



National P.O.W.-M.I.A. Recognition Day, 1980

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In each of America's wars our prisoners of war have been called upon to make uncommon sacrifices. Upon them has fallen the arduous responsibility of defending American ideals under the absolute control of the enemy. Extremely difficult at best, this responsibility becomes magnified almost beyond comprehension when men and women are treated inhumanely — in violation of ordinary human compassion, fundamental moral standards, and basic international obligations.

The Congress has by Joint Resolution designated July 18, 1980 as "National P.O.W.-M.I.A. Recognition Day."

All Americans should recognize the special debt we owe our fellow citizens who, as prisoners during wartime, sacrificed their freedom that we might enjoy the blessings of peace and liberty. Likewise, we must remember the unresolved casualties of war — our soldiers who are still missing. The pain and bitterness of war endures for their families, relatives, and friends.

Our Nation will continue to seek answers to the many questions that remain about their fate.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JIMMY CARTER, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate Friday, July 18, 1980, as National P.O.W.-M.I.A. Recognition Day, a day dedicated to all former American prisoners of war, to those still missing, and to their families. I call on all Americans to join in honoring those who made the uncommon sacrifice of being held captive in war, and their loved ones.

And I call on 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 second day of July in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fourth.



NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES
OF AMERICAN PRISONERS AND MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA
1608 K STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006 (202) 223-6846

August 7, 1980

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Good evening, ladies and gentlemen:

It is an honor and a pleasure for me to be able to appear tonight on behalf of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General David C. Jones. General Jones has asked me to convey his thanks for the kind invitation extended on behalf of the League of Families by your Executive Director, Ann Mills Griffiths. General Jones has been and is a strong supporter of POW/MIA resolution and fully endorses the League's efforts. Although he regrets being unable to attend, he has given me the opportunity to appear in his stead. This I treasure not only from my long association with the League, but more importantly because it affords me the opportunity to give a first hand account of where we stand in our efforts to achieve answers to years of uncertainty.

It hardly seems possible that last month marked the tenth anniversary of the League's founding. During that time your efforts have been an inspiration to us all. Your struggle to keep the issue in the forefront has helped ensure administration, military, Congressional and public interest. While successes since "Operation Homecoming" have been few, you have not faltered. Vietnamese intransigence has certainly not helped and the Kampuchean invasion got in the way. In short, there have been and are enormous problems.

Before addressing what we are doing to deal with those problems, I think we need to look at the current political situation in Southeast Asia and in other areas of the world and acknowledge the complications which that situation adds to resolving the POW/MIA problem.

The Soviet support of and presence in Vietnam and their aggressive posture worldwide, particularly in Afghanistan, has created an atmosphere clearly not conducive to eliciting Soviet support for resolving the POW/MIA problem.

The continued PRC/Vietnamese confrontation and tension along their common border remain as dominant factors in the political scene which preclude the SRV from focusing on the POW/MIA issue and their relationship with the U.S.

The Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, their domination of Laos, and continuing threat to Thailand are also factors which impact significantly on our ability to make progress on this vital matter. Just this past week, SRV forces violated the Thailand border, creating additional tension in an already volatile situation.

The attention of all the decision makers on the Indochina scene remain riveted on the potential for expanded conflict and subjugates other issues in the process.

As a backdrop to the political unrest in Southeast Asia, the continued holding of U.S. hostages in Iran has created a general crisis environment in the nation which has permeated all political and military activity and diverted attention from other issues of major importance.

These are some of the realities of the political scene that have and will no doubt continue to impact on what we are capable of doing to solve the problem which remains foremost in our minds tonight.

The picture is not as bleak as it may seem. As you are aware, as a result of the refugee exodus which followed the SRV invasion of Kampuchea, a source of new information has been uncovered which offers significant input to the POW/MIA accounting effort. There have been numerous reports of Americans yet in captivity and information on crash and grave sites.

Remarks of LTG Richard Lawson, USAF

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To cope with this increase in live sightings and other reports, DIA has expanded its operations and Lt. General Tighe, the Director of DIA, has taken a personal hand to insure exploitation of as many potential refugee sources as possible.

The first appearance of any DIA Director before Congress on the POW/MIA subject was at hearings conducted last summer. This year's appearance further underscores the importance once again given the issue. As you know, RADM Jerry Tuttle was appointed to coordinate efforts to revitalize collection of POW/MIA intelligence. His efforts have been both untiring and effective. Teams have been organized to travel worldwide to promising refugee sources. POW/MIA folders are now revised and expanded with corroborative data inserted where possible. ADM Tuttle has also called upon other U.S. intelligence resources and has obtained priority cooperation from those agencies.

The prognosis of results from this expanded effort is generally positive. Based on the data we have to date, I am cautiously optimistic that additional corroborative information will continue to be uncovered.

As we attempt to correlate the data and interpret its meaning, there is a parallel need to generate confidence in the results of our assessment. Unfortunately, we have had instances where such confidence has been eroded by Washington spokesmen who appear to use dual standards when addressing the validity of refugee reporting. For example, refugee testimony regarding the use of lethal chemical agents in Laos has been labeled as "persuasive," while at the same time, reports of live sightings have been given relatively less credence. We are making progress in closing this "perception gap." It is our belief that it is not only logical but desirable to apply the same standard of acceptability and validity to all information derived from refugees. To do less can only result in allegations of political chicanery, whether intended or not.

To briefly summarize the data we have obtained to date: Since 1975, DIA has received over 700 reports from Indochinese refugees concerning sightings of Americans, crash locations, grave sites and handling and disposition of remains. Of these reports, approximately 230 have been firsthand live sightings, and approximately 150 have been hearsay.

