



SOVIET SABRE HUNTING

The fuselage of a Chinese Mig-15/JJ-2 which served during the Korean War is displayed in the Xiao Tang Shan museum. It bears nine stars to show the number of United Nations aircraft shot down by the Chinese Ace Wang Hai from the 3rd Fighter Aviation Division

US forces long suspected the USSR of attempting to obtain examples of the cutting edge F-86 Sabre during the war over Korea. Recent evidence suggests the Soviets achieved this at least twice.

According to US Government figures, a total of 56 North American F-86 Sabres were shot down during the Korean War and 15 live pilots and one set of remains were handed back at the end of hostilities. Of the 40 others it was estimated that nine of the pilots could not have survived. The other 31 (55% of those shot down) were listed as missing in action. This is an unusually high figure when compared to the MIA rates for pilots flying other types of aircraft. But is it really surprising? The Sabre was the latest jet fighter in the US inventory and the Soviets would have wanted live pilots to go with the wreckage of one Sabre already recovered after ditching in shallow water. They would have been at the top of the Soviets' list for interrogation.

Mistaken Identity

Proof that Soviet Intelligence was targeting F-86 pilots came when USMC Corporal Nick Flores was recaptured after escaping from POW Camp 1 at Chongsong in July 1952. Before he left the camp the other prisoners gave him various articles of clothing to help ensure his survival in the harsh terrain, including a USAF flight jacket. After ten days on the run he walked into a camouflaged

anti-aircraft position near Sinuiju, which was manned by Soviet gunners. An officer said in English: "You are the American pilot" and ordered him bound and blindfolded. Flores expected to be returned to his POW camp, but he was bundled into a truck and driven across the twin bridges at Sinuiju to Antung in Manchuria.

He was taken into a building where he was handed over to a Soviet Colonel with the words "Here is the American F-86 pilot" and four hours of interrogation began. Flores continued to insist that he was an enlisted Marine and an escaped prisoner of war. He was unaware that at 09.20hrs that morning Maj Felix Asla had been shot down flying his Sabre in the vicinity of Sinuiju and the Russians must have thought he was the missing pilot.

The Russian interrogator demanded to know which squadron he flew with and the location of their airfield. He also repeatedly asked Flores about his knowledge of germ warfare, adding ominously that "All the other pilots have confessed" and he should do so as well. Eventually another officer entered the room and spoke to the Colonel who then halted the interrogation. After 18 hours Flores was helped aboard another truck, still blindfolded. Once on the truck he

removed his blindfold and could see that he had been held in an earth-covered bunker on a major airfield with rows of MiGs parked nearby. He was driven across the Yalu River and back to Camp 1.

Pentagon Report

The treatment of Corporal Flores was proof that the Soviets had a special handling procedure for pilots, especially Sabre pilots. They would be taken directly to a Soviet interrogation site, completely bypassing the normal prisoner of war camps. This was confirmed in 1993 in a report from the Pentagon entitled 'The transfer of US Korean War POWs to the Soviet Union.'

The report also confirmed that Soviet forces in Korea devised and executed a plan to force down an intact F-86 and that a Sabre and at least one pilot were delivered to the both the Sukhoi and Mikoyan-Gurevich Design Bureaus for exploitation.

It is now believed that Capt Albert G Tenney was one of the captured Sabre pilots sent to Moscow.

Capt Tenney's flight was making a high-speed descent over North Korea when they were attacked by enemy aircraft. The Sabre was seen to dive away from a Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-15

At the end of the war a North Korean pilot defected in his MiG-15 to South Korea. Here the aircraft is being tested by US pilots on Okinawa.



fighter and execute evasive manoeuvres at an extremely low altitude. His wingman informed Tenney of his low altitude and he was instructed to pull up but shortly after he levelled his wings the Sabre struck the surface of the water at a very flat angle. The 'accident' took place approximately three miles (4.8km) offshore near the mouth of the Yalu River.

Enemy aircraft forced the other Sabres to leave the area and the formation leader said he did not see whether the aircraft sank into the water or not. When search aircraft returned to the scene later that day they could find no trace of the aircraft or pilot.

In recent years information has been received that at least one of the Sabres sent to either the Sukhoi or MiG Design Bureau was full of sand. Could it have been Tenney's jet?

Captured Combatants?

