

Historian: 3 possible Japanese airmen for skull

July 23 2011, By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER , Associated Press

(AP) -- The skull found in Pearl Harbor believed to be from a Japanese pilot in the Dec. 7, 1941 attack could belong to one of three airmen who were aboard a torpedo plane that was shot down where the surprising discovery was recently made.

Daniel Martinez, the National Park Service's chief historian for Pearl Harbor, said Friday he and historian Mike Wenger planned to spend the weekend researching the names of the three Japanese men on a Nakajima B5N2 bomber that went down in the area where the skull was discovered during dredging in April.

[Forensic scientists](#) with the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command on Oahu are conducting tests to confirm that the skull belongs to one of 55 Japanese airmen killed in the attack. Martinez said the Nakajima B5N2, also known as a Kate bomber, was shot down in the southeast loch of the harbor. That's where an excavation crew in April found the skull during overnight dredging in water between 35 and 40 feet deep. The destroyer USS Bagley was credited with shooting down the aircraft.

"If JPAC determines this is Asian and it has been determined that it fits into the 1941 scenario, JPAC will then have to consider the names we'll submit to them as possible casualties," Martinez said. "We've got it whittled down to three possible crews."

Martinez said he would not disclose the possible names without JPAC's permission. JPAC officials could not immediately be reached Friday.

Researching names of those in three-man torpedo bombers from the Japanese aircraft carrier Kaga will require consulting a report the Japanese government issued after the war, Martinez said.

Archaeologist Jeff Fong of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command Pacific told The Associated Press earlier this week that he believes the skull belongs to a Japanese pilot. He said it has been determined not to be from an ancient Hawaiian burial site and the [skull](#) was dredged with items from the 1940s, including a Coca-Cola bottle.

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