From that body of reporting came the significant testimony of a former mortician concerning his knowledge of over 400 remains of U.S. MIAs being held in Hanoi. DIA's efforts resulted in providing solid information to Congress, subsequently used in making an official approach to Hanoi in 1980.

It is hoped that continued efforts by U.S. intelligence agencies will uncover additional leads which will culminate in irrefutable evidence to resolve the POW/MIA problem.

In parallel with DOD efforts on data collection and evaluation, I am sure you recognize the general improvement in relations that has developed between the League and the various elements of the Department of Defense. This has been facilitated by DIA's responsiveness to League input and suggestions. The League's Executive Director currently has access to all POW/MIA intelligence data, and your Board of Directors is more fully briefed and thus able to better understand the scope of ongoing actions and to contribute to League policy formulation from a knowledgeable background.

There have also been significant changes in the operating procedures by which

The Interagency structure here in Washington addresses the POW/MIA issue. For the first time since the 1973-74 timeframe, the issue is again a topic for active discussion in the Interagency arena. Senior representatives from the staffs of the NSC, State Department, OSD/ISA, JCS/J-5, DIA, the Wolff Subcommittee and including, for the first time, a League representative, are meeting regularly in an attempt to develop coordinated positions. The inclusion of a League representative in this forum is a major step toward improving relationships between the League and government agencies and has permitted us to move cohesively toward resolution of this most difficult and frustrating problem.

Our objective at this time is to develop and articulate a current policy aimed toward obtaining Vietnamese cooperation. The JCS took the lead in this regard and just yesterday approved a proposed POW/MIA policy position, developed in consultation with the Executive Director, for use as a basis for Interagency addressal of U.S. Government POW/MIA policy. This will be a continuing effort until a fully coordinated policy is agreed upon. We are beginning to examine alternative approaches and have begun consideration of how best to negotiate with the Vietnamese in pursuit of our objective.

As we look to the future, I see a continued effort to get irrefutable evidence on live U.S. prisoners. I would also expect to see development of a range of options for how we might best utilize the accumulating data.

I can understand how an adversarial role between the League and the government may have seemed advisable at one time. I do not believe the current environment suggests such a stance. Now I believe we have created an organizational structure which will produce a positive relationship characterized by cooperation and communication. I anticipate and welcome close scrutiny by your representatives, but I would hope we have put suspicion and hostility behind us. I believe everyone is in agreement that there is a necessity to deal realistically and actively with the problem and our main task now is doing something about it.

In conclusion, I would observe that we have come a long way together, and have overcome many artificial and some very real roadblocks in our mutual effort to resolve problems related to the POW/MIA issue. There is a recognized need to continue the current pace and intensity of effort, and I believe that recent changes in both the substance of information and the process of dealing with that information are contributing significantly toward maintaining this needed emphasis.

Years of frustration experienced by the members of the National League of Families, and all POW/MIA families for that matter, could have caused you to give up and develop deep hostility toward your own country as well as real negativism about the basic value of our system of government. As a group, you have stood firm and maintained your patriotism, dedication, and your belief in America. You have continued to pursue your worthwhile objective and, at long last, are succeeding in gaining the priority which, hopefully, will result in the conclusion so necessary for us all.

As an Air Force officer, I am acutely aware of the high regard with which active duty personnel view your efforts. There is no question but that your contribution to protecting the welfare of men and women in the Armed Forces is strongly supported, perhaps quietly, but, nevertheless, strongly.

Retention of high caliber military personnel is an increasingly critical

problem, due not only to erosion of benefits, as is so often mentioned in the press, but more importantly, the motivation and purpose of why they serve our nation. It is the concern, support and dedication of people like yourself which contribute to the rationale for continuing to serve.

For the example you have set, our country is in your debt. Your sacrifices, and those which your missing men have made, have done much to insure that our blessings of liberty continue, that the welfare of all military personnel is better protected, and that the defense of our country is looked upon as honorable and necessary. It is with humility and gratitude that I thank you for serving such a useful role in maintaining the integrity of our nation.

As you know, my move next week to a European assignment will lessen my direct involvement in this issue. There will be no lessening, however, in my dedication to that objective and I promise you my continued support wherever I may be, in whatever manner that may be required.

HELP AMERICAN POW/MIAS

To: The Honorable Lester Wolff, Chairman
Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific
Affairs

To: The Honorable Tennyson Guyer, Chairman
Task Force on American Prisoners and
Missing in Southeast Asia

We, the undersigned citizens of the United States, applaud your efforts to date and hope that our signatures will help you show Hanoi that the accounting for our POW/MIAs has the continuing support of the American people.

We ask that you call upon the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to release all information on Americans missing in Indochina and to return any American remains which are now in their possession or may subsequently be found. Vietnamese compliance with this request for humanitarian cooperation would end years of uncertainty for American POW/MIA families and could provide a basis for improved relations between the two countries.

We ask that you and the other Members of Congress continue your best efforts to secure the assistance of the people of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to resolve this critical issue.

COOPERATING ORGANIZATIONS

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION
AIR FORCE SERGEANTS ASSOCIATION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
AMVETS
BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION
MARINE CORPS LEAGUE

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF UNIFORMED SERVICES
NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL LEAGUE OF POW/MIA FAMILIES
NAVY LEAGUE
NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
THE RETIRED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Return this petition completed, to the House Task Force on POW/MIAs, Room SB329C Rayburn Building, Washington, D.C. 20515

*John - thought you'd like this one
P.S./k*

