MEMORANDUM FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (MP)

SUBJECT: DISINTERMENT REQUEST FOR UNKNOWN X-1130 Manila #2

This memorandum is submitted in accordance with Department of Defense Directive 5110.10, Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) and Deputy Secretary of Defense memorandum dated April 14, 2015 (TAB C).

On 3 February 2015, a family member requested that DPAA disinter X-1130 Manila #2 for potential identification as 1st Lt Alexander R. Nininger, a casualty from World War II. Research and analysis of existing dental, anthropological, and historical records (TAB B) led to the conclusion that X-1130 Manila #2 interred in Plot J, Row 7, Grave 20, Manila American Cemetery and Memorial (MACM), Manila, Luzon, the Philippines, does not meet the 50 percent threshold for likelihood of individual identification established for disinterment of unknown remains. Historical research cannot associate the remains with 1st Lt Nininger. Based on comprehensive assessment of the available information, DPAA assesses a low likelihood that disinterment would lead to identification of the interred remains as this individual.

Based on my review of the information at TABs B, C, and D, I have concluded that the standards prescribed in the referenced Deputy Secretary of Defense memorandum have not been met, and that there is less than fifty percent likelihood that an identification would result. Accordingly, I recommend X-1130 Manila #2 remain honorably interred at the MACM. Should future research and analysis change our recommendation for this case, we will submit a new request for approval and, if approved, notify the requestor.

My point of contact in this matter is Ms Wenona Lavin, at telephone (808) 448-4500 ext. 3255 or email address: wenona.s.lavin.civ@mail.mil.

Michael S. Linnington
Director

Attachments:
As stated

cc: Director, Joint Staff
   Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy)
MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

From: CW2 Justin K. Crick, Analyst, Asia-Pacific Directorate, DPAA
To: Science Director; Asia-Pacific Director, DPAA
Subj: FAMILY DISINTERMENT REQUEST OF UNKNOWN X-1130 MANILA #2 FOR COMPARISON WITH FIRST LIEUTENANT ALEXANDER R. NININGER

1. Initial Recovery and Assessment

On 8 January 1946, authorities disinterred a set of remains from Abucay Churchyard, Soldier’s Row, Grave #9 in Abucay, Bataan Province, Luzon Island, in the Philippines. This initial recovery was apparently based on information that five Americans had been killed in the town of Abucay, Philippines, in January 1942 and buried in the Abucay Cemetery. Historic documentation in the unknown file, however, suggests that the Abucay Churchyard and Abucay Cemetery were two separate sites of burial. On 18 January 1946, these remains were reinterred in Plot 2, Row 22, Grave 2836 in the U.S. Armed Forces Cemetery No. 2 in Manila, Philippines (Manila #2) and designated Unknown X-1130 Manila #2 (X-1130). Two copies of a 13 February 1946 Report of Interment each contain a different dental chart for X-1130. There is no record of any processing of non-dental remains.

2. Disinterment and Reprocessing

Manila #2 became the last of the PHILYRCOM cemeteries to be disinterred as a part of AGRS concentration efforts in 1947 and 1948, with the last of remains buried there transferred to the mausoleum at Nichols Field on 20 July 1948. Unknown X-1130 was disinterred on an undisclosed date, but was reportedly sent to the American Graves Registration Service (AGRS) Mausoleum, Manila, Philippines (Manila Mausoleum) for storage on 24 July 1948. There is no report of anthropological processing or dental charting at this time. A 29 January 1949 assessment states that the processor was unable to determine the weight or race of the remains, but did estimate the stature to be 62 1/8 inches. The remains were reportedly not burned but were mangled. A dental chart was completed and the examiner noted, “Maxilla missing, loose teeth found with remains[.] L16 Horizontally impacted.” When analysts were unable to make a positive identification of remains at the Manila Mausoleum, they processed the remains for storage, sometimes returning to re-examine a set of remains several different times. Unknown X-1130 underwent a second examination reported from the Manila Mausoleum in September 1950, estimating the height at 61 inches and age at 20-30 years. The examiner was unable to determine the weight or race, but assessed the remains as “probably mongoloid.” A dental
chart was completed. The remains were returned to storage at the Manila Mausoleum on 11 September 1950.

