

**TO SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIA AND PACIFIC,
HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

Information of the witness of the hearing

1) Name: MR. CHO, CHANG HO

**2) Title & Organization: DIRECTOR OF THE KOREAN POW AFFAIRS
(Former Korean POW Rescue Committee)**

3) Date & Time: APRIL 27(THUR.) 10AM, 2006

**4) Name of the Subcommittee: SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIA AND PACIFIC,
HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

**[provided by the Korean POW Affairs(president: Dr. Thomas Y. Chung)
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Biography of Witness of the hearing

Name : Chang Ho Cho

DOB: 10/02/1930

Address: 402, 906-Dong, LG Apt. Sanghyun-Dong, Yong-In City, Kyonggi-Do, Republic of Korea.

1930: Born in Seoul, S. Korea

1950 Graduation from Kyonggi Commercial High School, S. Korea

Apr. 1950: Entrance of Yonsei University(Dept. of Education),S. Korea.

Dec. 1950: Admission to Korean Military Cadet School, S. Korea

Apr. 1951: Commission to second lieutenant of S. Korean Army
Post to observatory officer of the 9th Division.

May 19, 1951: Officer Cho was taken prisoner by Red China Army at the battle of 'Han-Suk-San', Kangwon Province during Korean War.

Feb. 1952: Cho attempted to escape but was captured.

Feb. 16, 1952: Cho was sentenced on 13 years by the court-martial of 1st Corps of North Korean Army.

1952-1964: Detained in political camp at A-O-Ji, Manpo, Dukchon and Toichang area in N. Korea.

1964-1977: Forced labor in Hwa-Poong Mine(13 years) in N. Korea.

1977-1994: Lived under supervision by secret police in N. Korea.

Oct. 1994: Escaped to the China from N. Korea.

Oct. 23, 1995: Successfully returned to S. Korea

Apr. 22, 2005: testified at the DFF Capitol Forum

The Statement of Testimony.

Dear Honorable Chairman, and Members of the Committee.
It is an honor for me to be here today.

I thank the Providence who guided me to this spot at this time to testify before the Committee. First of all, I'd like to express my gratitude for the U.S. Congress to pass the North Korean Human Rights Act unanimously.

And I'd also like to thank the U.S. soldiers who fought for freedom and the peace of the Korean peninsula. I will never forget those people who fought over there.

Here I'd like to thank madame Suzanne Scholte, president of the Defense Forum Foundation and Dr. Thomas Chung, president of the Korean POW Affairs who devotes himself to try to save the lives of those remaining prisoners of war still being held in North Korea.

My name is Lieutenant(Ret.) Chang Ho Cho who dramatically escaped from North Korea in 1994 after 43 years of captivity. I entered Korean War as an officer of an artillery unit and became a POW. I'm the first POW who escaped from North Korea in last 40 years since Korean War ended and the exchange of POW had occurred.

As a POW I didn't even know that the war ended and the exchange of POWs had been occurred, I've learned that fact long after war ended. All of returned POWs whom I've met were not much different. They didn't know that the exchange of POWs had been occurred either.

It has been 53 years since the war ended, but still there are surviving Korean POWs in North Korea who endure savage oppression in hope of returning to their homeland.

As of 2005, 62 POWs successfully escaped from North Korea and return to the arms of their homeland. They risked their lives and guided their old aching bodies in hope of coming home. One woman escaped from North Korea with the remains of her father who had died in North Korea as a POW.

According to Korea's Ministry of National Defense, at least 540 POWs are still alive in North Korea.

North Korean government violated the Geneva Convention about disposition of POWs. At the time UN sent about 75,000 POWs back to North Korea, but North Korean government only sent 13,444 and detained about 70,000 POWs.

The detained POWs including me worked and treated like slaves at coal and mineral mines. Many POWs died due to various diseases and accidents.

