

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Remains of Vietnam War Veteran to Return to Middle Tennessee** William Brandon O’Kieff to be Laid to Rest After Nearly 50 Years

**NASHVILLE** – Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam and Department of Veterans Services Commissioner Many-Bears Grinder recognize the service and sacrifice of U.S. Air Force Technical Sergeant William O’Kieff of Murfreesboro, who was presumably killed on November 27, 1970 along with five other American crew members, 73 Republic of South Vietnam service members and their wives and children. O’Kieff was assigned to 19<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Squadron, 315<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Wing and was serving in support of the Vietnam War when the C-123K carrying the Americans and South Vietnamese passengers crashed. The Flight Engineer from Middle Tennessee was 38-years old at the time of the crash. The cause of the crash has not been determined.

On December 18, 1970, a Graves Registration Team recovered approximately 34 bodies, but was only able to identify two American crewmembers.

On March 29, 1971, additional remains were discovered but individual identifications were not made and the remains were buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Between 1985 and 1988, Vietnamese refugees returned human remains and personal effects over to the U.S. Using DNA testing and anthropological analysis, the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) identified O’Kieff in May, 2017.

O’Kieff played football for the Tigers and graduated from Central High School in Murfreesboro before he enlisted in the Air Force. In 1958 he married Margaret Adair O’Kieff and they had two children together. Margaret passed away in 2016.

“William left the football fields of Tennessee to bravely serve in the combat zones of Vietnam and gave his all in the process,” Haslam said. “We join his children, Alexander and Dawn, in remembering their father’s brave service and finally laying him to rest in Tennessee.”

“As we prepare to pay our respects and remember the ultimate sacrifice of William O’Kieff, we also want to remember the sacrifice of his family who waited nearly 50 years for this day,” Grinder said. “This is a somber time of closure and gratitude for the ongoing efforts of the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory to identify our fallen heroes.”

“Our family is just overwhelmed with all that has happened in the short weeks of receiving this information,” daughter Dawn O’Kieff said. “We never thought that we would have our father back home to us. To have him laid to rest beside our mum, and his parents and grandparents is just absolutely amazing.”

O’Kieff’s remains will arrive at the Nashville International Airport Air Cargo Building at 963 Airport Service Road in Nashville on Friday, June 16 at 12:49 p.m. (CDT). Media planning to attend the dignified arrival will need to be staged at the Air Cargo Building by noon. Interviews with family members will not be provided during the dignified transfer of remains.

Haslam has declared a day of mourning and ordered flags at half-staff from sunrise to sunset on Saturday, June 17 in honor of Technical Sergeant O’Kieff’s ultimate sacrifice. Graveside service with full military honors will be in Roselawn Memorial Gardens, 5350 NW Broad Street,



Murfreesboro on Saturday, June 17 at 1:00 p.m. (CDT).

O'Kieff is survived by his son Alexander, daughter Dawn of Nashville and granddaughter Aislin O'Kieff of Conover, North Carolina.

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