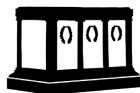


## Appendix D



### *Information Paper: Dept. of the Army*

*Subject: Unknown Soldier from the Vietnam Era*

March 21, 1977



**P**URPOSE: In view of increasing Congressional interest in the interment of a Vietnam Unknown at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, this paper explains the various facets of this project and its current status.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

- a. As a result of the Civil War, 75 national cemeteries had been established by 1873 which contained the graves of 170,162 known and 147,800 unknown Union soldiers. After the Spanish-American War and the China (Boxer) Expedition, the policy of returning American dead to the United States for final interment was initiated.
- b. Of the 78,111 remains recovered after World War I, 97.8% were identified. One Unknown was selected from the unidentifiable remains, returned to the United States and interred at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on 11 November 1921.
- c. Authority for memorialization of an Unknown from World War II was approved by Congress in 1946. However, events in Korea resulted in a Presidential recommendation that the interment of a World War II Unknown be delayed. Legislation approved in 1956 provided for the burial of an Unknown from Korea in conjunction with a World War II Unknown to take place on Memorial Day in 1958. In 1973 Public Law 93-43 was approved which provided for the interment of a Vietnam Unknown. A crypt has been completed at the Tomb to receive the Unknown.

**CRITERIA:**

The following criteria for the selection of an Unknown were established by the Army Quartermaster General based upon experience gained in the section of the World War I Unknown and were used to screen 8,532 unidentifiable candidates for the selection of a World War II Unknown and 643 unidentifiables for the Unknown from the Korean War. Of primary importance, the remains selected must be those of a member of the Armed Forces of the United States. In addition, to insure that the bodies are those of Americans and will remain unidentifiable is established as follows:

- a. Automatic elimination of any remains recovered without clothing, personal effects, and/or other media which would effectively serve to establish nationality.
- b. The remains must be nearly complete.
- c. Cremated remains are eliminated.
- d. There must be no identifying clues with the remains, such as initials on a ring.
- e. The Unknown must not have been part of comingled remains from which a residual Unknown may result.
- f. There must be no clues to pinpoint the Unknown as a member of a small unit such as a company.
- g. Geographic location of recovery, race, dental charts, and/or other physical characteristics must be without significance insofar as screening is concerned.

**VIETNAM SITUATION:**

- a. Approximately 57,453 servicemen lost their lives as the result of the hostilities of the Vietnam Era. Of this number approximately 55,105 remains have been recovered, identified, and returned to the next of kin. Approximately 2,348 United States military personnel and 94 civilians have not been accounted for.
- b. Active search and recovery operations for Vietnam had to be discontinued after the withdrawal of American Forces. It is hoped that the current negotiations with representatives of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam will result in authority to reinstitute search and recovery operations.

- c. Modern techniques employed by the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CIL), have resulted in a high percentage of identification of the remains recovered to date. Techniques include dental charting, examination of bones to detect healed fractures or anomalies, analysis of bone and hair samples to determine blood type, and other examination of remains which results in information that is compared against health and dental records of missing or believed-to-be persons. The superimposition of a transparency of the skull over photographic portraits is also employed. Prior to the return this past weekend of the 12 remains from Vietnam, there were only six unidentified remains in the CIL. Three remains recovered between 1970 and 1974 had been recently identified. Of the six unidentified, four have been name associated. That is, circumstances surrounding the recovery of the remains provide good indication as to identity, but a comparison of the remains with health and dental records has not established proof beyond any reasonable doubt. The remaining two cannot be confirmed to be American military personnel.



(National Archives)

*President Gerald Ford places a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. He is standing on the empty, center crypt for a Vietnam Unknown Serviceman which has been covered with granite pavers.*