

## U.S. Military Will Leave No One Behind

By Jim Garamone  
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**WASHINGTON, Sept. 20, 2002** -- It is a matter of honor to the U.S. military that it will leave no one behind.

Today was the National POW/MIA Recognition Day, and this sentiment was clearly front and center at the Pentagon observance.

"Throughout the history of our nation, we have been blessed by heroes willing to sacrifice their freedom to protect and defend our own," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said at the Pentagon's River Parade Field ceremony. "It is still so today. In foreign lands and on far away seas, courageous military men and women are fighting to defend our country's freedom.

"They do so knowing that if they should fall on the field of battle, should they be captured or lost, we will do everything in our power to find them and to bring them home," he continued. "That is our pledge to them and to you."

Rumsfeld asked the former prisoners of war and the families of those missing in action in the audience to stand and be recognized during the ceremony.

"To each of them we owe an unending debt of gratitude for the sacrifices they made, the pain they endured, the hardships they suffered to ensure the flame of freedom would never be extinguished," Rumsfeld said.

Rep. Sam Johnson of Texas was the featured guest at the ceremony. Johnson, a career Air Force officer who spent seven years as a POW in North Vietnam, spoke of the sacrifices the POWs and their families make. He said he was amazed to find that more than 78,000 were still missing from World War II. He said he is dedicated to the fullest possible accounting not only for those, but the missing from Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War.

Johnson also said that Iraq needs to account for Navy Cmdr. Michael Speicher, shot down on a mission over Iraq during the Gulf War. Speicher has been listed as missing since.

Johnson spent many months in solitary confinement and in leg stocks during his imprisonment. "Until you've had your freedom denied, only then do you realize what we have in this country of ours," Johnson said. "It's ours to protect and it's ours to defend."

"Freedom is something we cannot give up," Johnson said. "I don't care who threatens it here or anywhere in the world, we need to be vigilant and stop (the threat) in its tracks."



Rep. Sam Johnson of Texas is escorted Sept. 20, 2002, to the Pentagon POW-MIA remembrance ceremony, where he was the featured guest speaker. A career Air Force officer who spent seven years as a POW in North Vietnam, he spoke of the sacrifices made by POWs and their families. Photo by Jim Garamone.