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**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **WWII MARINE RAIDERS IDENTIFIED, RETURNING HOME**

The remains of 19 World War II Marine Raiders killed in action on Butaritari Island (Makin Atoll) and listed as missing in action since August 1942 were recently identified, and will be returned to their families for burial.

The remains are those of:

- Capt. Gerald P. Holtom, Palo Alto, Calif.
- Sgt. Clyde Thomason, Atlanta, Ga.
- FM1C. Vernon L. Castle, Stillwater, Okla.
- Cpl. I.B. Earles, Tulare, Calif.
- Cpl. Daniel A. Gaston, Galveston, Tex.
- Cpl. Harris J. Johnson, Little Rock, Iowa
- Cpl. Kenneth K. Kunkle, Mountain Home, Ark.
- Cpl. Edward Maciejewski, Chicago, Ill.
- Cpl. Robert B. Pearson, Lafayette, Calif.
- Cpl. Mason O. Yarbrough, Sikeston, Mo.
- Pfc. William A. Gallagher, Wyandotte, Mich.
- Pfc. Ashley W. Hicks, Waterford, Calif.
- Pfc. Kenneth M. Montgomery, Eden, Wis.
- Pfc. Norman W. Mortensen, Camp Douglas, Wis.
- Pfc. John E. Vandenberg, Kenosha, Wis.
- Pvt. Carlyle O. Larson, Glenwood, Minn.
- Pvt. Robert B. Maulding, Vista, Calif.
- Pvt. Franklin M. Nodland, Marshalltown, Iowa
- Pvt. Charles A. Selby, Ontonagon, Mich.

The Marines were members of the Marine Corps' 2nd Raider Battalion, killed during the August 17-18, 1942, raid on Japanese-held Butaritari Island, during which an estimated 83 Japanese soldiers were killed.

Lt. Col. Evans F. Carlson commanded the Raiders during the operation, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt's son, Capt. James Roosevelt, was the operation's second-in-command. Ferried to the island by submarine and landing on and departing Butaritari by rubber boats, the Marines were unable to evacuate the bodies of their fallen comrades.

With the assistance of island inhabitants, including a man who assisted in the burial of the Marines in 1942, a recovery team from the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI) uncovered a mass grave and excavated the remains in November and December 1999. That operation was preceded by an initial investigation in August 1998 and an unsuccessful recovery effort in May 1999. The U.S. Marine Raider Association provided invaluable assistance with firsthand information and documentation about their combat on Butaritari.

In late 1999, the CILHI began an exhaustive forensic identification process, including the use of mitochondrial DNA, to confirm the identities of the Marines. Marine Corps officials, using historical military records and more modern search techniques, located the next of kin of each of the Marines.

Arrangements for the transportation and burial of the Marines are underway, in consultation with the families. The first burial is expected to be that of Cpl. Yarbrough in Sikeston, Mo. in December. Among the remains recovered are those of Sgt. Clyde Thomason, the first enlisted Marine awarded the Medal of Honor during World War II.

The identification of these Marines contributes to the ongoing effort by the Department of Defense to locate and identify more than 88,000 American service members who remain missing in action from World War II, the Cold War, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

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