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KOREAN WAR VETS AND FAMILIES RETURN FROM NORTH KOREA

A delegation of four veterans and family members of MIAs returned last week from North Korea where they observed the recovery of the remains of American soldiers missing from the Korean War.

According to Jerry D. Jennings, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs, "The purpose of this visit was to allow the team to see firsthand the ongoing operations and report their observations to veterans and family groups in the U.S. These are among our primary constituents."

During the six-day visit, the group visited the west-side of the Chosin Reservoir. This was the first time any Americans have been allowed into this area since the end of the Korean War. Retired Marine Corps General Ray Davis walked the same areas where fierce battles were fought between American and Chinese forces Nov.-Dec. 1950. General Davis was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroic action on this battlefield.

They also observed the joint remains recovery operation on the east-side of the reservoir, where American and North Korean specialists continue their work.

Another location they visited is in Unsan County, approximately 60 miles north of Pyongyang, where a team from the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii (CILHI) has found remains. This is the site of battles between American and Chinese forces Nov.-Dec. 1950. American remains have been located in this area on several occasions since the operations began in 1996.

These joint remains recovery operations have been carried out annually since 1996, following negotiations led by the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office. Each operation lasts approximately 30 days, and the third one for 2002 will end on Oct. 29. CILHI teams have conducted 24 operations in North Korea, recovering what is believed to be the remains of at least 167 soldiers. There are more than 8,100 servicemen missing from the Korean War.