History Flight Tarawa Recovery Project announces recovery of over 13,000 bones of American WWII MIAs

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(PRWEB) October 21, 2014 -- History Flight is pleased to announce the results of its last 18 months of focused research and search missions to recover America’s missing WWII servicemen from the Pacific island of Tarawa.

In November 1943, 17 US Naval Carriers and hundreds of supporting ships delivered 18,000 U.S. Marines from the 2nd Marine Division to Tarawa. They captured the island in 76 hours from 5,000 Japanese soldiers and Korean laborers. Between 1,027 and 1,203 Marines and Sailors lost their lives in the invasion and between 514 and 539 of them remain unaccounted for today.

History Flight’s most recent series of excavation work on Tarawa resulted in the in situ recovery of over 13,000 American bones from fallen U.S. Marines – that were systematically recovered using systematic and thoroughly documented forensic archaeological techniques. These remains may be helpful to identify potentially dozens of the missing 539 Marines still unaccounted for.

The History Flight Tarawa Recovery Project is the culmination of nine years of research and field work and over a million dollars of privately raised funding, that to date has recovered a minimum number of American individuals totaling 110 on Tarawa.

Said History Flight Director Mark Noah, “the success of the project is the result hard work by volunteer and paid staff, the generosity of three remarkable anonymous donors and a positive collaboration between History Flight and the Dept. of Defense's Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC).

The recent burial of PFC Randolph Allen, repatriated from Tarawa and buried July 29, 2014 at Arlington National Cemetery, offers an example of this collaboration.

PFC Allen, 344151, USMC, Company F, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, perished on Nov. 20, 1943 during the Operation Galvanic USMC assault of Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll. Operation Galvanic, the seizure of the Japanese held Gilbert Islands in November 1943, was the largest operation of the Pacific war to date.

JPAC completed the excellent identification of PFC Allen’s remains in less than six months.

According to Johnie Webb, JPAC’s Deputy to the Commander for External Relations and Legislative Affairs, “JPAC is appreciative of History Flight’s diligent and successful recoveries of missing Americans from the Battle of Tarawa.”

"The History Flight/JPAC collaboration on Tarawa has laid the foundation for present and future success in recovering American service personnel and it has leveraged NGO assets and skill sets that have enhanced the number of recoveries per year and will continue to do so for years to come,” Noah added.
Because there are 74,000 missing service personnel from WWII and 539 missing from Tarawa, DNA samples from relatives of the missing are urgently needed to complete the identification process. Relatives are urged to contact the casualty office of the branch of service they served in – or contact History Flight at (888) 743-3311 or historyflightinfo(at)gmail(dot)com – for instructions on how to submit a DNA sample.

For more information History Flight also maintains a website, HistoryFlight.com, and a page on Facebook
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