

No. 046-99
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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 4, 1999

UNITED STATES SEEKS CONTINUED CHINESE COOPERATION ON POW/MIA ISSUE

A Department of Defense delegation has concluded a visit to China to seek additional cooperation in resolving Korean War POW and MIA cases.

Robert L. Jones, the deputy assistant secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs, led a small team of specialists to China last week to explore opportunities for access to Chinese archives. During his seven days in China, Jones met with U.S. and Chinese officials to emphasize the commitment of the U.S. government to POW and MIA accounting. Jones met with officials of the ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing to discuss ways in which the Chinese government could be of assistance.

"We believe Chinese records of the war may hold the key to resolving the fates of many of our missing servicemen from the Korean War," Jones said. "The Chinese have been very cooperative in our investigations of Southeast Asia and World War II losses. They have located sites where our World War II servicemen crashed and led us to remote areas where recovery teams have brought back remains. The Chinese have pledged continued cooperation. We are grateful for their continued assistance in this humanitarian mission."

Chinese records of battlefield operations, burials and management of POW camps during the war may offer details leading U.S. investigators to specific sites in North Korea. China has facilitated U.S. logistical support for the past three years as U.S. teams prepared to enter North Korea on remains recovery operations. Operating out of Beijing, U.S. logistics planners for these operations moved food, fuel, water and equipment into North Korea with the support of the Chinese government.

U.S. government teams have conducted three investigations between 1993-96 in China in an effort to gather information on the eight losses of American servicemen on Chinese territory during the Vietnam War. The Chinese government facilitated these investigations by arranging interviews with villagers and providing other support in conducting on-site surveys of possible crash locations. The Chinese also turned over remains of two Americans in 1975.

Remains of American World War II aviators were returned from Tibet in 1994 after Chinese officials found them in a glacier. In 1996, the Chinese informed President Clinton they had located the crash site of a World War II B-24 bomber near Guilin in southern China. At their invitation, U.S. recovery teams visited the site in 1997 and 1998, with plans to return this year to complete their recovery work.