



POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY TOOLKIT

2018

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National POW/MIA Recognition Day Fact Sheet

Since the American Revolution, people fighting to secure the freedom of the United States have at some points in time been held as prisoners of war (POWs).

National POW/MIA Recognition Day was established in 1979 through a proclamation signed by President Jimmy Carter. Since then, each subsequent president has issued an annual proclamation commemorating the third Friday in September as National POW/MIA Recognition Day. In 1998, the National Defense Authorization Act further strengthened the importance of the day by officially designating it as one of the six days per year that the POW/MIA flag is required to be flown at designated federal government locations.

A national-level ceremony is held on every National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Traditionally held at the Pentagon, it features members from each branch of military service and participation from high-ranking officials.

In addition to the national-level ceremony, observances of National POW/MIA Recognition Day are held across the globe on military installations, ships at sea, state capitols, schools and veterans' facilities.

No matter where they are held, these National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremonies share the common purpose of honoring those who were held captive and returned, as well as those who remain missing.

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POW/MIA Flag History and Display Rules

The official U.S. POW/MIA flag resulted from the efforts of family members to display a suitable symbol that made the public aware of their loved ones who were being held prisoner or declared missing during the Vietnam War.

In 1970, Mrs. Michael Hoff, the wife of a service member declared MIA and a member of the National League of POW/MIA Families, recognized the need for a symbol honoring POW/MIAs. Prompted by an article in a Florida newspaper, Mrs. Hoff contacted Norman Rivkees, Vice President of Annin & Company. The article stated that the company had made a banner for the newest member of the United Nations, the People's Republic of China, as part of their policy to provide flags of all United Nations member states. Mrs. Hoff found Mr. Rivkees very sympathetic to the POW/MIA issue. He and an Annin advertising agency employee, Newt Heisley, designed a flag to represent our missing men.

In January, 1972, the League of Families Board of Directors approved the design of the flag and ordered some for distribution. Wanting the widest possible dissemination and use of this symbol to advocate for improved treatment for and answers on American POW/MIAs, no trade mark or copyright was sought. As a result, widespread use of the League's POW/MIA flag is not restricted legally.

The flag was flown over the White House for the first time in September, 1982, making it the only flag other than the U.S. flag to be displayed there.

On March 9, 1989, an official League flag – flown over the White House on National POW/MIA Recognition Day 1988 – was installed in the US Capitol Rotunda as a result of legislation passed overwhelmingly during the 100th Congress.

On August 10, 1990, the 101st Congress passed US Public Law 101-355, which recognized the League's POW/MIA flag and designated it "*the symbol of our Nation's concern and commitment to resolving as fully as possible the fates of Americans still prisoner, missing and unaccounted for in Southeast Asia, thus ending the uncertainty for their families and the Nation.*"

The 105th Congress passed Section 1082 of the 1998 Defense Authorization Act requiring that the POW/MIA flag fly six days each year over specific federal locations.

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Those required days are:

- Armed Forces Day, May 16
- Memorial Day, May 25
- Flag Day, June 14
- Independence Day, July 4
- POW/MIA Day, 3rd Friday of September
- Veterans Day, November 11

The required federal locations include:

- All major military installations
- National cemeteries
- All post offices
- Veterans Administration medical facilities
- The World War II Memorial
- The Korean War Veterans Memorial
- The Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- The official offices of the secretaries of state, defense and veterans affairs and the director of the selective service system
- The White House

Most state and local governments across the nation have adopted similar laws.

Display rules

When displayed from a single flag pole, the POW/MIA flag should fly directly below, and be no larger than, the United States flag.

If on separate poles, the U.S. flag should always be placed to the right of other flags. On the six national observances for which Congress has ordered the display of the POW/ MIA flag, it is generally flown immediately below or adjacent to the United States flag as second in order of precedence.

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The POW/MIA or “Missing Man” Table

At most official military dinners, military dining facilities and events held at many local Veterans Service Organizations, a special table is set in honor of POWs/MIAs.

For special occasions, such as Veterans Day, some restaurants may also set aside a table at which no one is seated.

The table set up and decorations of the table usually include these symbolic displays:

- The POW/MIA table is smaller than the others, symbolizing the frailty of one prisoner alone against his or her oppressors.
- The white tablecloth draped over the table represents the purity of their response to our country’s call to arms.
- The empty chair depicts an unknown face, representing no specific Soldier, Sailor, Airman, or Marine, but all who are not here with us.
- The table itself is round to show that our concern for them is never ending.
- The black napkin stands for the emptiness these warriors have left in the hearts of their families and friends. A Purple Heart medal can be pinned to the napkin.
- The single red rose reminds us of their families and loved ones. The red ribbon represents the love of our country, which inspired them to answer the nation’s call.
- The yellow candle and its yellow ribbon symbolize the everlasting hope for a joyous reunion with those yet accounted for.
- The slices of lemon on the bread plate remind us of their bitter fate.
- The salt upon the bread plate represents the tears of their families.
- The wine glass, turned upside down, reminds us that our distinguished comrades cannot be with us to drink a toast or join in the festivities of the evening.

