



## News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Fulfilling Our Nation's Promise USS Oklahoma Sailor From World War II Accounted For

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that the remains of a U.S. serviceman from World War II have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

Navy Fireman 1st Class Lawrence H. Fecho, 20, of Willow City, North Dakota, will be buried August 13 in Bottineau, North Dakota. On Dec. 7, 1941, Fecho was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Fecho.

From December 1941 to June 1944, Navy personnel recovered the remains of the deceased crew, which were subsequently interred in the Halawa and Nu'uuanu Cemeteries.

In September 1947, tasked with recovering and identifying fallen U.S. personnel in the Pacific Theater, members of the American Graves Registration Service (AGRS) disinterred the remains of U.S. casualties from the two cemeteries and transferred them to the Central Identification Laboratory at Schofield Barracks. The laboratory staff was only able to confirm the identifications of 35 men from the USS Oklahoma at that time. The AGRS subsequently buried the unidentified remains in 46 plots at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP), known as the Punchbowl, in Honolulu. In October 1949, a military board classified those who could not be identified as non-recoverable, including Fecho.

In April 2015, the Deputy Secretary of Defense issued a policy memorandum directing the disinterment of unknowns associated with the USS Oklahoma. On June 15, 2015, DPAA personnel began exhuming the remains from the NMCP for analysis.

To identify Fecho's remains, scientists from DPAA and [the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System](#) used mitochondrial (mtDNA) DNA analysis, which matched a sister, as well as circumstantial evidence and laboratory analysis, to include dental comparisons.

Of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II, more than 400,000 died during the war. Currently there are 73,041 (approximately 26,000 are assessed as possibly-recoverable) still unaccounted for from World War II. Fecho's name is recorded on the Walls of the Missing at an American Battle Monuments Commission site along with the others who are missing from WWII. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for Americans who went missing while serving our country, visit the DPAA website at [www.dpaa.mil](http://www.dpaa.mil), find us on social media at [www.facebook.com/dodpaa](https://www.facebook.com/dodpaa) or call (703) 699-1420.

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