North Korean government kept POWs in various locations such as Pyung-Nam Kang-dong and Pyung-Buk Chun-ma as well as in official POW prison camps. After 1952, North Korean government went through strict examination to sort out criminals, and people who attempted to escape. They were treated as criminals and detained at political prisoner camp with special attention. The average sentence of inmates in political prisoner camp was 10 to 20 years

I served 13 years in prison after I was tried at the court-martial of North Korean Army. Also, I worked 10 to 18 hours a day in factories of war industry at Ja-gang-do Kang-ge, Ah-o-ji mine in Ham-Buk, Ham-Nam Ham-heung, and etc.

They had barbarous prison system that you'll never find anywhere in the world. We were verbally abused, battered, detained, and even our lives were threatened. At that point, we just gave up to be treated as human beings.

Our names were replaced with numbers and possession of private property was prohibited. Even in severe cold, we only had thin clothes to wear. There were no beds, blankets, or pillows. There was only a drum can to be used as a toilet.

Conversations between inmates were prohibited. If we talk to one another, conversations were tapped and reported to the guards. We couldn't even wash our faces and brush our

teeth. After 8 years of hell, an official prison camp was built and we could wash ourselves since then.

There were no medical facilities at all, so many people died from various diseases. Words can't describe what we have gone through. There were 5 other POWs like me at the facility, but everybody died before 1958 and I was the only survivor.

Before I came here today, I spoke with POWs who escaped from North Korea. They are currently living in South Korea and they wanted me to come here and testify North Korea's brutality on their behalf.

Jin Hwan Jang escaped from North Korea in April 20, 2000. He was a member of Regiment 16 in Division 8 of South Korean army. He was caught by Chinese army in March of 1952. He was trained for a month and put back into the war as a North Korean soldier. Like I said before, North Korea violated the Geneva Convention and put POWs back into the war as their army.

Three days later, he and 25 POWs were caught while escaping to South Korea. All of them received capital punishment at a military court and were executed except Mr. Jin Hwan Jang. Due to his young age Mr. Jin Hwan Jang saved his life, but he had to serve 17 years in prison before he was released in 1970's. After two and a half years of his release, he was caught again while trying to escape. He served another 5 years in prison and worked at Ah-o-ji mine for 10 years after his second release.

He was tortured unmercifully in prison by electric shocks and endless beatings. Also, he has gun shot wounds, scar from grenade splinters, and his legs were nearly torn off due to frostbite.

Mr. Young Il Oh was a POW who returned to South Korea after the war ended in August of 1953. He was detained at Pyung-Nam Do Seung-o Ri and Pyung-Buk Do Byuk-dong Chun-ma prison camp. When he was there he witnessed death of many people from

severe malnutrition, dysentery, and typhoid fever. He also witnessed a half of deceased UN POWs and one-third of Korean POWs being thrown away without graves.

Soon Ok Lee returned to South Korea in 2004. He testified that sometimes only meal he got for a day was just 300 grains of corn. Also, when his fellow POWs died in winter, the guards just buried them in the snow.

I feel really wretched as I testify here today. I demand for quick and safe return of surviving POWs in North Korea. They are very old, so you never know when they will die. I would like to take this opportunity and pay my gratitude to American and UN soldiers who fought for freedom and democracy of S. Korea during the Korean War. I wish you can support my testimony that I made here today.

I also demand for quick and safe return of hostages who were kidnapped in Korea, Japan, and other places as of today. In addition, political prisoner camp in North Korea must be brought down and 100.000 political prisoners must be released immediately. Democracy must be restored in North Korea in near future and freedom of speech, travel, and residency must be guaranteed.

South Korean government shouldn't neglect their own citizens who became POWs while fighting for their country. The issue of bringing them back home must be the priority of South Korean government. Also, I'm urging South Korean government not to neglect human rights of North Koreans anymore and embarrass ourselves by doing things like giving up to vote on resolution of North Korea human right issues at the UN General Assembly.

I would like thank you again. God bless America!

April 27, 2006

Lieutenant(Ret.) Cho, Chang Ho / former Korean POW

(The article about the witness was excerpted from POW News) (July 1995).