Other pilots had a good chance of surviving the loss of their Sabres, including Capt Robert H Laier, who was declared missing in action on June 18, 1951. He was participating in a four-ship fighter sweep in the area of Sinuiju when he came under attack. When last seen his aircraft was seriously damaged, trailing smoke and in a steep dive at approximately 10,000ft (3,048m). An aerial search for his aircraft wreckage was unsuccessful. A subsequent unofficial Chinese propaganda broadcast supports a belief that he survived the shoot-down and was captured. He never returned home.

First Lt Laurence C Layton was declared missing in action on September

2, 1951. His flight was engaged in combat with a number of enemy fighters when his F-86 was hit. He radioed that he was going to try to reach the northwest coast of Korea and bail out. Another member of the flight accompanied Layton and observed him parachute from the damaged aircraft near the mouth of the Chongchong-Gang River, roughly six miles off the coast. Subsequent information reveals that Layton is believed to have been rescued by a large enemy powerboat. It is assumed he was sent to the USSR as First Lt Layton was never seen again.

“Sabre pilots would have been at the top of the Soviets' list for interrogation”

First Lt Charles W Rhinehart would have been an ideal candidate for MGB (later KGB) interrogation as he had studied aeronautical engineering at Iowa State College, had gone through USAF All-Weather Interceptor Aircrew Training and conversion training on the F-86-4 model, the newest variant of the Sabre at that time. He was declared missing in action on January 29, 1952 during a combat mission over North Korea. His Sabre experienced a flameout and all attempts to restart the engine were unsuccessful. At an altitude of 4,000ft (1,219m) he was seen to successfully parachute from the jet and land in water off the mainland. A subsequent aerial search of the area failed to locate any trace of the pilot.

Survivor's Story

However, it wasn't just the Russians who were looking for Sabre pilots.

On September 4, 1952 Lt Roland Parks became separated from his flight leader while flying over North Korea. Shortly after 16.30hrs his Sabre was 'jumped' by four enemy MiG-15s and he immediately opened fire on one of his attackers. He saw pieces fly off the MiG as he pressed home his attack.

"Then some of the other MiGs moved in on me" he later recalled, "and I felt some hits on my 'plane, so I broke off. I had to keep zigzagging. Soon I found out that my compass had also been damaged. When I broke out of the overcast and could see the coastline, I realised that I had been flying west into the sun and must be considerably west of Korea.

"Shortly after breaking out of the overcast, at an altitude of about 42,000ft [12,801m], my engine quit. I knew from this altitude I could easily glide 100 miles [161km] and planned to glide back southeast as far as I could and then bail out over the water.

"At this point, though, I ran into more MiGs and got bounced again. With my engine dead, my only alternative was to get out. I had the choice of bailing out over the sea or over the land in the vicinity of Port Arthur. I elected to bail out over the land, with the hope, ridiculous though it may sound, of hiking my way back. I thought I could walk further than I could swim. So I just rolled my plane over on to its back and went down as fast as I could. During this time I had got into radio contact with one of our own jets, briefly explained the situation, and said I was bailing out.





◀ A few months after the end of the war North Korean pilot No Kum-sok flew his MiG-15 to South Korea. He later emigrated to the USA and changed his name to Kenneth Rowe

▶ North American F-86A Sabre 49-1319, piloted by Capt Gill Garrett, crash landed in one piece in shallow water in North Korea and was subsequently shipped to Moscow for Russia technical experts to examine. The pilot was rescued from the sea by an SA-16 Albatross seaplane



“The Russians took away from me everything they had given me, destroying the evidence that I had been in Russian hands”



F-86 Sabres from the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing, like the one pictured here, had black checkerboard tails during the Korean War



Captured US servicemen with a working knowledge of the F-86 would have been at the top of the Soviets' list for interrogation

“At about 10,000ft (3,048m) I steered the Sabre for the water and ejected. Everything was going perfectly, just like I'd been told to do. But after my parachute opened I saw the plane starting to circle back, heading right towards me. It went underneath me by about 200ft (61m).

“While I floated down the plane circled again and hit the side of a mountain. I could see people watching me from the ground. I landed on a rock-covered side of a mountain and rolled a good way down it, but fortunately I was not even bruised. I climbed the mountain hunting cover and finally made it to a valley on the other side where I hid in some woods until dark. I still had my pistol and some emergency rations, but had lost my knife and my escape kit. After dark I headed for the highest point of land in the vicinity to get my bearings. I could see water on three sides, and I was between Port Arthur and Darien.