At formal military dinners, the significance of the POW/MIA table is often explained during the official toasts portion of the program.

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SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: **(Your name.)**

Date: **(Of the release.)**

Phone: **(Your contact phone number where you can be reached.)**

(Installation or organization name) Commemorates POW/MIA Recognition Day.

(Installation or organization name) will recognize POW/MIA Recognition Day on 21 September 2018 at **(time)** to honor those who were held captive and returned, as well as those who remain missing from past conflicts.

The following event(s) will take place: **(list the events that will take place on your installation or by your organization.)**

For more information on the POW/MIA Recognition Day event(s), call **(your name/ organization)** at **(phone number)** or visit our website or social media platforms **(list web address, social media platforms, etc.)**



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Sample Social Media Posts



Sample Facebook message:

[To be posted prior to POW/MIA Recognition Day. Pair with an image of the POW/MIA flag]

“You’ll be seeing lots of these flags on Friday as we commemorate the 2018 POW/MIA Recognition Day. Come join us at **[time and place]** for **[your organization’s]** event.”

[To be posted on POW/MIA Recognition Day]

“Today’s the third Friday in September. Anybody know what makes it special? Answer: POW/MIA Recognition Day. Find out more at our ceremony **[fill in information about your event.]** “

[To be posted on POW/MIA Recognition Day. Pair with an image of the POW/MIA flag]

“Have you seen the iconic flag of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia flag flying over the post office today? It’s the POW/MIA flag. Today is POW/MIA Recognition Day. It’s one of six days that federal law requires the flag to be flown over specific federal buildings. Find your connection at www.dpaa.mil.”

Sample Tweets:

“On POW/MIA Recognition Day 2018, pause to remember the more than 82,000 U.S. personnel who have not returned from past conflicts and their families. You Are Not Forgotten.”

“Remember our missing American heroes and their families today. It’s POW/MIA Recognition Day 2018. You Are Not Forgotten.”

“Find your connection to POW/MIA Recognition Day at #OurPromise.”

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Sample Speech

[Thank distinguished guests, veterans, family members, representatives from Veterans Service Organizations and the POW/MIA community]

It is an honor to join all of you for this important observance.

Every year, on the third Friday in September, the nation remembers our service members and civilians who never returned from war.

Every American still missing and unaccounted-for from past conflicts is entitled to one certainty -- that he or she will not be forgotten. Throughout American history, many men and women have bravely served, sacrificing much to preserve our country and protect the democratic ideals that make this Nation a beacon of hope. Some of those who answered the call to service were captured in conflict and imprisoned by our enemies, and many remain missing. As a Nation, we are committed to honor their sacrifice, and we will never stop searching for them. And whenever possible, we will bring them home.

Each year on National POW/MIA Recognition Day, we honor those Americans who were prisoners of war and recognize them for the courage and determination they showed in the face of unspeakable hardships. We also honor those who did not return, especially remembering the sacrifices of their families who must courageously face each day without knowing the fate of their loved ones.

We honor patriots and family members like.... [Provide information on a local/regional/state unaccounted-for service member who has been identified within the past year, if possible. Check www.dpaa.mil for information.]

Many Americans, including me, are inspired by the fierce resolve of generations of American POWs. We also draw inspiration from the bonds of camaraderie, compassion, and love that prompted our POWs to care for each other, and sustain each other, through months and years of hardship.

These bonds are fundamental to the strength of the American military and one of the characteristics that define us all as Americans. As Americans, we look out for each other. We protect each other. And we vow to never leave a fellow service member behind.

Today, more than 82,000 fallen Americans remain missing in action from conflicts dating back to WWII. [Provide information on the number of unaccounted-for personnel from your state. You can find those statistics on www.dpaa.mil]

Our Nation continues to search for our unaccounted-for heroes through the efforts of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, known by the acronym "DPAA." In Fiscal Year 2017, DPAA accounted for 183 U.S. personnel. So far this fiscal year, DPAA has accounted for [check www.dpaa.mil for the latest statistics].

**POW/MIA
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As the POW/MIA flag is raised in communities like ours across America today, let us pause to give thanks for those who have been returned and renew our pledge to those who are still missing and their families: “You are Not Forgotten.”

Thank you.

**FULFILLING
OUR
NATIONS
PROMISE**

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2018 POW/MIA Recognition Day Talking Points

- Sept. 21, 2018, has been designated National POW/MIA Recognition Day.
 - National Prisoner of War/Mission in Action (POW/MIA) Recognition Day is a day set aside to honor those who were held captive and returned, as well as those who remain missing.
 - Since World War II, the remains of more than 82,000 U.S. personnel have yet to be recovered, identified, and returned to their families. The Department of Defense remains firmly committed to the families of the missing and to the fullest possible accounting for those U.S. personnel who remain missing.
 - Federal law requires the POW/MIA flag to be flown on the following days:
 - 1.) Armed Forces Day, May 16
 - 2.) Memorial Day, May 25
 - 3.) Flag Day, June 14
 - 4.) Independence Day, July 4
 - 5.) POW/MIA Day, 3rd Friday of September
 - 6.) Veterans Day, November 11