Memorandum on Areas In Which US/DPRK Joint Recovery Operations Have Been Conducted

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It is estimated that the remains of over 5,000 Americans lost in the Korean War are still in the DPRK. Since 1996, the US Department of Defense's POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) has been successful in arranging with the government of the DPRK for the joint recovery of the remains these American servicemen. Joint recovery operations, or JRO's, have typically involved personnel from the US Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI) working in conjunction with DPRK military personnel and normally last about one month. Between July 1996 and October 2002, twenty-five JRO's were conducted in the DPRK. The purpose of this paper is to outline the specific geographic areas in which JRO's have been conducted during the seven-year history of this program.

Past arrangements between DPMO and the DPRK's Army (the Korean People's Army or KPA) have, over time, provided JRO access to four county sized administrative areas within the DPRK. These are Kaechon City in South Pyongan Province, Unsan and Kujang Counties in North Pyongan Province, and Changjin County in South Hamgyong Province. As points of reference, Kaechon City, Unsan County, and Kujang County all border Yongbyon County in the Northwestern DPRK and were the locale of heavy fighting during the initial phase of the Chinese intervention into the Korean War in November and December 1950. Changjin County in the Northeastern DPRK surrounds the Chosin (named Changjin in Korean) Reservoir and was also the scene of heavy fighting during November and December 1950. It should also be noted that during each JRO, a two-man liaison element from

DPMO has been located in the city of Pyongyang with the ability to travel by vehicle to visit recovery teams in outlying areas.

The specific areas in which JRO's were conducted varied from year to year. In 1996, a single JRO was conducted. This took place in Unsan County during the month of July. Three JRO's were conducted in 1997. These also took place in Unsan County with the first beginning in July and the last ending in October.

1998 saw an expansion in the number of JRO's conducted and a change in location to Kujang County. A total of five JRO's were conducted between April and October 1998. JRO's returned to Kujang county again in 1999, but only three operations were conducted that year. The first two JRO's took place in the April through June time period while the final JRO of 1999 lasted from October through November. Five slightly shorter JRO periods were executed in 2000 between the months of June and November with the recovery teams operating in both Unsan and Kujang Counties.

In 2001, operations were expanded to permit two recovery teams to operate simultaneously in widely different areas of the DPRK. This allowed JRO's to begin in the area east of the Chosin (Changjin) Reservoir while still maintaining operations in the Northwestern DPRK. For the first three JRO's of 2001 (April through August) one recovery team operated in both Unsan and Kujang Counties while a second team recovered remains in Kaechon City. During the final two JRO's of 2001 (September through November) the second recovery team moved to Chanjin Country and conducted operations in the area east of the Chosin (Changjin) Reservoir while the first team remained in Unsan and Kujang Counties. In 2002, JRO's began in July and continued through October, allowing for three full JRO periods. During each JRO, one recovery team operated in Unsan County while the while the second team operated in eastern Changjin County. A similar pattern was followed in 2003, when two full JRO periods were executed, allowing two recovery teams to operate simultaneously from August through October. The location of operations in 2003 and 2004 remain Unsan and eastern Changjin Counties.

A map of US-DPRK Recovery Operations from 1996-2004 can be found here .

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