

MEMORANDUM FOR CORRESPONDENTS

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U.S. and North Korean negotiators reached agreement yesterday in New York to expand joint operations to recover the remains of American servicemen lost during the Korean War.

The negotiating teams also set a date for another joint archival review, and will consider expanding this area to a second review with a date to be determined. The U.S. side continued to press for access to the known American soldiers who defected to North Korea in the 1960s - 80s, but no agreement was reached on interviewing them.

The joint recoveries were expanded to five separate operations, the first of which begins April 21, 1998. The final operation will end on Oct. 15, 1998. These five sites are approximately 30-40 miles south of Unsan County, where 1996 and 1997 joint excavations were conducted. The 1998 sites are in Kujang County of North Pyongan Province and near Kaechon City of the South Pyongan Province. In November and December of 1950, American troops from the 2nd Infantry Division and other units were withdrawing southward, and approximately 1,700 soldiers were lost. The U.S. and North Korean sides believe that more remains can be recovered from this area than from the operations in 1996 and 1997.

Each side agreed to many technical arrangements in support of the operations and the archival review. For example, a meeting will be held before the first joint operation in which archival documents, including maps, will be exchanged to more precisely identify suspected burial sites. This meeting will assist the U. S. Army Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii forensic anthropologists and help maximize the productive time available to them on each site.

The New York talks, which began last Wednesday, are a continuation of similar negotiations of 1996 and 1997. Earlier agreements led to four joint excavations and a joint archival review. As a result of these earlier excavations, the remains of seven servicemen have been repatriated, and one has been identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors. The remaining six are undergoing forensic identification at CILHI.

The U.S. team was led by J. Alan Liotta, acting deputy assistant secretary of defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs. Senior Colonel Pak Rim-su of the Korean Peoples' Army represented North Korea. Both sides agreed that preliminary meetings of archivists and anthropologists during the winter months of 1997-98 would assist the on-site teams in their scientific work at each location, and would also help determine the fate of other servicemen about which the United States has questions.