**Department of Defense
POW/MIA Bulletin
American Debriefing Report of Former South Korean POW,
Lieutenant Cho, Chang-Ho**

On February 14, 1995, U.S. officials debriefed retired 1Lt. Cho Chang-Ho, a former Korean War POW who escaped from North Korea to South Korea in March 1994. During the debriefing, Cho confirmed earlier reports that he did not observe any American POWs after following his initial month of captivity in late May, mid-June 1952. However, Lt. Cho did report he had heard from South Korean POWs in late 1952 that there were large numbers of American POWs being held at various wartime POW camps.

Other significant comments from Lt. Cho concerned the location of POW burial sites. He stated that several POWs were buried at the foot of an unnamed mountain.

This burial took place while South Korean and American POWs were marching away from the front lines to the rear POW camps.

Lt. Cho was captured alone by Chinese Army troops on May 18, 1951, In Hyon-ni, Inju-gun, Kangwon-do (east coast of South Korea).

A week later, he was turned over to the North Korean Army's Fifth Corps headquarters at Changansa (a Buddhist monastery) in Kumgang-san, Kangwon-do (north of the DMZ on the east coast). When he arrived at Changansa, Lt. Cho observed approximately 700-800 South Korean Army POWs and approximately 70-80 American POWs at the Fifth Corps headquarters. Lt. Cho, who knew that the U.S. Army's 7th Division was deployed in that area, surmised that the U.S. POWs were members of the 7th Division. They were young, approximately one-third were black.

Later, all of these South Korean and American POWs were moved on foot from Changansa to Sinan, Kangwon-do (30-40 miles from Changansa).

En-route to Sinan, Lt. Cho observed several American POWs who died after suffering from malnutrition and diarrhea caused by eating raw corn.

Fellow prisoners buried them at the foot of an unnamed mountain in shallow graves approximately one meter deep, and placed a piece of straw mat over the bodies, and covered them with soil.

After arriving at Sinan, the American POWs were separated from the South Koreans and taken by truck to an unknown destination. South Korean and American POWs were not permitted to talk to each other. Lt. Cho did not observe any American POWs other than those mentioned above. In the summer of 1951, still at Sinan, Lt. Cho was debriefed at military reception centers in Moranbong-guyok, Pyongyang and in Kaesong.

In May 1952, he attempted to escape but was captured and sent to a prison in Wonsan. Later, Lt. Cho was moved to different prisons in Hoechang, Tokchon and Manpo.

In late 1952, while he was at the Manpo prison, many South Korean POWs were sent there from different POW camps to serve prison terms because they were North Koreans who served in the South Korean Army. At that time, Lt. Cho heard from South Korean POWs that there were large POW camps controlled by the Chinese in Usi, Ch'olma, Pyoktong, and Ch'olsan, all located in P'yongan-pukto.

He also heard from South Korean POWs that there was a large number of U.S. POWs, together with South Korean POWs.

TRAGIC EXISTENCE OF SOUTH KOREAN POWS IN NORTH KOREA

(excerpt from the article(June 22, 2005) of the Segye Times, Korea)

South Korean prisoners of war, detained in North Korea, lead a tragic life. Those who attempted to escape from detention facilities were executed, as traitors, by firing squad. Otherwise, they were forced to serve as slave-labor in hellish, inhuman coalmines.

For allegedly resisting "the War of Liberation," they were framed as Reactionaries, placed under the penetrating scrutiny of the Security Agency and subjected to agonizing, involuntary servitude, as mining laborers, for their lifetime. Their offspring, unable to leave the confines of the mining area, due to discrimination in education and employment, must live their miserable lives at the lowest level of existence.

FROM THE DETENTION CENTER TO THE COAL MINES

The Prisoners of War Repatriation Agreement of June 8, 1953 between the United Nations Command and North Korea stated that within 60 days after the Armistice Agreement becomes effective, each side shall, without offering any hindrance, directly repatriate and hand over in groups all these prisoners of war in custody who insist on repatriation. It prohibits the use of force or threat of force to prevent or influence the repatriation.

