

Kodiak Coast Guardsman Helps Uncover Attu Remains

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Casey Kelly/KMXT

Crews

from the United States and Japan returned to Kodiak early this morning (Thursday), after about two weeks on Attu Island in the Aluetians, where they were searching for the remains of 2,300 Japanese soldiers killed during World War II. As KMXT's Casey Kelly reports, a Kodiak Coast Guardsman played an instrumental role in unearthing the only remains found during the mission.

The

Coast Guard was mainly responsible for providing transportation to and from the island, so Petty Officer Richard Brahm was the only Coast Guardsman on Attu for the entirety of the trip. As a public affairs officer he was supposed to take pictures and document the mission. But it didn't take him long to start helping out the crews searching for the remains.

(Brahm

1 :04s "why aren't you?"

Most

of the digging took place near where remains had been found last year, but Brahm says they searched for a week without finding anything. On the eighth day, he and a specialist from the Army were searching in another area, when they made the first discovery.

(Brahm

2 :11s "a little bit of the skull."

After

continuing to dig in the same area, he says they unearthed a coffin that was fully intact.

(Brahm

3 :14s "it was pretty exciting."

Brahm,

who thought he was just coming along for the ride, says at first he was pretty shocked by the discoveries.

(Brahm

4 :12s "and died on that island."

The

remains were reburied and their location marked. Brahm says the team of

specialists from the U-S and Japan plans to return next summer in the hopes of finding more. He says he would like to return as well.

(Brahm
5 :07s “…closure
for some people.”)

Attu
and nearby Kiska Island were invaded by the Japanese during World War II. Besides the 2,300 Japanese dead there were also about 1,500 Americans who died during the Battle of Attu. Many died of cold and disease rather than the actual battle itself. The mission to find the remains is a joint effort of the United States and Japanese governments.

I’m
Casey Kelly.

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