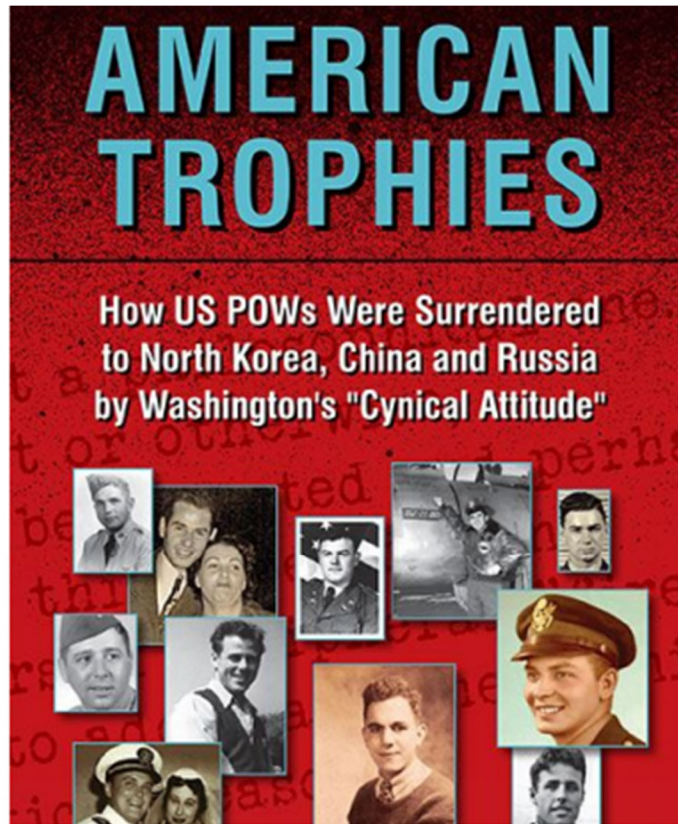


Forgotten War, Forgotten Soldiers

Book: American POWs left behind from Korean War

[Bill Gertz](#)

July 26, 2013



U.S. prisoners of war were left behind in North Korea, China, and Russia after the Korean War and the Pentagon failed to win their release or a full accounting of their fate, according to research contained in a new book that is highly critical of U.S. POW recovery efforts.

"The Obama White House and Pentagon show not a trace of urgency in recovering our Korean War POW/MIAs, perished or alive," said Mark Sauter, the book's co-author who has spent more than two decades investigating missing soldiers.

"Time is running out for many of their family members, not to mention American POWs reported in North Korea long after the war, if any still survive," he told the *Washington Free Beacon*. "Contrast this with South Korea, which has recovered dozens of its POWs alive in recent years. Some family members believe the U.S. government is simply waiting for the problem to go away."

The book, *American Trophies: How American POWs Were Surrendered to North Korea, China, and Russia by Washington's 'Cynical Attitude,'* includes numerous cases of missing Americans from the Korean War, along with several from the Cold War and Vietnam War. It is based on years of research, interviews, and documents by the authors, Sauter and John Zimmerlee.

Declassified intelligence reports obtained by the authors reveal that Americans were being held captive in China, North Korea, and the Soviet Union at least through the 1990s.

Publication of the book follows the recent disclosure of a Pentagon report highly critical of Defense Department POW search efforts. "The Pentagon's effort to account for tens of thousands of Americans missing in action from foreign wars is so inept, mismanaged and wasteful that it risks descending from 'dysfunction to total failure,'" said an internal Pentagon study suppressed by military officials but first reported by the Associated Press July 8.

The book cites the same report and others, saying they "cast grave doubt about government goals for finding and identifying the missing from Korea and other wars." The study said the cost of recovering a single missing soldier can reach between \$2.1 million and \$5.7 million.

"The Obama administration has failed to manage these POW programs effectively or press other countries for answers," the book says. "It has even sidelined the long-running Presidential US-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, now stuck in White House bureaucracy."

The House Armed Services Committee will conduct a hearing Aug. 1 when senior Pentagon POW officials are expected to face tough questioning on the matter.

The book documents several cases of missing Americans who were reported alive but never returned after the conflict. The Korean War lasted from 1950 to 1953 and involved a coalition of U.N. states led by the United States fighting a Soviet-backed North Korea and later China.

The cases include the fate of Harry Moreland, who the Chinese say escaped from an enemy prison despite having both legs amputated. In another case, Air Force Capt. Sam Logan went missing after his aircraft went down near Pyongyang in late 1950. He disappeared under mysterious circumstances.

