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MIA REMAINS RECOVERY EFFORTS TO BEGIN IN SOUTH KOREA

U.S. and Republic of Korea officials have reached tentative agreement on a broad range of provisions to enhance combined operations in South Korea to recover the remains of American servicemen missing in action from the Korean War.

Meeting in Seoul with officials of the Korean Ministry of National Defense (MND) earlier this week, a high-level team from the Defense Department's POW/Missing Personnel Office and the Army's Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii (CILHI) agreed to procedures and discussed several locations for combined recovery operations in 2000.

These talks broaden existing recovery operations in the Republic of Korea. CILHI specialists presented potential recovery locations where they believe additional American remains may be recovered. Additionally, the officials discussed gaining access to Korean War veterans who may have personal knowledge of the loss or burial sites of Americans. Both sides expect recovery operations to start by early June.

Between 1951-55, Army graves registration teams recovered approximately 25,000 remains in the south, all but 400 of which were identified and returned to their families. CILHI has conducted 10 recovery operations over the past two decades in the south, leading to the identification of three missing American servicemen.

U.S. and ROK officials established a framework to share technical assistance and operational experience during South Korea's three-year effort to account for their own missing from the war. Republic of Korea officials agreed to share any information gathered from veterans, witnesses and archives that might lead to the recovery of missing Americans as they undertake this ambitious recovery effort.

U.S. officials offered access to historical and archival data that might aid MND in its search for potential recovery sites. Additionally, CILHI is prepared to provide the South Koreans assistance in a number of technical areas.