

## Table for One Honors America's Missing Servicemen

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American Forces Press Service

ARLINGTON, Va., Feb. 2, 2001 – A small pristine table with one chair sat near the podium during this year's seventh annual Prisoner of War and Missing Personnel National Day of Prayer breakfast on Feb. 1.

It was a table set for one, which symbolizes that service members were missing from the midst of the annual gathering.

"They're commonly called prisoners of war or missing in action," said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Vince Cromer of the Defense POW and Missing Personnel Office. "We call them 'brothers'. They're unable to be with us today."

Cromer asked the gathering to remember that the table set for one symbolizes the frailty of one alone against his oppressors.

"The tablecloth is white, symbolizing the purity of their intentions to respond to their country's call to arms," Cromer told the large gathering of top Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, State Department, veterans organizations, former POWs and families of missing personnel.

A single long stemmed red rose protruded high above a crystal vase with a red ribbon tied around it. "...The rose reminds us of the families and loved ones of our comrades-in-arms who keep the faith awaiting their return," Cromer explained. "...The red ribbon is reminiscent of the red ribbon worn upon the lapel and breast of thousands who bear witness to their unyielding determination to demand a proper accounting of our missing."

Of the slice of lemon on the bread plate, Cromer said the lemon "reminds us of their bitter fate."

A salt shaker filled with salt is symbolic of the families' tears as they wait, he said.

Cromer said the glass on the table was upside down because "they can't drink with us this morning."

The chair is empty because, "they're not here," he said.

He asked the audience to remember that "all of you who served with them and called them comrades, who depended upon their might and aid, and relied upon the, for surely, they have not forsaken you!"