![Figure 1. Map of Abucay Churchyard and Cemetery.](chart)

3. 1940s Investigations and Name Associations

Unknown X-1130 was initially associated with First Lieutenant (1st Lt) Alexander R. Nininger based on the testimony of Colonel (Col) George S. Clarke of the 57th Infantry, who stated that 1st Lt Nininger was buried at Abucay Churchyard in Grave #9 outside the churchyard wall in a ceremony presided over by a Chaplain Scecina. However, both X-1130 and a set of remains later identified as Philippine Scout Tranquilino Beles were both reported in association with Grave #9 – despite current research having found no documentation stating that two sets of remains were ever interred in Grave #9. Colonel Clarke also apparently wrote to Mr. Herbert B. Maynard, father of Lt. Maynard, informing him that his son was buried in Grave #6, but remains recovered from Grave #6 were identified as Philippine Scout Pedro Obsioma.

According to Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) John W. Raulston, the Medical Corps officer in charge of the medical collecting station at the Catholic Church in Abucay, Chaplain Thomas Scecina, “established a little graveyard in a plot of ground within the five foot wall around the church.” The approximate recovery location for X-1130, however, was listed as Soldier’s Row, which was located outside of this wall. Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) Raulston did not recall the name Nininger from the burial. The only officer buried at Abucay Churchyard named by Lt Col Raulston was Captain H.A. McCurdy, who was recovered from the Abucay Churchyard and identified because of the presence of an identification tag recovered with the remains.

In a 10 September 1946 letter, Major (Maj) Franklin O. Anders of the 57th Infantry stated that 1st Lt Nininger, 1st Lt Kenneth L. Wilson, 1st Lt David W. Maynard, 1st Lt John C. Compton, 1st Lt Arthur W. Green, and “Capt. Meyer” were buried in the Abucay Churchyard. A close friend of 1st Lt Wilson, Lee Culver Brooks, concurred by stating in an undated phone
call between Mr. Brooks and Captain (Capt) Vogl of the Repatriation branch that he “feels that the burial was made in the church…cemetery at Abucay.” Neither Lt Col Raulston nor Mr. Brooks were present at the burial. Of those reported buried at the Abucay Churchyard by Maj Anders, none were recovered and identified from the Abucay Churchyard. Captain Adolph Meier, likely the Captain Meyer listed above as no Meyer was reported as killed in Bataan, was recovered from Mariveles Cemetery #3, some 30 km away.

In 1945, while attempting to locate graves for U.S. servicepersons, Master Sergeant (M Sgt) Abie Abraham located one of the original grave diggers, Greggorio Cunanan. Mr. Cunanan claimed that he was hired by American officials to inter five Americans in the Abucay Cemetery prior to the surrender of Bataan (9 April 1942). The Abucay Cemetery is separate from the Abucay Churchyard and its attached cemetery. The Abucay Cemetery lies across a river and 650 m to the southwest of the church (Figure 1) and is not the location from which X-1130 was recovered. This distinction between the churchyard cemetery and Abucay Cemetery was one that investigators in the 1940s and early 1950s struggled to reconcile.

