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## LOCAL NEWS

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### Vietnam dog tags not MIAs

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By [William Cole](#)

Seemingly old dog tags, the metal IDs worn by U.S. military members, have been available for sale on the streets of Vietnam for years.



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As a symbol of service overseas and the loss of life in time of war, the tags were often bought up — sometimes by the hundreds — by American tourists driven to safeguard them out of respect for the duty that ended for Americans in 1975.

The volume of the tags out there left a big question: Are they real?

The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command at Hickam Air Force Base took up the cause and in 2001 posted more than 1,000 names listed on tags acquired in Vietnam.

The conclusion?

"After examining and analyzing hundreds of dog tags, our research has concluded that 99 percent of the dog tags being sold on the streets of Vietnam are genuine, but are not from Americans listed as "missing in action," the command said on its Web site.

The accounting command is charged with investigating, recovering and identifying missing American war dead.

JPAC, as it is known, said a lot of the tags it took a look at were worn and carried by U.S. troops in Vietnam, but were lost for a variety of reasons.

The chain they were on might have broken. Some of the tags probably went AWOL after

they were turned in during out-processing in Vietnam.



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"Considering the fact that 2.5 million American troops served in Southeast Asia, it's not surprising that thousands of dog tags have ended up on the streets of Vietnam," JPAC said.

There was reason to be skeptical of the leftover tags.

Stamping machines and blanks used to produce U.S. dog tags were left behind after the war. The name "Elvis A. Presley" has turned up on some.

JPAC lists 76 service members it says have been reunited with their old dog tags through the Web site listing, which can be found at [www.jpac.pacom.mil/index.php?page=dogtag\\_project&size=100&ind=3](http://www.jpac.pacom.mil/index.php?page=dogtag_project&size=100&ind=3).

In January 2002, the accounting command received its first response — from Dan Clipson, who had served in Phu Bai from 1969 to 1970.

He didn't remember losing a tag, but was grateful nevertheless to get it back.

"Please know that this is one former American soldier who thanks you for giving back to him a piece of his history," Clipson said in a letter to JPAC.

JPAC says it is aware that American tourists in Vietnam may be concerned that dog tags for sale might be related to a service member missing in action, "however, we do not recommend people purchase them, as they are probably items that were simply lost or discarded during the war."

Reach William Cole at [wcole@honoluluadvertiser.com](mailto:wcole@honoluluadvertiser.com).



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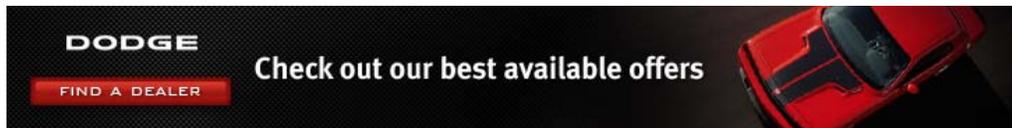
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