Background Paper
Accountability of Missing Americans from the Korean War
Live-sighting Reports

The U.S. Government has received numerous reports concerning Americans living or
attracted in North Korea after the prisoner exchanges with North Korea in 1953. Based
on number of unaccounted for personnel captured by the Communist forces and not
returned from the Korean War and, a number of recent live American sightings in North
Korea, the DPMO concludes that there are two groups of Americans in North Korea...a
small group of defectors and a larger group of 10-15 possible POWs.

A small group of four personnel is comprised of American soldiers who defected to North
Korea in 1960’s. Based on U.S. Army files, North Korean literature and North Korean
movie, entitled “Namless Heroes”, these defectors appear to be in North Korea on their
own volition. They are Private Larry A. Absher, Private First Class James J. Dresnak,
Specialist Four Jerry W. Parrish, and Sergeant Charles R. Jenkins.

According to North Korean defectors, PFC Dresnak is married to a North Korean and has
a daughter. One of the North Korean defectors met SGT Jenkins in a coffee shop in
Pyongyang. SGT Jenkins told the North Korean defector that he is now ready to return to
America. The American deserters live in the “foreigner’s apartments”, Chukchon-dong,
Mangyongdae-kuyok, west-side of Pyongyang.

A second, larger group of Americans is comprised of US service members, most likely
POWs, from the Korean War and possibly Vietnam War era. There have been numerous
reports of both American and British POWs in North Korea. One of the most compelling
reports received over the years was a sighting reported to DoD by a Romanian in 17 Feb

On October 1979, Mr. Oprica, a former Romanian, now a naturalized U.S. citizen, along
with other Romanians employed at a North Korean factory in Pyongyang was on a North
Korean Government sponsored sight seeing trip. During this bus trip, the bus drivers
appeared to be disoriented and drove the bus through a collective farm. During this trip,
he observed 7-10 Caucasians, including one individual with blue eyes, working in the
fields. The workers appeared to be in their 50’s. Mr. Oprica was told by a female
passenger that the Caucasian farmers were American prisoners of war. Mr. Oprica was
unable to recall who the lady was and how she determined the Caucasian farmers were
American POWs. On 24 Nov 91, another passenger on the bus, Mr. Florin Tomescu, was
finally located in Romania and interviewed. He confirmed seeing Caucasians working on
a farm and the location of the collective farm to be somewhere between Pyongyang and
the city of Nampo.

Since the Oprica/Tomescu sightings, a variety of additional sightings reports have been
received, culminating in a recent flurry (last 60 days) of very compelling reports. The
following summarizes these reports:

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY
1. All "American POWs" were under the direct control of the Ministry of People's Armed Forces (MPAF) and were residing in various sections within the Pyongyang city area and they were always escorted and moved in a vehicle with a license plate belonging to the MPAF, the reconnaissance bureau, or the Ministry of Social Safety.

2. "Black and white" Americans were seen shopping together in a foreigners only, western goods store. The number of Americans sighted generally ranged from 10-15, with a few recent citing as many as 40-50. One defector cited that since 1978, he learned that over 60 American POWs lived in Pyongyang proper. Some are married to Koreans and have children.

3. One defector stated that in the film "Nameless Heroes" a black POW played a role of a house servant for the American policy officer, Dr. Kelton. The "Nameless Heroes" film has 20-21 segments, and the DPMO is in the process of obtaining them to determine if this information is accurate.

4. Several defector reports cite that there have been numerous Americans teaching English and American customs at the foreign language department in Anmokgang College or a military reconnaissance school in Pyongyang. These English language instructors are sometimes identified as U.S. defectors, but more frequently as "American POWs".

5. According to escorts, many POWs desired to return to U.S.

6. The analysis of numerous live sighting reports correlates that American POWs live in a group compounds in various locations in Pyongyang and its suburbs, and perhaps other places in DPRK. POWs movements in DPRK are apparently controlled by the North Korean Government.

7. In the summer of 1976, a North Korean defector visited a cooperative farm located in the outskirts of Pyongyang. There he met a Caucasian man of about 60 years old, 180 cm tall with a large body. The Caucasian told the defector that he was an American. He asked one of the women who the American was, and the woman told him that the American was an American POW from the Korean Liberation War.

There are too many live sighting reports, specifically observations of several Caucasians in a collective farm by Romanians and the North Korean defectors' eyewitness of Americans in DPRK to dismiss that there are no American POWs in North Korea.

Prepared by I.O. LEE; DPMO
As of: D/126/96

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY
U.S. Intelligence Reports of Americans, including U.S. Korean-War PoWs, in North Korea:

IIR-2-221-2605-68 (20 November 1968)
IIR-2-221-0074-80 (7 April 1980)
IIR-2-221-0122-80 (7 May 1980)
IIR-2-221-0347-80 (9 December 1980)
CIA TDFIR-K-314/00459-86 (3 June 1986)
IIR 2-240-5002-88 (7 March 1988)
IIR 2-221-0158-88 (12 August 1988)
IIR-2-221-0050-89 (2 February 1989)
IIR-2-221-0187-89 (6 July 1989)
AMCONSUL Hong Kong, 0306312 (3 December 1990)
IIR-2-221-0070-92 (31 December 1991)
DIA, IIR-6-843-0010-93 (October 1992)
IIR-2-221-0166-93 (4 May 1993)
USDAO, Bucharest RO. 500-93 (27 November 1995)
IIR-7-312-0341-96 (8 February 1996)
IIR-7-312-0451-96 (25 March 1996)
IIR-7-312-0452-96 (25 March 1996)
IIR-7-312-0453-96 (25 March 1996)
IIR-7-312-0341-96 (22 April 1996)

Under U.S. law these documents should have been declassified within 1 year after...