

Veterans of Foreign Wars **POW/MIA GOALS**



The VFW will not rest until we achieve the fullest possible accounting of all missing American military service members from all wars.

The VFW encourages the U.S. government to continue its missing personnel accounting efforts, and is directly engaged with former enemy nations urging their fullest cooperation and assistance in obtaining information about American POWs/MIAs. VFW national officers make periodic

trips to Pacific, Asian and European countries where they meet with senior host country officials to stress the importance of conducting investigation and recovery operations, as well as gaining access to documents and archival research facilities.

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VFW's Stance on POW/MIA Issues

- 1.** Never quit on achieving the fullest possible accounting of all American POWs/MIAs from all wars.
- 2.** Urge Congress to fully fund the requested amounts for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and all supporting agencies involved in the Full Accounting Mission.
- 3.** Encourage POW/MIA public awareness projects and events.
- 4.** Support POW/MIA Recognition Day.
- 5.** Encourage the flying of the POW/MIA flag on all local, state and federal government buildings as a reminder that this issue is a matter of national importance.
- 6.** Immediately drape all transfer cases containing recovered remains of military members with the U.S. flag upon departure from foreign soil.
- 7.** Solicit and provide information to assist the government of Vietnam in accounting for their own missing-in-action during the war with the U.S.
- 8.** Keep the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs intact in mission, personnel and funding.

Fortunately, another kind of DNA—called mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA)—is of great help in identifying older remains. This material is extremely abundant, with most bodily cells containing thousands of copies. With so much more mtDNA available, some of it almost always survives, no matter how old or degraded the remains (teeth and bones can be good sources). Scientists have even extracted mtDNA from a 100,000-year-old cave man.

Unlike nuclear DNA, mtDNA is not unique to the individual in question. For starters, only a few hundred thousand different variations of mtDNA exist among the world's billions of people. In addition, mtDNA comes solely from a person's mother, and it is shared by all maternal relatives, which means that siblings as well as maternal aunts, uncles and cousins have identical mtDNA. Consequently, mtDNA is not a precise identifier and would be worthless in a criminal case. But this apparent shortcoming also is mtDNA's greatest asset.

Since 1992, investigators have been collecting mtDNA from the maternal relatives of MIAs and using these samples to identify

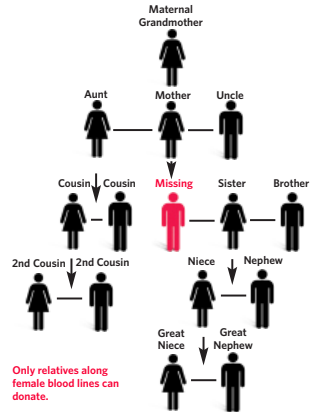
remains. Thanks to the mtDNA repository, more than 1,000 families have experienced the bittersweet closure of MIA identification.

As with nuclear DNA, however, mtDNA comes into play only after other means have been used to narrow the identity possibilities.

Perhaps investigators know which unit (and therefore which individuals) was in an area at the time of a battle. Or, in the case of a crashed plane, there may be a roster of crew members. Or dog tags or personal effects might be found near the remains. With the list of possibilities sufficiently narrowed, investigators can then use a relative's mtDNA to confirm (for all practical purposes)

Maternal Relatives Needed To Donate DNA Samples

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) wants blood. Specifically, it is seeking blood samples from maternal relatives of missing GIs to perform DNA matching tests. DPAA officials say VFW members can be a big help in this endeavor. If you are or know of a family member who is eligible to give blood for DNA matching, contact your respective military service Casualty Assistance Office at <http://www.dpaa.mil/Families/ContactInformation.aspx>, or by calling:



Army, 1-800-892-2490;
 Marine Corps, 1-800-847-1597;
 Navy, 1-800-443-9298;

Air Force, 1-800-531-5501;
 or the U.S. State Department at 1-202-647-5470.

