



# ***MEDIA ADVISORY***

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## **SAILOR MISSING SINCE WORLD WAR II TO BE INTERRED AT BARRANCAS NATIONAL CEMETERY ON NAS PENSACOLA**

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

Navy Water Tender 1st Class Walter H. Sollie, 37, of Myrtlewood, Ala., will be interred Jan. 6, 2017, at Barrancas National Cemetery onboard Naval Air Station Pensacola. On Dec. 7, 1941, Sollie 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 Sollie. No single vessel at Pearl Harbor, with the exception of the USS Arizona, suffered as many fatalities.

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

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, Hawaii. 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 Sollie.

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 Sollie's remains, scientists from DPAA and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used mitochondrial DNA analysis, which matched two great nieces, as well as circumstantial evidence and laboratory analysis, to include dental comparisons, which matched Sollie's records.

Of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II, more than 400,000 died during the war. Currently there are 73,104 service members still unaccounted for from World War II.

*Media interested in covering the event should contact NASP Public Affairs at (850) 452-4436, 452-4466 or 452-2552 for gate clearance. For interviews with family members prior to day of services should contact the NAS Public Affairs office as well.*

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