

MEMORANDUM FOR CORRESPONDENTS

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U. S. and North Korean negotiators are meeting in New York City this week to discuss continued efforts to account for American servicemen missing in action from the Korean War.

The U. S. team, lead by Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Affairs J. Alan Liotta, is meeting to finalize details for continued U. S. operations in North Korea during 1998. This Department of Defense team met with the North Koreans in 1996 and 1997 and reached unprecedented agreements on joint remains recoveries and joint archival reviews.

In addition to these two broad areas of agreement, the team will seek access to the known American deserters living in North Korea in an effort to resolve alleged sightings of Americans there.

As a result of the 1996 agreement, the remains of an American soldier were recovered in July of that year. He was identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors

The remains of what are believed to be six other soldiers were recovered in 1997 during three additional joint operations. The forensic identification process is underway now at the Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii. During the last 1997 operation, the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office persuaded North Korean officials to invite representatives of family and veterans groups, as well as two national media organizations, to observe a joint excavation and to visit the military museum. In addition, U.S. investigators conducted the first-ever sustained review of Korean War archival information located in Pyongyang.