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## SERVICEMEMBERS MISSING IN ACTION RETURNED

The remains of two U.S. Navy officers, missing in action from the Vietnam War, have been accounted for and are being returned to their families for burial in the U.S. One has been identified as Lt. Cmdr. Roger B. Innes of Chicago. The other officer's name will not be released at the request of his family.

On Dec. 27, 1967, Innes and the other U.S. aviator were aboard an F-4B Phantom as the lead aircraft in a flight of two from the carrier, the U.S.S. Kitty Hawk. The flight was an armed reconnaissance mission along the coast of North Vietnam. Innes' aircraft was observed on radar as it started its attack on an enemy target, but contact was abruptly lost in the vicinity of the target. Repeated radio calls were unsuccessful, and an extensive visual and electronic search conducted throughout the day failed to locate the aircraft. Low flight ceilings and poor visibility in the target area prevented additional search efforts.

In August 1992, teams of U.S. and Vietnamese investigators, led by Joint Task Force-Full Accounting, interviewed villagers and reviewed documentation which indicated an aircraft crashed in 1967 about 300 meters off the coast. The information was a close match to the circumstances of Innes' loss. In 1995, investigators interviewed local fishermen who pointed out a general area where their fishing nets had snagged on aircraft wreckage.

In February and March 1998, U.S. and Vietnamese divers surveyed the underwater site and recommended a full excavation. Then in May and June 1999, U.S. Navy divers operating from a Vietnamese barge, conducted the first underwater recovery operation in Vietnam in waters approximately 10-15 meters deep. The divers were able to recover remains, personal effects of the crew, and aircraft debris.

Analysis of the remains and other evidence by the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii established the identity of these servicemen.

The U.S. government welcomes and appreciates the cooperation demonstrated by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam that resulted in the identification of these officers. We hope that such cooperation will bring more significant results in the future. Achieving the fullest possible accounting of Americans missing in action is one of the nations highest priorities.