

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

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For Immediate Release

April 9, 1998

NATIONAL FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR  
RECOGNITION DAY, 1998

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

Engraved on the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., are the words "Freedom Is Not Free." Generations of Americans who have served our Nation in uniform know the truth of this inscription. They have paid freedom's price by leaving behind their homes, families, and civilian lives to serve America around the globe. They have paid the price by suffering injuries and even death. And some have paid the price for our freedom by sacrificing their own as prisoners of war.

While in captivity, American prisoners of war have served our Nation with the same valor, pride, honor, and dedication as their comrades on the battlefield. American POWS have struggled for their freedom, armed with courage, wits, and an indomitable spirit. Enduring long months or years of hunger, abuse, torture, isolation, and the dreadful suspense of not knowing when -- or if -- they would ever be released, they have remained true to themselves and to our country.

This year we commemorate the 25th anniversary of Operation Homecoming, when we finally achieved the release of our prisoners of war from captivity in Southeast Asia. We also mark the anniversary of Operations Big Switch and Little Switch some 45 years ago, when Americans held captive during the Korean War finally came home. As these heroes returned to the open arms of their families and the grateful hearts of their fellow Americans, we saw written on their faces their deep love for our country and the faith, determination, and sense of honor that had sustained them through times of unimaginable suffering.

We can never adequately express our gratitude to those who have served our Nation while prisoners of war or to their families who experienced such anguish during years of separation. But on this day, and throughout the year, we can and should pay tribute to these extraordinary American patriots, thank them for their service and their sacrifice, and honor them always in our hearts.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 9, 1998, as National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day. I call upon all Americans to join me in remembering former American prisoners of war who suffered the hardships of enemy captivity. I also call upon Federal, State, and local government officials and private organizations to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

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

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

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