On 28 November 1949, a memo from HQ AGRS PHILCOM explained the basis for associating X-1130 with 1st Lt Nininger. The memo appears to contradict itself throughout. The memo references the burial records of Chaplain Scecina as having buried 1st Lts Nininger, Maynard, Compton, Green, and Captain Adolph Meier within Abucay Churchyard. However, as previously discussed, Captain Meier was identified after his remains were disinterred from a cemetery some 30 km away. The records cited in this memo state that of the fourteen sets of remains recovered from the churchyard, only two were believed to be American (Figure 2). Of the two potentially American sets of recovered remains, one was identified as Capt H.A. McCurdy, O-28378, and one was designated X-1671 Manila Mausoleum. Unknown X-1671 was never identified but some records indicate that the remains may be associated with a Philippine Scout. The other twelve sets of recovered remains were determined to be Philippine Scouts. The presence of so many Philippine Scouts in this burial location weakens the argument that the unidentified remains belong to an American. The memo then discredits the information provided by Lt Col Raulston and Mr. Brooks, pointing out that neither was present at the burial conducted by Chaplain Scecina. It then calls into question the validity of the disinterment location as Abucay Churchyard, but goes on to reason that since the grave numbers match, they must be the same. Despite appearing to present evidence that X-1130 is not associated with 1st Lt Nininger, the summary of the memo concludes that X-1130 is likely the serviceman.
On 28 November 1949, the same day as the previous memo from the same office, HQ AGRS PHILCOM forwarded the casualty case to a Zone Board of Review, citing that all the remains recovered from an “extensive investigation” of the churchyard were “mongoloid” and could therefore not be 1st Lt Nininger.

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Figure 2. Map of Abucay Churchyard burials. Map not to scale.\(^{30}\)

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On 24 March 1950, Lt Col T.H. Metz requested that a search and recovery team be sent to the Abucay Churchyard to ensure the interior of the churchyard walls were searched in addition to the already searched exterior.\textsuperscript{32} The order for this excavation was sent on 5 May 1950 and the excavation occurred on 9 May 1950. The excavation covered the four plots within the walls of the Abucay churchyard. The search and recovery officer encountered remains that were “distinctly Mongoloid” and some of small children.\textsuperscript{33} Eighteen sets of remains were examined by an anthropologist and all were determined to be of Filipino descent.\textsuperscript{34}

This excavation brought the total remains recovered from the Abucay Churchyard and the area just outside its walls to 30 remains of Filipino descent, X-1671, the remains later identified as Capt McCurdy, and X-1130 (33 total sets of remains).

4. Unidentifiable

On 30 August 1950, a Board of Review rejected the recommendation that X-1130 be identified as 1st Lt Nininger on the basis of an inconclusive dental comparison and the difference in the estimated height of the remains (61 3/8- 62 1/8 inches) when compared to 1st Lt Nininger’s recorded stature of 71 inches.\textsuperscript{35} The remains were reinterred at Fort William McKinley Cemetery—now the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial—on 1 March 1950 in Plot J, Row 7, Grave 20.\textsuperscript{36}

On 8 September 1950, X-1130 was re-examined and determined to be unidentifiable due to a lack of sufficient identifying data.\textsuperscript{37} Interestingly, the memo stating this finding was dated 6 September 1950, 2 days prior to the examination date.

5. Present Investigation

On 3 February 2015, DPAA received a family disinterment request for X-1130 based on the family’s belief that there is a tentative association with 1st Lt Alexander R. Nininger.

To gain a complete understanding of this association for this investigation, the situation on the ground at the time of Lt Nininger’s loss must be understood. According to War Plan Orange, the United States’ plan to defend the Philippines was to consolidate forces on the Bataan Peninsula and defend until reinforcements arrived from the United States. In the days leading up to 12 January 1942, the eastern side of the Mabuan-Abucay main line of resistance, near the Abucay Hacienda, had repulsed eleven attacks. The attacks consisted of waves of frontal assaults at night that left snipers on the battlefield to pin the United States Forces Far East (USAFFE) soldiers to their foxholes in the day. Lieutenant Nininger’s actions leading up to his death allowed the USAFFE forces to push back and retake ground lost during the eleven assaults. Unfortunately, the line was penetrated further west in the following days, threatening to cut off troops from the rear, and the Mabuan-Abucay line had to be abandoned on 22 January 1942. The United States Armed Forces Far East defense fell back to the Bagac-Orion main line of resistance, 8 km to the south. After continuing to defend for months without reinforcement, the exhausted, underfed, and undersupplied forces on Bataan were compelled to surrender on 9 April 1942. The Abucay area fell under Japanese possession until the return of U.S. forces to Luzon in 1945.\textsuperscript{38} The personnel remaining on Bataan then became Prisoners Of War (POWs). It is unclear
if there was any attempt to bring temporary graves with them during their retrograde to the Bagac-Orion line. This may explain why Meier, who was reportedly buried at Abucay, was recovered at Mariveles Cemetery #3.\textsuperscript{39}