United States Code, Title 36, Section 902
POW/MIA FLAG DISPLAY



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The display of the POW/MIA flag shall serve as the symbol of the nation's concern and commitment to achieving the fullest possible accounting of Americans who, having been prisoners of war or missing in action, still remain unaccounted for — or in the future may become prisoners of war, missing in action or otherwise unaccounted for as a result of hostile action.

When and Where the POW/MIA Flag is Displayed

The POW/MIA flag is displayed at selected federal facilities on six designated days: Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, National POW/MIA Recognition Day and Veterans Day.

The federal facilities are the Capitol; the White House; the World War II Memorial; the Korean War Veterans Memorial; the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; each national cemetery; the buildings containing the official office of the secretaries of State, Defense, Veterans Affairs and the Director of the Selective Service System; each major military installation, as designated by the Secretary of Defense; each medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and each U.S. Postal Service post office. In the case of display at A medical centers, the World War II Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the POW/MIA flag will be displayed any day on which the U.S. flag is displayed; in the case of display at U.S. Postal Service post offices, if any of the six designated days are not on a business day, the flag will be flown on the last business day before the designated day.



Order of Precedence in the Display of the POW/MIA Flag

All flags flying on the same pole with the U.S. flag will be subordinate to the U.S. flag. The question frequently arises about what flag (POW/MIA, state, organization, etc.) has precedence to be flown directly beneath the U.S. flag and above any other flag. There is no definitive answer or protocol established in writing or codified in law.

It is VFW protocol, since the POW/MIA flag is considered a federal banner, that the POW/MIA flag has precedence over all other flags flying on the same pole beneath the U.S. flag. In a line of march, the POW/MIA flag is carried to the immediate left of the U.S. flag. VFW views the POW/MIA issue as a matter of national importance first, thereby giving the POW/MIA flag a position of prominence.

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The Prisoner of War Medal was created by Public Law 99-145 in 1985. Any U.S. veteran who has been taken prisoner and held captive since April 5, 1917, qualifies. However, veterans must serve honorably while in captivity. This means that veterans who collaborate with the enemy are ineligible.



National League of POW/MIA Families

POW/MIA FLAG HISTORY

The National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia was incorporated in the District of Columbia on May 28, 1970. The League's sole purpose is to obtain the release of all prisoners, the fullest possible accounting for the missing, and the repatriation of all recoverable remains of those who died during the Vietnam War. Its Web site is www.pow-miafamilies.org.

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In 1970, Mrs. Michael Hoff, an MIA wife and member of the National League of Families, recognized the need for a symbol of our POW/MIAs. Prompted by an article in the Jacksonville, Florida, Times-Union, Mrs. Hoff contacted Norman Rivkees, Vice President of Annin & Company, which had made a banner for the newest member of the United Nations, the People's Republic of China (PRC), 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. Following approval by the League's Board of Directors at a meeting held January 22-23, 1972, POW/MIA flags

were manufactured 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 large volume of commercial production and sales now required to meet demands of federal and state laws does not benefit the League financially, though Annin & Company did contribute a modest amount on one occasion. On March 9, 1989, an official League flag flown over the White House on National POW/MIA Recognition Day 1988 was installed in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda as a result of legislation passed overwhelmingly during the

100th Congress. In a demonstration of bipartisan Congressional support, the leadership of both Houses hosted the installation ceremony, at which League Executive Director Ann Mills-Griffiths delivered remarks represented the POW/MIA families.

The League's POW/MIA flag is the only flag ever displayed in the US Capitol Rotunda where it stands as a powerful symbol of America's determination to account for US personnel still missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. 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 importance of the League's POW/MIA flag lies in its continued visibility, a constant reminder of the plight of America's POW/MIAs. Other than "Old Glory," the League's POW/MIA flag is the only flag ever to fly over the

White House, having been displayed in this place of honor on National POW/MIA Recognition Day since 1982. Passage by the 105th Congress of Section 1082 of the 1998 Defense Authorization Act required that the League's POW/MIA flag fly six days each year: Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, National POW/MIA Recognition Day and Veterans Day. It must be displayed at the White House, the US Capitol, the Departments of State, Defense and Veterans Affairs, the headquarters of the Selective Service System, major military installations as designated by the Secretary of Defense, all Federal cemeteries and all offices of the US Postal Service. In addition to the specific dates stipulated, the Department of Veterans Affairs voluntarily displays our POW/MIA flag 24/7. The National Vietnam Veterans, Korean War Veterans and World War II Memorials are now also required by law to display the POW/MIA flag daily. Most State Capitols have adopted similar laws, as have local governments nationwide.