However, the terms and conditions of this agreement were largely violated. The North Koreans forcibly detained tens of thousands of prisoners of war against their will and diverted them to the

mines. Lee Sam Chool, POW returnee, age 76, stated that he heard in July, 1953 that the truce was signed and he believed they were being transported to Kae Sung for the purpose of POW exchange when he and his prisoners were loaded onto vehicles at Chil Pyung Detention Center in Ja Gang Do, North Korea. To his surprise, they found themselves in Sung Chun Mine in Pyong Nam Province, North Korea. "Still," said Lee, "I did not abandon the hope of repatriation someday and counted each day with my fingers, only to realize 50 years had passed."

Another POW, Huh Jae Suk, 74, who returned to South Korea, said, "Because the POWs were loaded on a train in Pyong Yang on April 25, 1954, we thought we were getting repatriated to South Korea. When the train stopped three days later, we found out that we had been transported to a POW detention center at Ah Oh Ji Coalmine in Ham Buk Province in North Korea."

"The place was designated as a Construction Unit of the Dept. of Interior, a fake name, for the purpose of feigning non-existence of POWs in North Korea," he reported. In order to maximize the use of the POW labor, North Korea refused to exchange the POWs, Huh pointed out.

THE BOTTOM-MOST LIFE OF THE LOWEST CLASS PEOPLE

North Korea closed the POW detention centers in June, 1956. However, although South Korean POWs were perfunctorily released and made North Korean citizens, no real changes took place. They were given no freedom in job selection or change of residence. They are still subject to forced labor at the coal mines or other mines, which are the lowest level jobs even in North Korea.

Even past the age of 70 years, South Korean POWs must still reside in the mining areas, factory facilities in controlled districts, or on collective farms. Registered in the national Security Agency, their every move is under constant surveillance.

Koh Eul Won, returned POW, age 74, explained, "South Korean POWs are the most mistreated class, and once assigned to coal mine, that is final. At the age 61, they are given so-called old age assistance, so they don't have to work, but they still cannot move out of the coal mining area since a travel permit is never given to them."

Huh Jae Suk further added, "After an issuance, in 1956, of the Cabinet Resolution #143, which allowed the citizen certificates to South Korean POWs and their release to the community, North Korea officially abolished the POW detention facilities. However, their list is kept at the People's Unit, the Secret Agency, the Security Agency, etc. and they are continuously placed under surveillance."

MISTREATMENT TO POWS' CHILDREN

The offspring of South Korean POW's in North Korea are discriminated against and disdained down through succeeding generations.

Koh Eul Won testified, "While one must complete the military service to be treated like a human being, their offspring were rejected both by the military and the colleges solely for the reason of being the children of POW parents. Therefore, even offspring, generation after each generation, had no choice but to work in the coal mine." Huh Jae Suk added, "The offspring of the subjects of the Cabinet

Resolution #143 were not allowed to join the military or enroll into colleges in spite of their academic excellence."

Former POW Suh Byung Ryul also recalled, "My son ended up as a mining laborer due to the rejection by the military. Also, although my daughter was selected as a cultural official in the Secret Agency, her selection was quickly withdrawn once they discovered that I was a South Korean POW."

CHARGES OF CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY OVER ACCIDENTAL EXPLOSION

In 1958, at Yong Yun **Gang** Ah Oh Ji Coalmine in Ham Buk Province, North Korea, a massive accidental explosion took 36 lives. Over this accident, four or five POWs were charged as masterminds, and among them, Baik Nam Woong, was executed in public, by firing squad.

Former POW Choi Young Chan testified, "POWs were usually assigned to the most hazardous and strenuous tasks. Consequently, they harbored discontent." Huh Jae Suk, who worked at the same coalmine with Choi, stated, "Since the Ah Oh Ji Coalmine accident, the POWs were so intensely watched that one politically incorrect utterance would cause a POW to be taken to the Security Agency. "In some instances, entire families were taken to the Agency. Once taken, they never returned, so we presumed that they must have been executed." Huh explained, "Ham Buk Province Secret Agency Detention Center was located at Chang Pyung Ri, Wong Sung Gun, Ham Buk Province. There was a coalmine in the detention center, and the whole area was a huge detention facility."

