



News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AIRMEN MISSING IN ACTION FROM WWII IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of five U.S. servicemen, missing in action from World War II, have been identified and returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

They are Capt. Leonard E. Orcutt, Alameda, Calif.; 2nd Lt. Harry L. Bedard, Minneapolis; 2nd Lt. Robert S. Emerson, Norway, Maine; Tech. Sgt. Louis H. Miller, Philadelphia; and Staff Sgt. George L. Winkler, Huntington, W.Va., all U.S. Army Air Forces. Winkler and Miller were buried recently at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C., and Orcutt was buried in Oakland, Calif. Bedard's burial is scheduled for June 25 in Dayton, Minn., and Emerson's is scheduled for July 9 in his hometown.

On April 3, 1945, Orcutt and his crew took off in their B-25J Mitchell bomber from Palawan Field, Philippines. The pilot of another aircraft in the flight reported seeing Orcutt's plane stall out and crash about one mile northeast of the village of Consolacion in a swampy area. There were no survivors.

In early 1947, personnel from the Army's Graves Registration Service recovered additional remains from the crash site and buried them as unknowns in Leyte, Philippines. Later that year, they were exhumed and transferred to Manila for possible identification. In 1949, a military review board declared these unknown group remains to be those of the aircrew and re-buried them at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Mo.

Two years later, the Graves Registration Service returned to the crash site and recovered additional remains. The case was reanalyzed and a recommendation was made that the group remains at Jefferson Barracks be disinterred for individual identification. All remains from the crash site were examined with no resulting identification. They were reburied at the same location. A sister of one of the airmen contacted the U.S. Army in 2001 upon learning of the recovery of additional remains in the 1950s. The Army then disinterred the group remains at Jefferson Barracks in 2008 and were taken to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) in Hawaii for identification.

Among forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC used dental comparisons and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used mitochondrial DNA – which matched that of relatives of the aircrew—in the identification of these airmen.

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) 699-1169.