

Cohen Reiterates U.S. Resolve on POW/MIA Issues

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, September 23, 1997 -- Accounting for American service members lost during war remains a DoD priority, said Defense Secretary William S. Cohen during a POW/MIA Recognition Day commemoration at the Pentagon Sept. 17.

The falling of "old walls" has meant more opportunities for the United States to account for those Americans missing in action.

Cohen detailed one battle of the Army's 8th Cavalry Regiment during the Korea War. The unit was battling North Korean forces above the 38th parallel in 1950 when Chinese troops entered the conflict. "After a series of bloody clashes, the 8th Cav. was forced to withdraw behind the 38th and leave behind several fallen comrades," Cohen said. "Among them was a young sergeant. But last October, this soldier came home. His remains were discovered by the Americans and North Koreans working together. Today, he rests in peace near his home and family in Louisiana."

This is important to the United States, because service members must know the country will never abandon them, Cohen said. It also matters to American POWs who can rest assured that their nation will find and free them. It matters to families and friends who need relief and closure. "And it matters to the Department of Defense because we are a family, and like family, we cherish and care for our own," Cohen said.

Cohen said the United States is using technology to track American service members to rescue them quickly when necessary. The military is also using DNA technology to identify remains and reduce the number of service members missing in action.

In addition to North Korea, Cohen pointed to research and recovery efforts under way in China, Russia and Southeast Asia -- a place he said America's biggest hopes lie. Vietnam is opening its doors ever wider to American search teams, Cohen said.

"Vietnam has made it clear that it's ready to cooperate with us on this," he said. "We've made it clear that without this cooperation, Vietnam can never achieve its goal of normal and full relations with the United States."

	The POW/MIA flag flies under the American flag at the Pentagon Sept. 19, POW/MIA Recognition Day. Jim Garamone
	Defense Secretary William S. Cohen (left), and former POW and current Arizona Sen. John McCain troop the line during POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremonies at the Pentagon Sept. 19. Jim Garamone
	Former POW in North Vietnam and current Arizona Sen. John McCain addresses the crowd at POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremonies at the Pentagon Sept. 19. Jim Garamone
	Defense Secretary William S. Cohen tells the crowd accounting for prisoners of war and service members missing in action is a priority for the U.S. government. Cohen spoke during POW/MIA Recognition Day activities at the Pentagon Sept. 19. Jim Garamone



The crowd at POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremonies at the Pentagon included former prisoners of war from World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. Jim Garamone



A World War II American prisoner of war looks skyward at a flyover during POW/MIA Recognition Day observances at the Pentagon Sept. 19. Jim Garamone