THE FOILED ESCAPE AND THE PUBLIC EXECUTION

Where POWs were apprehended after a foiled escape, they were executed in most cases. Otherwise, they served time in prison then were banished to the coalmines for hard labor.

Former POW Kim Sung Tae, 74, whom the reporter met on the 25th of last month, was captured during his foiled attempt to escape, with his fellow POWs, from Hwae Ryung POW Detention Center, in Ham Buk Province, on July 18, 1953. Pursuant to Section 69 of the Military Law, he was sentenced for 13 years for treason and was incarcerated at Nam Po Prison, he recounted. Kim tried again to escape but was apprehended 24 hours later and served his time at Ham Heung Prison. Subsequently, Kim was expelled to Ju Won Coalmine. He stated, "The price of a foiled escape is execution."

COLLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TESTIMONY OF 32 SOUTH KOREAN PRISONERS OF WAR WHO RETURNED TO SOUTH KOREA

(excerpt from the article(June 22, 2005) of the Segye Times, Korea)

79 SURVIVORS – 43 DECEASED – THE FATE OF 125 UNCERTAIN – TOTAL SURVIVORS ARE ESTIMATED TO BE 600, INCLUDING THOSE UNIDENTIFIED

The names of 247 South Korean prisoners of war, still detained in North Korea, have been confirmed. As a result of combining the testimonies of 32 returned South Korean POWs by investigation team of the newspaper, the list of 247 South Korean POWs who were forcibly detained in 16 different mines over such localities as Ham Kyung Nam Province and Ham Kyung Buk Provinces, have been identified. Among them, 79 POWs have been ascertained as surviving and 43 deceased. The remaining 125 POWs were either relocated or apprehended by the secret service, and their fate remains uncertain.

This is the first time a large scale list of names of the South Korean POWs, still forcibly detained in North Korea, has been disclosed. Since the Korean War truce was signed, North Korea has been adamantly asserting until now that not a single South Korean POW has been detained in North Korea. Even though the South Korean Government has a partial list of South Korean POWs detained in North Korea, it has not disclosed the list for concerns over the personal safety (security) and/or possible disruption of South-North Korean relations. However, this newspaper decided to publish the list to enable the families to ascertain the fate of their loved ones and not merely to presume them as dead or missing in action.

The fact that South Korean POWs were captured during the Korean War and spent over 50 years of their lives in incarceration in the mines of North Korea has been established by the testimonies of the returning POWs. They were incarcerated in those 16 mines, the most notorious for hard labor, including Ah Oh Ji Coalmine in Eun Duk Gun, Ham Buk Province, according to the returned POWs' accounts.

The names of 23 surviving POWs at the two mines (6.13 and Oh Bong Coalmine) were confirmed by the newspaper reporters after reviewing the lists secured. Furthermore, 14 POW survivors at Ha Myun Coalmine in Sae Byul Gun, Ham Buk Province and 10 survivors, each, at Hak Po Coalmine in Hwae Ryang Gun and at Sang Hwa Coalmine in Ham Buk Province, were also identified by name.

Additional survivors, identified by name, included:

- 8 at Yong Buk Coalmine, Sae Byul Gun, Ham Buk Province
- 5 at Moo San Mine in Moo San Gun, Ham Buk Province
- 3 at Ko Gun Won Coalmine in Sae Byul Gun, Ham Buk Province
- 2 at Joo Won Coalmine at On Sung Gun in Ham Buk Province
- 2 at Kum Duk Mine at Dan Chun Gun, Ham Nam Province
- 1 at On Sung Coalmine at On Sung Gun, Ham Buk Province, and
- 1 at Yong Ahn Mine at Dan Chun Gun in Ham Nam Province.

The highest number of POWs, identified by name, dead or alive, is 64, at Won Tan Mine of Koh Kun, Ham Buk Province. Among those three are still alive, one is dead, and the fate of 60 remains unknown.

At Ah Oh Ji 6.13 Coalmine, 44 POWs were confirmed by name. Of those 44, fifteen are known to be survivors, 12 deceased, and the fate of 17 remains unknown. While they cannot always remember the names of the survivors, the testimonies of the returned South Korean POWs has reasonably established the number of South Korean POW survivors currently detained in North Korea at more than 600.