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The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA)

Mission: To promote the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel to their families and the nation.

Web site: <http://www.dpaa.mil>

Service Casualty Offices

Web site: <http://www.dpaa.mil/Families/ContactInformation.aspx>

Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL)

Mission: To provide worldwide scientific consultation, research and education services in the field of forensic DNA analysis to the Department of Defense and other agencies. To provide DNA reference specimen collection, accession and storage of U.S. military and other authorized personnel.

Web site: www.afmes.mil

Alternate Ceremony Set for Six

Master of Ceremonies

"As you entered the dining area, you may have noticed a table at the front, raised to call your attention to its purpose—it is reserved to honor our missing loved ones [or missing comrades in arms, for veterans].

Set for six, the empty places represent Americans [our men] still missing from each of the five services— Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard—and civilians. This Honors Ceremony symbolizes that they are with us, here in spirit.

Some in this room were very young when they were sent into combat; however, all Americans should never forget the brave men and women who answered our nation's call and served the cause of freedom in a special way.

I ask you to stand, and remain standing for a moment of silent prayer, as the Honor Guard places the five service covers and a civilian cap on each empty plate."

Honor Guard

In silence or with dignified, quiet music as background, the Honor Guard moves into position around the table and simultaneously places the covers of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard, and a civilian hat, on the dinner plate at each table setting. The Honor Guard then departs.

Master of Ceremonies

"Please be seated. I would like to explain the meaning of the items on this special table.

The table is round—to show our everlasting concern for our missing men.

The tablecloth is white— symbolizing the purity of their motives when answering the call to duty.

The single red rose, displayed in a vase, reminds us of the life of each of the missing, and the loved ones and friends of these Americans who keep the faith, awaiting answers.

The vase is tied with a yellow ribbon to symbolize our continued uncertainty, hope for their return, and determination to account for them.

A slice of lemon on the bread plate is to remind us of the bitter fate of those captured and missing in a foreign land.

A pinch of salt symbolizes the tears endured by those missing and their families who seek answers.

(Optional Step: The Bible, Torah, or other book of faith, represents the strength gained through faith to sustain those lost from our country, founded as one nation under God.)

The glass is inverted—to symbolize their inability to share this evening's [morning's/day's] toast.

The chairs are empty—they are missing.

Let us now rise and raise our glasses in a silent toast to honor America's POW/MIAs and to the success of our efforts to account for them."

POW/MIA Ritual

TRIBUTE TO COMRADES



White Flower:
Devotion to Duty



Laurel Wreath:
Victory Over Death



Blue Flower:
Love of Country



Red Flower:
Courage and Gallantry



Evergreen Sprig:
Love of Comrades

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The Post room will be set theater fashion with the altar or small table at front center to receive the symbolic tributes.

The POW/MIA flag should be properly displayed.

Post officers in order of rank, or comrades representing them, will be seated in the front row, right of the center aisle. If the Ladies Auxiliary is to participate, the officers or representatives will be seated in the front row, left of the center aisle.

The Officer of the Day (O.D.) or other proficient comrade will give the preliminary address and act as master of ceremonies during this ritual.

Suggested opening address:

O.D.: "Honored guests, comrades, sisters and friends, the members of _____ Post # _____ Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, are assembled here to remember comrades who are being held as prisoners of war or missing in action. We must not forget the sacrifices these comrades are still making and the suffering they are still enduring for us and our way of life. They must remain alive in our minds and hearts until we know they have returned home to their loved ones or have been called to the bosom of Our Heavenly Father. We must continue to give moral support to their families who continue to suffer along with them.

