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REMAINS OF WWII U.S. BOMBER CREW FOUND IN RUSSIA

A team of U.S. and Russian investigators has positively identified the wreckage of a U.S. Navy PV-1 Ventura patrol bomber, missing since March 25, 1944, at a crash site on the Russian far eastern peninsula of Kamchatka.

The team, led by retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Roland Lajoie, chairman of the U.S. - Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs (USRJC), and Col. Konstantin Golumbovskiy, the USRJC's deputy chairman, visited the crash site from August 7-9.

At the site, forensic specialists from the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI) recovered remains assumed to be those of crewmembers. The specialists believe additional remains are located at the site and have recommended a full-scale recovery operation be mounted next summer, when the absence of ice and snow would make excavation possible.

Initial information on the crash site was provided to USRJC officials by a local Kamchatkan historian, Ms. Alla Paperno. The investigation team, which included members of the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) and CILHI, used a combination of archival research and interviews with Russian geologists who had been to the site 30 - 40 years ago to locate the remote site.

The plane was one of five which took off from Attu, in the Aleutian Islands, on the "Empire Express," a reconnaissance and bombing mission over Japanese bases on the northern Kurile Islands. In the face of extremely bad weather and hazardous flying conditions, only one of the five planes in the flight was able to successfully complete the mission. Of the other planes, one crashed soon after take-off, two were unable to reach the target area, discharged their bombs into the sea and returned to base, and one failed to return. It is this plane, about which there has been no information for 56 years, that was located on the slope of the Mutnovskiy volcano in Kamchatka.

Working with the U.S. Navy's casualty office, DPMO has initiated efforts to locate relatives of the PV-1's seven-man crew. The results of the recent investigation will be provided to those family members, as will additional information as it is developed.

A request has been made in the Russian media that any Russian citizens having information on this or other American crash sites contact USRJC officials in Moscow.