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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMERICAN REMAINS RETURN FROM NORTH KOREA

Remains believed to be those of an American soldier were repatriated across the demilitarized zone from North Korea this morning, Korea time.

A joint U.S.-North Korean team conducted the remains recovery operation which began Oct. 4, 1997. This was the fourth such operation into North Korea since the summer of 1996. This team excavated a number of sites in the same general area as the previous three operations in the northwestern part of North Korea in Unsan County. The remains were flown immediately to the Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii where the forensic identification will begin.

The remains of seven soldiers have been excavated in these four joint operations. One has been identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

More than 8,100 Americans remain unaccounted from the Korean War.

The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office led a series of negotiations with North Koreans beginning in January 1996. Agreement was reached in the two broad areas of joint remains recovery operations and archival reviews. A U.S. team visited the North Korean military museum in Pyongyang in August, and returned with copies of documents, identification media and information on captured American equipment and paraphernalia.

The operation which concluded today is the last one scheduled for 1997.