"Color Guard! Prepare to post

Colors! All rise! Present Arms!”

The Colors will enter by way of the center aisle and be posted on each side of the altar. The bearers and guards will remain with the Colors during the ceremony.

O.D.: “Order Arms! Parade, rest! Uncover!”

Chaplain: “Almighty God and merciful Father, we praise and glorify You. Thank You for the many blessings You have bestowed upon our great nation. Heavenly Father, we beseech You to guide our missing comrades through every day and night. Give them unbound strength and courage to continue their efforts to survive and return to their loved ones. If they perish, Lord, we ask You to welcome them to the house You have prepared for them where they will rest in peace. Amen.”

O.D.: “Let us all rededicate ourselves to the flag of our country by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.”

“Attention! Cover! Present Arms! [O.D. will lead in the recitation of the pledge.] Order Arms! You may be seated.”

“Before you is the flag of the United States, the flag of our country for which our imprisoned and missing comrades are still suffering and dying. Look closely upon this beautiful symbol and listen to the words of our officers as they present their symbolic tributes.”

The O.D. will introduce Post officers in turn. They will come forward and

hold the symbol in view of the audience while speaking.

The symbols are:

Laurel Wreath—victory over death, presented by Commander

Evergreen Sprig—love of comrades, presented by Chaplain

Blue Flowers—love of country, presented by Officer of the Day

White Flowers—devotion to duty, presented by Senior Vice Commander

Red Flowers—courage and gallantry, presented by Junior Vice Commander

When finished speaking, the officer will turn, place the symbol on the altar, salute and return to his/her seat.

If the Ladies Auxiliary are to participate, they will be introduced along with their counterpart of the Post. Each lady, instead of the Post officer, will hold a symbol in view of the audience while the Post officer is speaking. Then both will turn, place the symbol, salute and return to their seats.

Junior Vice Commander: “The flag of the United States reflects our imprisoned and missing comrades. The red stripes reflect their courage and willingness to sacrifice, even their lives if necessary. The red of our country’s flag has been made redder by their heroism. Therefore, we place these red flowers to symbolize their courage and gallantry.”

Senior Vice Commander: "The white stripes symbolize the purity of purpose that our comrades have in serving under this beautiful flag. The white becomes more stainlessly pure by the motives which impel them. We place these white flowers as a reminder of their unselfish devotion to duty."

Officer of the Day: "The blue of our flag symbolizes truth and fidelity and represents the desire of our missing comrades for peace and happiness throughout the world. Therefore, we place these blue flowers to symbolize the great love that our comrades have for our flag and our country."

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Chaplain: "As our flag symbolizes undying love for our country, this evergreen tribute, whose color bespeaks life everlasting, symbolizes our undying love for our imprisoned and missing comrades."

Commander: "As the flag of the United States symbolizes victory over oppression for the living, so this laurel wreath symbolizes victory over death for those who have made the supreme sacrifice.

Therefore, we place this last token of affection in honor of our missing comrades who have gone to their final reward."

If the Ladies Auxiliary is participating, the O.D. will call for the Ladies chaplain to offer the closing benediction. If not, he will call on the Post chaplain.

O.D.: "All rise! Uncover! Parade, rest!"

Chaplain: "Almighty God, we praise Thee, we glorify Thee and we thank Thee for sparing us from the grasp of our enemies. Grant us full understandings of the suffering being endured by our comrades who are being held as prisoners of war or are still missing.

"We ask Thy blessings upon them, that whatever comforts they are denied, whatever evil they must endure may rebound to their everlasting happiness.

"Especially do we seek Thy support for their loved ones. May Thy grace be with them, always giving them the strength to do their daily tasks and the courage to meet the problems of life.

"We pray for those missing comrades who have been called to Thy bosom that whatever justice they have been denied in this life has been granted them a hundredfold. Amen."

O.D.: "Color Guard! Prepare to retire the Colors! Comrades attention! Cover! Present Arms!

The national anthem will be sung, then the Colors will be retired.

O.D.: "Order Arms! This concludes our ceremony."

