



Physical Anthropology Section – 2011

H12 The Central Identification Unit (CIU) During the Korean War

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The goal of this presentation is to provide historical insight into the operations of the United States Army Central Identification Unit (CIU) during the return of United States (U.S.) deceased from the Korean War, spanning from 1951 until 1956. Brief descriptions of forensic anthropologists working at the CIU, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and insight into the analysis of unknown Korean War deceased will be examined through historical documents, anecdotes, and period photographs.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by contributing to the historical understanding of the CIU during the return of deceased U.S. Korean War servicemen. Attendees will understand the purpose of the CIU, process of analysis and identification, and the historical legacy of the identifications made by the CIU. In addition, a brief synopsis will demonstrate how historical documents about the CIU have been used to develop name associations for Korean War cases previously categorized as unknowns by investigators at the CIU.

On January 2, 1951, the United States Army (USA) opened a forensic identification laboratory at Camp Kokura, Japan to analyze, identify, and return deceased U.S. Korean War servicemen to their families. The CIU employed a staff of mortuary technicians, forensic specialists, and forensic anthropologists to analyze and identify the remains of thousands of U.S. servicemen who lost their lives during the Korean War. Utilizing developments in forensic anthropology refined by forensic anthropologists working on the identification of war deceased from World War II, a small handful of anthropologists at the CIU handled caseloads of over 100 remains per day. In light of such demands, stringent SOPs were followed in order to ensure the integrity of identifications. Official SOPs and CIU documents detail the procedures for receiving, storing, analyzing, preserving, and identifying remains. These documents will be captured through summary and copied examples to demonstrate how remains were recovered, analyzed, identified, and returned by the CIU.

Candid anecdotes from Dr. Kazuro Hanihara's book, *"Bones Reveal the Identities of Human Bodies: Scientific Procedures for Identification"* provide insight into the working conditions at the CIU and challenges faced by anthropologists working on war deceased.

United States Army Signal Corps silent film recordings of the CIU offer visual reference to the procedures of analyzing remains recovered from the conflict. Though there is no commentary, the film captures how the SOP was employed by staff at the CIU, and shows the laboratory as used by the forensic anthropologists and technicians.

Unknown Korean War deceased presented unique challenges to investigators at the CIU. Various investigative methods of anthropologic

analysis and historical research were utilized to examine unknown remains. When an investigation was unable to result in identification, these remains were classified as Unknown "X" cases, and were eventually buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) in Honolulu, Hawaii. The Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command Central Identification Laboratory (JPAC CIL) has continued to research the unknown cases in an attempt to associate the unknowns with unaccounted-for servicemen. A brief summary of the JPAC research process through a case study will demonstrate the critical importance of historical documents from CIU.

Korean War, Forensic Anthropology, History