In an effort to clear Bataan for an assault on Corregidor Island, the Japanese moved the U.S. and Filipino POWs on foot to San Fernando and then by rail to Camp O’Donnell in what later became known as the Bataan Death March. There were far more POWs than the Japanese were able to handle, and stragglers were routinely bayoneted or beheaded along the route. These bodies were left for locals to bury, and they did so typically near where the deceased fell. This route includes the road that passes the Abucay Churchyard. Maintaining and keeping records of those lost along the route or prior to the surrender was impossible as those participating were struggling just to survive and any records discovered by the Japanese were likely to have been destroyed.\textsuperscript{40}

Prior to the surrender of Bataan, the AGRS unit on Bataan retrograded to Corregidor Island, which surrendered on 6 May 1942. On the day of the surrender of Corregidor, the AGRS sealed the burial records for Corregidor and Bataan in a gun powder can and hid them behind lateral 20 in Malina Tunnel. Personal effects from of the deceased from both Bataan and Corregidor were stored in a safe in Malinta Tunnel. This safe was quickly looted by the Japanese after the surrender. The lateral walls were destroyed either during the Japanese occupation or when the U.S. recaptured Corregidor in 1945, destroying the records along with it.\textsuperscript{41}

In September 1992, Mr. Patterson, nephew of 1st Lt Nininger, traveled to the Abucay church cemetery with a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) archaeologist and another colleague, along with three archaeologists from the National Museum of the Philippines. They attempted to conduct test digs in an area believed to hold the remains, but cement flooring hindered their work. The former caretaker of the church, Felicismo Tria, informed them that, while “enlarging a subsurface canal” near the site, workers had found remains, which they encased in a wall of the church. In a June 1993 letter, Patterson concluded that his efforts in the cemetery had “proved fruitless.”\textsuperscript{42}

Mr. Patterson resolved to look into the connection to X-1130 instead. On 7 October 1993, CILHI informed Mr. Patterson that it had examined the records and confirmed the conclusion of the AGRS that the dental records were not diagnostic and that there was a significant height discrepancy between the remains and 1st Lt Nininger.\textsuperscript{43} Using modern estimates, the DPAA Laboratory estimates the stature at 60.9-66.5 inches.\textsuperscript{44}

Mr. Patterson was also aware of a letter from Col Garnet Francis, who was reportedly at Lt Nininger’s burial. Colonel Francis stated that the burial was 50 ft south of the stream and 150 ft west of the national highway, which raises further discrepancies about the recovery location of the remains. The JPAC 13-1RP (Republic of the Philippines) IT (Investigation Team) visited the Abucay church and confirmed that the grounds are almost entirely paved. The area south of the river is densely developed with residences. There has been no new evidence in recent and current investigations that changes any previous findings that resulted in a negative correlation of X-1130 to Lt Nininger.
6. Summary and Conclusions

Based on the historical analysis set forth above, the case of X-1130 fails to meet the established threshold of a 50 percent likelihood of being able to make an individual identification and is, therefore, not recommended for disinterment at this time. It seems possible or maybe even likely that these remains are not American. Even assuming the remains are American, with Col Clarke’s testimony that Lt Nininger and Lt Maynard were buried in Graves #9 and #6 in doubt, these remains could also be Lt Green, Lt Wilson, Lt Compton, Lt Nininger, or Lt Maynard, or someone else entirely. The route of the Bataan Death March passed through Abucay, directly in front of the church. Many died along the route and were buried near their place of death by locals. The initial possible association of X-1130 with Lt Nininger appears to be inconsistent due to Captain Meier, a reported concurrent burial, being recovered from Mariveles Cemetery #3, the incorrect identity of the Grave #6 burial, and the recovery location of X-1130 outside the wall of the church when the statement suggested inside. There exists too much doubt as to the location of the burial and subsequent recovery area for these remains, be it inside the churchyard walls, outside the walls, across the river to the south of the church, or in another area entirely, as in the case of Captain Meier. The historic evidence is not strong enough to overcome the 4.5-inch discrepancy with the highest estimated stature of X-1130. This set of remains does not appear to be a likely candidate for identification as 1st Lt Alexander R. Nininger, Jr. There is no evidence that can establish even a tentative association between X-1130 and 1st Lt Nininger, other than the tentative and problematic reference to the Abucay Churchyard, Soldier’s Row, Grave #9 recovery location.