Three-hundred-fifty survivors, the highest number, still were incarcerated at Koh Won Coalmine, according to a returned POWs. One hundred, plus, survivors at Ah Oh Ji 6.13 Coalmine, 50 or more at Kum Duk Mine and Yong Yang Mine, respectively. Returned POWs attested to 30 each, remaining at Hak Po Coalmine and Sang Hwe Coalmine, and 20 at Yong Buk Coalmine.

A returned POW, Hong, stated, "There were 350 plus POWs detained at Ko Gun Won Coalmine, including 50 plus officers from colonel down to lieutenant levels. "In the 1970s and 1980s, most of the officers were either executed by the Secret Agency or sent to the brain-washing center."

Through the help of refugees and returned POWs, by the end of December, 2004, the Defense Ministry of the Republic of South Korea had secured a total list of 1,369 South Korean prisoners of war, including 542 survivors, 636 deceased, and 191 POWs of unknown fate. The list has been classified as "Top Secret."

An official in the North Korea Unit of the Policy Planning Section of the South Korean Defense Ministry explained, "If the list of the names of the detained POWs was disclosed, their personal safety could be jeopardized. Therefore, it must be kept confidential."

THE STATUS OF SOUTH KOREAN POWS IN NORTH KOREA

(excerpt from the article(June 22, 2005) of the Segye Times, Korea)

The testimonies of the South Korean prisoners of war who escaped from North Korea revealed for the first time that 79 South Korean POWs are currently being detained against their will at over 16 various mines and coalmines in North Korea. The investigation by the news media team exposed that several tens of thousands of South Korean prisoners of war at North Korean Detention Centers were not allowed to be repatriated to South Korea through the POW exchange at the cessation of the Korean War. They were diverted to the mines and spent 40 to 50 years of their lives in involuntary servitude. Although, at age 61, they were given "the old age benefits" and released from forced labor, yet they are not relocated from the mining areas, lacking freedom to move about, thus continuing in lifelong hardship.

SIX-HUNDRED PLUS SOUTH KOREAN POW SURVIVORS AT VARIOUS MINES

Quite a few South Korean POWs the newspaper team met clearly remembered, in spite of being over 70 years of age, the names and hometowns of fellow POWs who spent several decades with them in the mines.

Mr. Uhm, who escaped to South Korea in the year 2000, provided the news media team with a clearly-prepared, three-page list of fellow POWs. The list contained, in detail, names, ages, birthplaces, vocations, and special comments concerning 59 fellow POWs.

Most of the POWs were placed en mass over the northern-most mining area in the distant hinterland, adjacent to the tri-nation border of Russian, China and North Korea. POWs were assigned as follows:

- 10 places in Ham Buk Province,
- 3 places in Ham Nam Province,
- 2 places in Hwang Buk Province, and
- 1 place in Pyong Nam Province,

placing them in a total of 16 mines.

An analysis of the total testimonies of those returning POWs indicated that Koh Gun Won Coalmine at Sae Byul Gun in Ham Buk Province with 350, had the highest number of South Korean POWs, and Ah Oh Ji Coalmine, was the second, with 100 plus, POWs.

Chang Jin Hwan, who returned to South Korea in February of 2000, reported, "When I was sent to the Ah Oh Ji area in 1972, there were 500 POWs at 6.13 Coalmine and Oh Bong Coalmine. Even at the time of my escape, more than 100 POWs were still living there." Chang added, "Ah Oh Ji Coalmine had 6.25 POW Detention Center where 800 plus POWs were detained at the early stage."

Huh Jae Suk, who escaped from North Korea in July, 2000, recalled, "On April 25, 1954, at Seung Ho Ri POW Detention Center, wounded POWs were loaded on trains for Pyoung Yang. I naturally thought that we were headed for POW exchanges. But after three days of travel, I was shocked to learn that we arrived at Ah Oh Ji Coalmine, not South Korea." "There were more than 500 POWs there at that time," he said.

