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NORTH KOREA TENTATIVELY AGREES TO RETURN REMAINS

The Department of Defense announced today that tentative agreements have been reached between DoD officials and the North Korean government to resume the search for and transfer of remains of Americans missing in action from the Korean War. Delegations from both countries will meet in mid-October to work out details. Operations to recover American remains from North Korea began in 1996, but were halted in June of this year in a dispute over the method of repatriating the remains.

Robert L. Jones, deputy assistant secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel, will lead a delegation to Pyongyang in late October to accept the remains of what is believed to be four American soldiers. Since recovery operations began in July 1996, the U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii has recovered 39 sets of remains, of which three have been positively identified.

Jones hails these new agreements as a breakthrough to the standoff that has plagued recovery operations in the past months. With these agreements, DoD teams will be allowed to immediately resume recovery operations.