Richard Desautels was captured by the Chinese in 1950 and taken to Manchuria where he was kept prisoner and was never returned after Beijing released other prisoners.

Gilbert Ashley and four other B-29 crewmen parachuted safely after their plane went down in North Korea, but they were never returned after the conflict.

"The U.S. military radioed a demand to return them: *Communists cannot plausibly deny you are alive and must arrange your exchange.* They never came home," the authors said of Ashley and his crew.

One former Soviet colonel told the authors that an U.S. F-86 pilot captured by the Russians was sent to Moscow because Soviet leader Josef Stalin wanted to speak to him. And a North Korean source revealed that the North Korean communist government kept American prisoners for the same reason serial killers keeps mementos of victims.

"Pyongyang, Beijing, and Moscow kept our prisoners for several strategic and tactical reasons," the book states. "American captives were also sometimes a sort of 'trophy.'"

China conducted show trials of U.S. POWs captured in Korea and traded them for scientists held by the United States. The book says evidence reveals the Chinese were holding other American prisoners who were never released.

"We expect mendacity and indifference from North Korea, China, and Russia, and it is they who kept American captives and frustrate attempts to account for them," the authors said. "But we hold the US government to a higher standard, which it has failed to meet."

The authors' investigation of missing POWs found that the Pentagon had "substantial evidence" American POWs remained in enemy hands after the end of the Korean War but declared all of them dead—even those that were thought to be alive.

At one point after the war, the Air Force's most senior general, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Nathan Twining, asked the CIA to conduct a covert action program in 1954 to recover what the general said was "apparently substantial number of U. S. military personnel captured in the course of the Korean War (who) are still being held prisoners by the Communist Forces," according to one document.

The CIA rejected the request claiming it did not believe reports of secretly held POWs. Russia initially agreed to cooperate in the late 1990s with the Pentagon on accounting for missing servicemen but continues to "stonewall" access to KGB files that could shed light on the missing Americans, including those Moscow admitted were sent to Russia, the book says.

China admitted that it secretly transported Richard Desautels to China and has a classified file on his case and that of other missing soldiers that it refused to turn over to U.S. investigators.

However, the authors are harshly critical of the Pentagon for its failure to resolve the cases of missing soldiers.

"The Pentagon's POW/MIA organizations are plagued by incompetence, waste, overlap and in-fighting," the book said.

Despite spending tens of millions of dollars in recent decades, the Pentagon has identified the remains of 246 of out of 8,177 Korean War POW/MIAs.

In the case of North Korea, the U.S. government has paid the communist regime \$22.1 million for U.S. remains, access to sites, and excavations. North Korea in return has tried to fool U.S. investigators by "salting" POW recovery sites using warehoused Americans' remains.

On the recent U.N. Human Rights Commission of Inquiry on North Korea, the authors note that the inquiry will not include a search for POWs from the Korean War despite that conflict being fought under the United Nations flag.

A recent North Korean defector disclosed to the *Free Beacon* that South Korean soldiers from the Korean War are still being held in North Korea.

The authors state that they do not believe there is a "conspiracy" to cover up Korean War prisoners.

"Our view is that senior U.S. leaders and the government bureaucracy that helps set the agenda for them resist emphasizing a problem that appears beyond their control to resolve," they say.

"This is today's 'cynical attitude.' The bureaucracy knows what to push and what to 'research' forever. Families of the missing want and deserve answers, be they from foreign countries, U.S. records or remains."

Norm Kass, a recently retired senior Pentagon official involved in POW affairs, is quoted in the book as saying that the poor effort by the U.S. government to account for POWs will leave most of their relatives dead before they get answers.

"It's a way a bureaucracy has of pretending to pursue an issue when in reality it has no interest in dealing with the issue," Kass stated.

Sauter is a veteran journalist who has spent more than two decades researching POW issues. He was an Army officer once stationed on the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Koreas.

Sauter's investigation of missing prisoners began in 1989 when he uncovered a classified memo at the Eisenhower Presidential Library stating U.S. prisoners were sent to the Soviet Union. The memo is disclosed in the book.

Zimmerlee is the son of Air Force officer John Henry Zimmerlee, who disappeared in 1952 during the Korean War.

"When most Americans think of pressing issues with Beijing, Moscow and Pyongyang, topics such as cybersecurity, trade and arms proliferation come to mind. But for families across the nation, the most important issue is one rarely discussed by government and media—the fate of Americans left, dead or alive, in North Korea, China and the former Soviet Union," Sauter and Zimmerlee said.