Captured

“I wanted to get back to where I had lost my escape kit and recover it so I set out in that direction. But I ran into a bunch of Chinese and turned back before they spotted me. It was just about midnight. While trying to circle them, I ran smack into another Chinaman. He was so scared he shook. I tried to make him understand that I wouldn't hurt him, and only wanted him to help me. I was just grasping at a straw, hoping I might have found the one Chinese who was friendly to us. I followed him into a small village. Then, just as we reached the village square, he grabbed me and started yelling. Chinese came from everywhere. They were armed with iron spears and I just had one pistol.

“I threw my gun on the ground and put my hands up. I think they would have killed me right there if one old man hadn't driven them off. He brought me a drink of water that I really needed badly.



51st Fighter Wing F-86 Sabres at Suwon AB during the Korean War

“Then several Russian officers arrived, one of whom could speak English, and they put me in the back of an old truck and drove about 30 minutes. We stopped in the middle of a cornfield and I began to sweat. I was expecting a bullet in the back of the head, but then a MiG flew over and landed – I was at a camouflaged airfield. We went through a gate into a camouflaged area of tents, occupied by Russian soldiers. The Russians seemed friendly and treated me well. They fed me, questioned me about general things and then gave me back the watch and pen from my escape kit that had been found.

“In the morning a Russian Army doctor came to examine me. He was accompanied by a beautiful young Russian woman who spoke perfect English. They brought in a bottle of lemonade. They were surprised to find that I, a jet pilot, was only 22-years-old. The real questioning got under way later in the day. It was done by Russian officers. They seemed especially interested in our radar equipment, but I told them I didn’t know anything about it. I spent the next 13 days in a military compound.

“On the seventeenth day the Russians told me they were taking me to Russia where I would be with other Americans. I had told them I did not want to be turned over to the Chinese and that’s probably why they told me they were taking me to Russia. I thought they were taking me to the Siberian salt mines. I had made up my mind that if we kept going north towards Siberia I was going to go over the hill at all costs. We stopped in Darien for food and supplies for the trip. My Russian guards on this trip were dressed in civilian clothes until we crossed the border between the Russian zone of Port Arthur and China proper. Then they put on uniforms. We drove until late that night.

“We finally arrived in Antung about 15.00hrs the following day and a Russian officer went away and came back with some Chinese officers. Then I was blindfolded while we drove about 30

minutes more, stopping at what I learned later was a Chinese military base, where I was taken into a room and the blindfold was removed. The Russians took away from me everything Russian they had given me, destroying the evidence that I had been in Russian hands.”

Guest of the Chinese

“The Chinese immediately started questioning me, with the interpreting being done by a Chinese named Lue who spoke perfect English and said he had taken pilot training in the USA during World War Two. Later in my imprisonment Lue turned out to be the man they used as a sort of “pacifier” to soothe you and try to trick you into telling something when things didn’t go to suit them in their long interrogations.

“Lt Col Edwin L Heller and Capt E Fischer, who were later imprisoned, also encountered this character Lue. I really learned to hate him. He thought he was such a slick operator but it finally became so obvious that I disliked him that they kept him away from me.

“During the last half of September I was questioned repeatedly, hour after hour,

sometimes nine hours at a stretch. They tried to get me to say that I had flown into Manchuria many times. They showed me a pamphlet accusing the Americans of atrocities and I wouldn’t look at it. Some guards gave me apples, candy, nuts and butter and some clothing. They tried to get me to write a description of American air-to-air combat tactics. When I refused they kept questioning me far into the night. They always held out the promise that if I co-operated I would go to a North Korean prison camp, and threatened that if I didn’t cooperate things would be very bad for me.”

In January 1955 UN representative Dag Hammarskjöld visited China to try to obtain the release of Parks and other pilots, but the wheels of diplomacy turn slowly. In May 1955 Parks was taken to Peking and put on trial on charges of violating Chinese territory. After a show trial he was pronounced ‘guilty’ and ordered to be deported immediately. On the afternoon of May 31 they crossed the border into Hong Kong. After 33 months of imprisonment, 21 of them after the war in Korea had ended, Roland Parks was free. ❖

Kolyma 2 was one of the prison camps in the Soviet Far East Gulag. Is this the fate of some of the UN soldiers and aircrew known to have been taken into Russia?



