

MEMORANDUM FOR CORRESPONDENTS

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A 10-person team of POW/MIA specialists has arrived in North Korea to begin joint recovery operations of the remains of Americans missing in action from the Korean War.

The team arrived in Unsan County, in northwest North Korea, this morning, EDT. Their first task is to set up a base camp, from which suspected burial sites will be surveyed and eventually excavated. If American remains are located, they will be returned to the United States for forensic identification. Two team members, from the Defense Department and the State Department, will remain in Pyongyang during the mission to facilitate communication with the field operation.

Three joint excavations are scheduled for 1997, per agreements struck between the United States and North Korea in May. This operation is the second time U. S. specialists from the Defense Department's POW/Missing Personnel Office and the Central Identification Laboratory have entered North Korea. In July 1996, a similar joint team located the remains of an American soldier, also in Unsan County. He was identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

Follow-on excavations are planned for August and October, all in Unsan County. Several hundred Americans are known to have been lost there in fierce combat between U. S. and Chinese forces.