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CW2 JUSTIN K. CRICK
Analyst

Science Director Decision:  Regional Director Decision:
______________________Approved  ______________________Approved
______________________Disapproved  ______________________Disapproved
______________________Other  ______________________Other
End Notes


6 V. C. Aquino, “Report of Interment,” 12 August 1948, X-1130 file. The remains were re-designated as X-4685 Manila Mausoleum during this time. For continuity and readability the remains will continue to be referred to as X-1130 throughout this report.


11 Ibid.


13 Abucay, Bataan Map, undated, X-1130 file.

14 Col. George S. Clarke, Letter to Alexander R. Nininger, Sr., 20 February 1944; Herbert B. Maynard, Letter to Major General T. B. Larkin, Quartermaster General, 10 September 1946, Individual Deceased Personnel File (IDPF) for Nininger, Alexander R., Jr., 1st Lt, O-23761, Record Group (RG) 92: Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Washington National Records Center (WNRC), Suitland, Maryland. Original document states “67th” but later states that a Maj. Anders was “also of the 57th Infantry.” Chaplain Secina is spelled Secina in most documents and Cecina in Col. Clarke’s letter within the X-1130 file and 1st Lt Nininger’s IDPF. Captain (CH) Thomas Secina, O-384964, died 24 October 1944 as a POW aboard the Arisan Maru. Mr. Maynard’s letter refers to him as Chaplain Secina; George S. Clarke, Letter to Alexander R. Nininger, Sr., 20 February 1944, IDPF for Nininger.

Herbert B. Maynard, Letter to Major General T. B. Larkin, Quartermaster General, 10 September 1946, IDPF for Nininger; Abucay, Bataan Map, undated, X-1130 file.


Ibid.


Herbert B. Maynard, Letter to Major General T. B. Larkin, Quartermaster General, 10 September 1946, IDPF for Nininger. According to current records, there is no Captain Meyer that died in Bataan in this timeframe. There is a Capt Adolph Meier who died at Abucay Hacienda on 12 January 1942 and was assigned to the 57th Infantry along with 1st Lt Nininger. Captain Meier was recovered from Mariveles Cemetery #3.

J. Windsor, Jr., “Extract Copy of Information Obtained in a Telephone Conversation Between Captain Vogl, Repatriation Branch, Memorial Division and Mr. Lee Culver Brooks,” undated, IDPF for Nininger.

John Shypula, “Memo, Subj: Identification of World War II Deceased,” 28 November 1949, X-1130 file. As previously noted, Capt Adolph Meier, who died at Abucay Hacienda on 12 January 1942 and was also assigned to the 57th Infantry, was recovered from Mariveles Cemetery #3. It is likely this is the “Capt. Meyer” from the list.


Ibid. Unknown X-1671 was previously designated as X-3421 Manila #2.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Abucay, Bataan Map, undated, X-1130 file.


38 George S. Clarke, Letter to Mr. Alexander R. Nininger, Sr., 20 February 1944, IDPF for Nininger.

39 These events largely conform with the historical account provided in the official history. See, Louis Morton, The Fall of the Philippines (Center of Military History, United States Army, Washington, D.C., 1953).

40 Ibid.


42 George S. Clarke, Letter to Mr. Alexander R. Nininger, Sr., 20 February 1944, IDPF for Nininger.

43 Ibid.

44 Emily Wilson, E-mail correspondence to Dr. Michael Dolski, 30 September 2015.