COUNTING THE COST

The Korean War turned out to be much longer and far bloodier than anyone anticipated. In addition to those lost or injured, large numbers of POWs 'disappeared', presumed to have been shipped to the USSR



The USA military alone suffered 36,686 men killed and another 103,284 wounded during the war in Korea



The war in the air was bloody. A total of 1,986 UN aircraft were destroyed with 1,466 of those belonging to the Far East Air Force (FEAF). Of the total losses, 1,041 happened during combat, with 816 of these falling to the ever dangerous anti-aircraft 'flak'. A further 147 aircraft were lost in air-to-air combat.

Far from being a 'limited war' as first anticipated, the conflict ultimately dragged on for three years, one month and two days, from June 25, 1950 to July 27, 1953. A full accounting of the casualties will never be known but it has been estimated that military casualties on both sides were approximately 2.4 million, while another two million civilians were lost. These civilian figures may actually be conservative. The USA military alone suffered 36,686 men killed and another 103,284 wounded.

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FEAF units flew almost 721,000 sorties and delivered 476,000 tonnes of ordnance – but suffered 1,841 casualties, including 1,180 dead.

Among the equipment claimed destroyed by UN aircraft were 976 aeroplanes (including 792 Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-15s), 1,327 tanks, and 89,920 vehicles. Some 184,800 enemy troops were also claimed killed.

On the other side, the Soviets claimed 510 UN aircraft shot down in just the first year of the war and a total of 1,300 during the entire war. They acknowledge the loss of 345 MiG-15s.

Whatever the cost of the war in aircraft, the cost was even higher for the loved ones trying to lead a normal life while fathers, husbands and sons were serving their country. The former prisoners of war who returned home under Big Switch had a chance to rebuild their lives. The pilots

who were listed as Killed in Action (KIA) would be remembered with honour, but what about those carried on the rolls as Missing in Action (MIA)? Were any of them still alive and if so, where were they?

Missing in Action

Altogether 1,690 USAF personnel were brought down behind enemy lines and of those 1,180 were as a result of direct enemy action.

A total of 175 downed airmen were rescued immediately by helicopter or flying boat and it is known that 155 were killed when their aircraft crashed. Of the rest, some are known to have been captured; 248 were returned during prisoner exchanges and 15 were still held by Communist China in violation of the armistice agreements. The remaining 999 airmen were listed as MIA and eventually declared dead.

Only three USAF pilots managed to return to friendly lines after being captured. Capt William D Locke escaped during the confusion of a North Korean retreat early in the war. He hid under the floor of a schoolhouse in Pyongyang, where he had been temporarily interned and waited there until UN troops had advanced to his position.

Another pilot, Capt Ward Millar, walked out of an enemy hospital where he had been kept for three months and, with the help of a North Korean Army sergeant who had defected, managed to signal a UN aeroplane, which later directed a helicopter in to pick them both up.

First Lt Melvin J Shadduck was shot down, captured and then, entirely unaided, planned and successfully executed an escape from behind enemy lines.

There were almost 100 USAF officers

who fell into a special category; after they were shot down they were neither rescued nor captured. Most of these men landed in no-man's land and eventually found their way back to friendly lines. A dozen or so landed deep in enemy territory and some sneaked back through the Communist lines, completely unaided. Others made their way to the sea and eventually made contact with friendly naval forces or with the Air Rescue Service. A few were assisted by North Koreans who wanted to collect the 'blood chit' reward, the equivalent of a year's pay.

The Missing 999

But what happened to the 999 USAF pilots who were listed as missing in action at the end of the war, as well as the US Navy, USMC, US Army and UN pilots also recorded as MIA?

Men such as Wing Commander Johnny Baldwin, a British pilot who was shot down while flying an F-86 with the USAF. One intelligence report claimed that he was being held in a North Korean tungsten mine, together with 35 American officers, none of whom came home. Canadian SqN Ldr Andrew MacKenzie was held by the Chinese until 1955 and on his release confirmed that the Chinese had told him that they also held 'Johnny Baldwin'.

During the Korean War US Col Philip Corso was head of the Special Projects Division in the G-2 Section of Far East Command. One of his primary duties was to keep track of enemy prisoner of war camps in North Korea – their locations, the conditions in the camps, estimated numbers of American and Allied prisoners of war in each camp and the treatment that the prisoners received at the hands of the enemy.



