

President's National POW/MIA Recognition Day Proclamation

Throughout our Nation's history, the men and women of America's Armed Forces have preserved our freedom, protected our security, and upheld our democratic values. From the battles of the American Revolution through the crucible of two world wars to the challenging peacekeeping and humanitarian missions of today's post-Cold War era, our men and women in uniform have stood proudly in defense of the United States and in the cause of liberty. In the two centuries since our Nation's birth, more than a million have paid the price of that liberty with their lives.

Joining the ranks of these heroes are the thousands who have been held as prisoners of war or whose fate has never been resolved. Many have been lost in the chaos of battle, the grief of their loss made more acute for their families and their fellow Americans because of the inability to determine whether they perished or survived. Captive Americans, cruelly stripped of their freedom, treated with contempt and brutality, or used as pawns by their captors in a larger political struggle, have fought long, lonely battles against despair, physical and psychological torture, and the ultimate fear of being forgotten.

But Americans will never forget those who have borne the indignities and sufferings of captivity in service to our country, those missing in action, or those who died as prisoners of war, far from home and family. On National POW/MIA Recognition Day, we reaffirm our commitment to those still missing and renew our pledge to make every effort to obtain the answers to their fate. We can do no less for these American heroes and for their families, who have endured such profound loss and whose suffering continues as long as their loved ones' fate remains unknown.

On September 19, 1997, the flag of the National League of Families of American Prisoners of War and Missing in Southeast Asia will be flown over the White House, the U.S. Capitol, the Departments of State, Defense, and Veterans Affairs, the Selective Service System Headquarters, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, and national cemeteries across our country. This black and white banner, symbolizing America's missing, is a stark and powerful reminder to people around the world that our Nation will keep faith with those who have served and sacrificed; that we will not rest until we receive the fullest possible accounting of every American missing in service to our country.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 19, 1997, as National POW/MIA Recognition Day. I ask all Americans to join me in honoring former American prisoners of war and those whose fate is still undetermined. I also encourage the American people to remember with special sympathy and concern the courageous families who maintain their steadfast vigil and who persevere in their search for answers and for the peace that comes only with certainty. Finally, I call upon State and local officials and private organizations to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety- seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON