

## **OSS, Attached memorandum, “Korean and Japanese prisoners of war in Kunming”**

Annotation Source: Seoul Metropolitan Archive

Annotation and Image Link: <https://archives.seoul.go.kr/item/10>

The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) is a U.S.' wartime intelligence agency created during WWII, which later became the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The U.S. psychological warfare agencies including OSS considered the “comfort women” issue useful for their operations. There were two ways the “comfort women” issue could be used in the psychological warfare against Japan. First, it created a source of conflict within the Japanese military. Although the Japanese military exploited “comfort women” to boost the morale of soldiers, such goal in using “comfort stations” as well as the ways in their services were distributed were not necessarily agreed within the military by consensus. Second, the “comfort women” system could invoke outrage among local populations in the occupied region. Raising awareness of the fact that many local women were forcibly mobilized and exploited for the “comfort” of the Japanese Army would trigger anti-Japanese sentiment among the local populations. In other words, the information on the “comfort station” system was a useful tool for the psychological warfare as it could cause a rift in the Japanese empire.

The OSS based in Kunming at the time carried out interrogations of POWs to gather information for the psychological warfare. This document includes information from Korean POWs who were interned in the camp in Kunming. The document states that twenty four out of twenty five Korean POWs were female and that all of them had become “‘comfort girls,’ apparently under compulsion and misrepresentation.” For example, according to the document, fifteen of them “were recruited through advertisements in Korean newspapers offering employment for girls in Japanese factories in Singapore.” The report also states that “the contingent with which they were sent southward included at least 300 girls who were similarly misled.”

Young-sim Park (spelled as Pak Yông-sim on p.2), whose name is found in the list of Korean POWs, testified at the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery convened in Tokyo in December 2000 that it was indeed herself that is shown in the well-known photograph of the pregnant “comfort woman,” taken in Songshan, China. Another survivor, Kyung-ae Yoon’s (spelled as Yun Kyông-I on p. 2) name is found in this document. Yoon also testified that she was a “comfort woman” in Songshan, China, and it was confirmed that she was alive in North Korea as of 2003. Twenty four “comfort women,” including Park and Yoon, were taken to Songshan, a strategic point near the border between China and Burma (today’s Myanmar). In June 1944, the U.S.-China Allied Forces started attacks on Songshan and captured the area on September 7 in the same year. In the process, the Japanese troops were annihilated and fourteen “comfort women” were killed by bombing. Only ten women survived, either by escaping from the caves that the Japanese troops used as strongholds, or by being captured on site by the Allied Forces. Park was one of the four women who escaped from the Japanese military base and were found by Chinese troops. Those women including Park were interned in the POW camp in Kunming for about seven months before they were sent to Korea via Chongqing, China.

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