Chicago, will be buried on June 26, at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. On Sept. 13, 1944, Wasilewski and eight other crew members were on a B-17G Flying Fortress that crashed near Neustaedt-on-the-Werra, Germany. Only one of the crewmen is known to have successfully parachuted out of the aircraft before it crashed. The remaining eight crewmen were buried by German forces in a cemetery in Neustaedt.

Following the war, U.S. Army Graves Registration personnel attempted to recover the remains of the eight men, but were only able to move the remains of one man to a U.S. military cemetery in Holland. In 1953, with access to eastern Germany restricted by the Soviet Union, the remains of the seven remaining unaccounted-for crewmen—including Wasilewski—were declared non-recoverable.

In 1991, a German national who was digging a grave in the cemetery in Neustaedt, discovered a metal U.S. military identification tag and notified officials. German burial law restricted further site investigation until 2007, when the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) surveyed the area. In 2008, the site was excavated and the team recovered human remains and military equipment.

Scientists from the JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, including dental comparisons and y-chromosome DNA—which matched that of Wasilewski's nephew—in the identification of his remains.

Of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II, more than 400,000 died. At the end of the war, the U.S. government was unable to recover and identify approximately 79,000 Americans. 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, visit the DPMO web site at <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> or call (703) 699-1420.

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