Bodies of some 400 Korean civilians lie in and around trenches in Taejon's prison yard. The victims were bound and slain by retreating Communist forces



Many POWs required immediate medical care upon release. These exchanged prisoners are arriving at Tachikawa Air Base, Japan, in August 1953



Airmen with a souvenir of the former north-south Korean border that was replaced by the Demilitarised Zone



The Soviets claimed 510 UN aircraft shot down in just the first year of the war and a total of 1,300 during the entire war. Additional aircraft were damaged, such as this B-26 Invader seen making an emergency landing



Another consignment of casualties is loaded onto a C-54D at Taegu during the war. It has been estimated that military casualties on both sides were approximately 2.4 million

He also served as a member of the UN truce delegation at Panmunjom during the closing days of the war and participated in the discussions on Operation Little Switch, the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners of war. He stayed on for Big Switch and was present at the time when the prisoners were brought in.

At the end of Little Switch, he prepared a document showing that not all the sick and wounded were returned. Intelligence reports indicated that there were between 1,700 and 2,000 sick, seriously ill or wounded men in the camps. Around 1,200 were eventually repatriated and Corso estimated that another 500 would not survive unless they were handed over for treatment. Four more months would pass before any more prisoners were handed over.

Corso Report

After Big Switch Col Corso went back to the USA and was assigned to President Eisenhower's National Security Council operations coordinating board as a member of the staff. His primary duties were POW matters and following the end of Big Switch, Corso and his colleagues concluded that around 8,000 prisoners of war had not been returned. He was directed to prepare a statement on the subject for Henry Cabot Lodge to read out at a UN meeting in New York. At the same time it was discovered that the Chinese, under Russian tutelage, were conducting detailed and scientific Pavlovian-type experiments on UN prisoners.

Sent to the USSR

While the war was still going on Corso received daily evidence that prisoners had been sent to the Soviet Union. This came

from the interrogation of North Korean and Chinese prisoners, defectors and photographs from reconnaissance aircraft.

In fact Corso received between 300 and 400 reports indicating that UN prisoners of war had been sent up through Manchuria to Manchouli where they changed trains because of the difference in the rail line gauges and continued on to the Soviet Union.

Corso briefed President Eisenhower on the subject and when he told the president that between 900 and 1,200 US prisoners had been transferred to the Soviet Union Eisenhower asked Corso for his recommendations.

Corso reportedly replied: "These men will never come back alive because they will get into the hands of the NKVD [later the KGB] who will use them for their purposes – espionage, playbacks or whatever. This is not uncommon in the intelligence business. Once they fall into their hands there is little hope of them coming back. My recommendation is to not make it public in order to protect the families."

Over 60 years later the families are still waiting to hear the fate of their loved ones and only Russia can provide the answers.

Years after the war ended there were still reported sightings of US prisoners in the hundreds of concentration camps comprising the Gulag in Siberia. It is not unreasonable to assume that once the prisoners were interrogated and bled dry of information they were given Soviet names and shipped to various camps in the Gulag. Over time they would have succumbed to the extreme weather, harsh working conditions, poor diet and absence of medical assistance. Some may have been deliberately killed or worked to

death. A small number, sympathetic to the Communist cause or brainwashed by their rhetoric, or perhaps considered useful to the Soviet authorities may have survived a while longer. Not one came home to tell their story.

Voices from the Gulag

There were two main prison systems in the USSR that absorbed the US and UN prisoners received from North Korea and China.

The Sharashka system consisted of small, unnoticed camps or sites where Soviet and foreign professionals, either sentenced and confined or kidnapped off the streets, were forced to carry out research and development work on defence associated projects.

Engineers, PhDs, Scientists and Technicians were sentenced to imprisonment in the Sharashkas, which were usually located near the more notorious forced labour camps. Projects undertaken are thought to have included bacteriology (for germ warfare), rockets, atomic energy and radar.

However, most POWs were destined for the Gulag system. The brainchild of Joseph Stalin, the Gulag was the cruelest and most severe of the Russian prison systems. Situated in Siberia and other inhospitable areas of the Soviet Union, the Gulags consisted of thousands of camps with millions of inmates. The prisoners were used for forced labour by brutal guards, with poor accommodation and food and almost non-existent medical care. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions died in these remote camps and that included American and other UN prisoners of war.

