

## **KOREA, US TO SIGN PACT ON RECOVERY OF WAR DEAD**

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Staff Reporter

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South Korea and the United States will sign an agreement Tuesday on expanding joint recovery and identification of their soldiers killed in action during the 1950-53 Korean War, an official of the Ministry of National Defense said Sunday.

Col. Park Shin-han, head of the ministry's Agency for Killed in Action Recovery and Identification (MAKRI), will sign a memorandum of understanding on bilateral cooperation with Maj. Gen. Donna L. Crisp, chief of the Joint Prisoners of War (POWs), Missing in Action and Accounting Command (JPAC) in Hawaii, the official said.

Under the agreement, the two agencies will share information related to the recovery and identification of the remains of fallen soldiers and conduct joint operations on a regular basis, he said. JPAC will also help train officials of the South Korean agency.

JPAC is a standing joint task force within the U.S. Pacific Command whose headquarters is located at Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii. Its mission is to account for all U.S. prisoners of war and those missing in action from all past wars. JPAC's operations are divided into four areas: analysis and investigation, recovery, identification, and closure.

Since 2005, both agencies have held meetings on bilateral cooperation twice a year. They have also carried out joint recovery and identification operations in South Korea since 2006.

South Korea has found and handed over the remains of five U.S. soldiers and three British Commonwealth soldiers to the United States, while the United States has recovered the remains of three South Korean soldiers, according to MAKRI.

South Korea's Army launched operations to recover the remains of war dead in 2000 and the mission was transferred to MAKRI in 2003. MAKRI now has 134 members, including forensic and archeological specialists.

The remains of some 1,900 soldiers killed in the war have been recovered since 2000.

Remains of about 130,000 South Korean soldiers are believed to be buried on the Korean Peninsula, while 8,100 U.S. military personnel are still missing from the war.

The Korean War, often called the ``Forgotten War," resulted in a devastating death toll. According to the ministry, some 137,000 South Korean troops lost their lives, with a further 20,000 listed as missing in action.

Foreign records show that at least 400,000 South Korean troops and two million civilians were killed, and up to 1.5 million troops from communist North Korea and China were killed.

The two Koreas **remain technically at war** because the conflict ended in an armistice on July 27, 1953, rather than a formal peace treaty.

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**COMMENT:** Considering the 55 years of cease-fire, "a temporary cessation in hostilities," it is time the members of the KOREA-US Alliance adopt a pragmatic view. Rather than the phrase **remain technically at war** I propose that it is time to assert **remain technically at peace**. This more closely describes the situation for the armed forces of the United States and of the Republic of Korea. The 1953 cease-fire in itself contained the processes to return (after completion of the repatriation of the prisoners on each side). After milking the maximum from propaganda during the repatriations the Communist parties refused to return for the peace treaty process.

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