



News Release

Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (Public Affairs)
Washington, DC 20301-2900

Phone: (703) 699-1169

Fax (703) 602-4375

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MISSING WWII AIRMAN IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of a serviceman, missing in action from World War II, have been identified and are being returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

U.S. Army Air Forces Pfc. Mervyn E. Sims, 23, of Petaluma, Calif., will be buried on April 22 in his hometown. On April 24, 1943, Sims and four crew members aboard a C-87 Liberator Express departed from Yangkai, China, in support of “the Hump” resupply mission between India and China. Prior to takeoff a ground crew determined the aircraft had sufficient fuel for the six hour flight to the air base on other side of the Himalayas in Chabua, India. Once cleared for takeoff there was no further communication between the aircrew and airfield operators. Army Officials launched a search effort when the plane did not arrive at the destination. No evidence of the aircraft was found and the five men were presumed killed in action.

In 2003, an American citizen in Burma reported to U.S. officials at the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) that he had found aircraft wreckage he believed to be an American C-87 in the mountains 112 miles east of Chabua. He was detained by Burmese officials when he attempted to leave the country with human remains and artifacts from the site. The remains and materials were handed over to officials at the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon. Attempts to excavate the site are being negotiated with the Indian government.

Meanwhile, JPAC scientists continued the forensic process, analyzing the remains and physical evidence already in hand.

Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used mitochondrial DNA—which matched that of Sims’ sister—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 72,000 are unaccounted-for from the conflict.

For additional information on the Defense Department’s mission to account for missing Americans, call 703-699-1420 or visit the DPMO Web site at www.dtic.mil/dpmo.

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