SEPARATE DETENTION FOR OFFICERS

Most officer POWs were separately detained at the Ha Myun Coalmine and Koh Gun Won Coalmine in Sae Byul Gun. Ham Buk Province. Park, who returned to South Korea in November, 2001, produced for the news team, a list of 85 POWs he remembered: 62 at Koh Gun Won Coalmine and 23 at Ha Myun Coalmine. The list included 14 POWs at Koh Gun Won Coalmine, including Lieutenant Colonel Lee Joon and three POWs at Ha Myun Coalmine including 1st Lieutenant Lee Jong Kook. Out of three POWs, Major Shim Hyung Sik died of an ailment in the early 1980s, 1st Lieutenant Suh Chae Soo was executed in 1990, and only 1st Lieutenant Lee Jong Ku was still living at the time Park escaped.

Park added, "Out of over 2,000 miners at Ha Myun Coalmine, 30% was made up of South Korean POWs." Park spent his prior nine years at Koh Gun Won Coalmine where many detainees were former South Korean officers. Out of 700 South Korean POWs at Koh Gun Won, one-half of them have already died. Lee Soon Ok, age 77, who escaped in May of last year, substantiated the foregoing by reporting, "At Koh Gun Coalmine, 50 plus officers were among 550 South Korean POWs."

POWS GROUPED INTO FORCED LABOR ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS

An analysis of the POWs' combined testimonies revealed that South Korean prisoners of war detained at widespread detention centers were, immediately after the truce, reassembled at the Detention Center at Kang Dong Gun, Pyong Nam Province. Then, North Korea organized them into the so-called "Interior Department Construction Force." North Korea assigned one battalion (about 500 members) or two battalions in some instances, to mines and coalmines. The Interior Department Construction Force was made up of nine units, from Unit 1701 to 1709 as follows:

1701 - Ah Oh Ji Coalmine

1702 - Hak Po Coalmine

1704 - Sung Chun Mine

1706 - Ha Myun Coalmine

1707 and 1708 - Kum Duk Mine (Part of these were later reassigned to Yong Yang Mine.)

1709 - Koh Gun Won Coalmine

North Korea also organized such other troops as #210, etc. with the POWs.

Returning Former POW Uhm said, "While North Koreans gathered most POWs in Kang Dog Gun, Pyong Nam Province, but once they could get 200-300 POWs together, they made South Korean POWs put on North Korean army uniforms, and transported them to the mines and coalmines in either Ham Kyung Province or Pyong Ahn Province." Lee Soon Ok commented, "The POWs who were assembled at Kang Dong POW Detention Center in early October, 1953, were sent to Ah Oh Ji, Koh Gun Won, Ha Myun, Hak Po, Yoo Sun, and Koong Shim Mines, by groups of approximately 500 each."

Park explained, "Immediately after the War, all POWs were sent to the Detention Center. Here, North Koreans altered the name of the detention center to Interior Department Construction Force and regrouped the into nine troop units from #1701 through #1709."

THE HIGHEST SUCCESS RATE OF POWS ESCAPE AT HAK PO COALMINE IN HAM BUK PROVINCE

Former POW Oh Jin Sang, age 80, who returned in September, last year, reported that 23 to 30 POWs were still alive at Hak Po Coalmine, Hwe Ryong City in Ham Buk Province.

Former POW Park Dong Il testified, "On or about July 14, 1953, five-hundred soldiers of the Capital Division were captured at the Battle of Kim Hwa region, and most of them were sent to Hak Po Coalmine." At the time of his escape, about 30 of them were still living, thus corroborating the facts in Oh's testimony.

Suh Byung Ryul spent 23 years in captivity at Hak Po Coalmine until his escape in February, 2000. "About one-half of the 625 POWs passed away at Hak Po Coalmine," he said. At the time he escaped, he was only able to confirm three living POWs.

The successful escapees were: six from Hak Po Coalmine, five from Ah Oh Ji Coalmine, and four from Ha Myung Coalmine. It appeared that close proximity to the Chinese border made escapes from these coalmines more feasible.

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