A CIA report dated September 2, 1952, reported on the location of Soviet



Peace talks faltered on numerous occasions. By the time the war was over in July 1953 more than two million civilians had paid with their lives



A large number of memorials to the fallen during the Korean War have been constructed around the globe. This tribute can be found in downtown Philadelphia *Dr Nia Jones*



Current servicemen line up in readiness to pay tribute their fallen predecessors during a ceremony in Washington DC. The millions lost during the Korean War are far from forgotten – although many remain missing in action, presumed dead *Dr Nia Jones*

transit camps for prisoners of war from Korea. The report noted: "Since July 1951, several transports of Korean POWs passed through the ports of Bukhta [near Vladivostok], Okhotsk and Magadan. Each ship contained 1,000 or more prisoners. Between the end of November 1951 and April 1952 transports of POWs were sent by rail from the Poset railway junction on the Chinese-Soviet frontier. Some were directed to Chita in Eastern Siberia and some to Molotov in European Soviet Russia, west of the Ural Mountains. It is most probable that POWs are undergoing some sort of investigation and selection process while in the MVD [Ministry of Justice] prison in Chita. Some of them are retained in prison in Chita for a long time, while others are sent directly by rail to Molotov and other industrial regions in the Ural Mountains."

Fate Unknown

In some camps situated near the Gubakha railway, about 150 Americans were kept, probably soldiers and NCOs. From these camps one to three POWs were taken every few days by officers of the MVD for transportation to Gubakha or Molotov. They never returned to their camps and their fate remained unknown.

Following remarks by Russian Premier Boris Yeltsin that Americans were imprisoned in the Russian camps system, Task Force Russia was formed in 1990 to try to track down any survivors and discover the fate of those who died inside the USSR. There was enormous resistance by the KGB and GRU (the Main Intelligence Agency) to the work of the joint American-

Soviet commission and most of their records remain out of reach to this day. However, the commission advertised their search for information in newspapers and in radio broadcasts and people started to come forward.

In a series of interviews in 1996, a Soviet veteran who lived in Minsk claimed to have seen a US POW in May or June 1953. He was reportedly a North American F-86D Sabre pilot whose jet had been forced to land in North Korea in the late spring of 1953. The witness said that the pilot was sent to Moscow the day after his forced landing. The witness claimed that the pilot later became an instructor and taught at the Monino Air Force Academy between 1953 and 1958. Apparently he taught air battle techniques and tactics and assisted the Soviets in figuring out a US radar gun sight.

During an interview in 1993, a witness in Lithuania described an encounter with Americans at the Novosibirsk Transit Prison around June 1952. The witness stated there were two American pilots in the group of prisoners brought into his small room. The other two or three prisoners were German. The Americans reportedly told him that they had been shot down in Korea. They were dressed in khaki shirts and trousers with no belts. The first American was tall with a red beard and he told the source that he was a Captain in the USAF.

A Polish former inmate waiting for release from the Gulag recalled that an American arrived at 'Coal Mine Number Six' in Vorkuta in June of 1953. Other prisoners told the witness that the American was a pilot from a spy plane downed by the

Soviets. He was approximately six foot tall and about 40 years old, of medium height, thickset with dark or auburn hair.

A former German POW detained in labour camp OLP-9 in Vorkuta in 1952 heard from a driver that approximately 19 miles (31km) north of Vorkuta was a 'Camp of Silence' where the inmates did not have to work and were not eligible for mail privileges. According to the driver who was an ex-prisoner engaged in hauling supplies to various camps, this Camp of Silence held Americans and Britons captured in Korea.

Survivors?

The Korean War was a very brutal conflict against a cruel and merciless enemy and over 60 years later both sides still face each other across the most fortified strip of land in the world.

In recent years dozens of former South Korean POWs have escaped into China and back to South Korea, after 50 years of slavery in North Korean coalmines. Is it possible that there are still American or British prisoners of war surviving in the far-flung corners of North Korea, China or the former Soviet Union? It is possible, but it is more likely that most are lying in unmarked graves outside long ago abandoned labour camps in Siberia.

We can only learn the lessons of history and make sure that such things do not happen again. We can also remember the brave men who flew their fighters and bombers in the skies over Korea and gave their lives to ensure the freedom of the people of South Korea. Wherever their bones lie, may they rest in peace. ❖