



## News Release

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 21, 2015

### Marine Missing From World War II Accounted For

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

Marine 1st Lt. Alexander Bonnyman, Jr., 33, of Knoxville, Tenn., will be buried Sept. 27, in his hometown. In November 1943, Bonnyman was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 18th Marines Regiment, 2nd Marines Division, which landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll, in an attempt to secure the island against stiff Japanese resistance. Over several days of intense fighting, approximately 1,000 Marines were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded. Bonnyman personally led a 21-man team in an initial attack against Japanese forces, where they engaged in close-quarter fighting. As a result of these attacks, Bonnyman was reported killed in action on Nov. 22, 1943. His body was not recovered by U.S. forces at that time. Bonnyman was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor – the United States' highest military honor – for personal acts of exceptional valor during the battle.

In the immediate aftermath of the fighting on Tarawa, U.S. service members who died were buried in a number of battlefield cemeteries on the island. During World War II, U.S. Navy Combat Engineers, "Seabees," significantly restructured the landscape to convert the island for use by the military. In 1947, the Army Graves Registration Service recovered remains from the island for repatriation, but Bonnyman's remains were not recovered.

In June 2015, a History Flight Inc. team notified DPAA that their group discovered a burial site on Betio Island and recovered the remains of what was believed to be U.S. Marines who fought during the battle in November 1943. During the recovery operations, one of their anthropologists compared the dental remains recovered to Bonnyman's dental records, suggesting a match. The remains were turned over to DPAA in July 2015.

DPAA confirmed the identification of Bonnyman using circumstantial and material evidence, as well as laboratory analysis, to include dental comparisons, which matched Bonnyman's records.

Of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II, more than 400,000 died during the war.

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) or call (703) 699-1420.