



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

Communications Department | 406 W. 34th Street | Kansas City, MO 64111
1.816.756.3390 | www.vfw.org | info@vfw.org

POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY

GOOD MORNING/AFTERNOON. I AM HONORED TO BE HERE TODAY AS WE SALUTE THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED AND SACRIFICED TO KEEP AMERICA FREE ... AND TO RECOGNIZE THE FAMILIES OF THE MISSING, WHO CONTINUE TO HOPE AND PRAY THAT THEIR LOVED ONES WILL SOMEDAY RETURN HOME.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US ON THIS THIRD FRIDAY OF SEPTEMBER TO RECOGNIZE OUR

NATION'S PRISONERS OF WAR AND MISSING IN ACTION.

THERE ARE CURRENTLY 88,000 AMERICANS LISTED AS MISSING AND UNACCOUNTED-FOR GOING BACK TO THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

THAT NUMBER INCLUDES 78,000 AMERICANS FROM WORLD WAR II ... 8,100 FROM THE KOREAN WAR ... 1,730 FROM THE VIETNAM WAR ... 120 FROM THE COLD WAR ... AND ONE EACH FROM OUR CURRENT WARS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN.

EIGHTY-EIGHT THOUSAND AMERICANS WHO HAVE YET TO RETURN HOME FROM THEIR WARS.

THAT NUMBER EQUALS THE POPULATION OF ANY TOWN IN ANY STATE IN OUR COUNTRY.

NOW ADD TO THAT NUMBER THEIR SURVIVING PARENTS, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, AND SONS AND DAUGHTERS, AND YOU HAVE A HUGE POPULATION OF FELLOW AMERICANS WHO CONTINUE TO GRIEVE IN SILENCE EVERY DAY.

MY WAR ENDED A LONG TIME AGO ... THEIRS, SADLY, HAS NOT.

THEY GO TO SLEEP EVERY NIGHT RELIVING THAT FATEFUL TELEGRAM OR KNOCK ON THE DOOR THAT INFORMED THEM THEIR LOVED ONE WAS MISSING OR HAD BEEN TAKEN PRISONER.

**MANY OF OUR 140,000 FORMER POWS
CONTINUE TO BEAR PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL
SCARS FROM THE BRUTAL TREATMENT THEY
RECEIVED FROM YEARS OF CAPTIVITY DURING
WORLD WAR II, KOREA OR VIETNAM.**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE CANNOT WALK IN
THEIR SHOES, BUT WE CAN REASSURE THEM THAT
VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE VFW WILL
CONTINUE TO FIGHT ON CAPITOL HILL FOR BETTER
HEALTHCARE AND BENEFITS FOR ALL VETERANS,
AND THAT WE WILL NEVER REST UNTIL OUR
NATION HAS OBTAINED THE FULLEST POSSIBLE
ACCOUNTING OF OUR MISSING.**

**WE ARE BLESSED TO LIVE IN THE ONLY
COUNTRY THAT ACTIVELY CARES ABOUT THE
RECOVERY AND RETURN OF OUR MISSING
SOLDIERS, SAILORS, MARINES, AIRMEN AND
COAST GUARDSMEN.**

**AMERICA'S FULL ACCOUNTING MISSION FALLS
SQUARELY ON THE SHOULDERS OF 500 DEDICATED
MILITARY AND CIVILIAN MEMBERS OF THE
DEFENSE POW/MIA OFFICE AND THE JOINT
POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND.**

**THEY CARRY ON THE TIME-HONORED MILITARY
TRADITION OF NEVER LEAVING A COMRADE
BEHIND ON THE BATTLEFIELD ... AND THEY CARRY
ON THIS MISSION DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES OF**

WEATHER AND TERRAIN, AND REGARDLESS OF THE TIME INVOLVED. THEY CARRY ON BECAUSE THEY KNOW—THAT OUT THERE SOMEWHERE— THERE IS AN AMERICAN FAMILY WHO DESERVES TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THEIR LOVED ONE SO MANY YEARS AGO.

THOSE INVOLVED IN THE FULL ACCOUNTING MISSION HELP TO IDENTIFY APPROXIMATELY 80 TO 100 MIAS EVERY YEAR ... LIKE ARMY AIR FORCE STAFF SERGEANT JIMMIE DOYLE OF LAMESA, TEXAS, WHO HAD BEEN MISSING SINCE 1944 WHEN HIS B-24 BOMBER WAS SHOT DOWN OVER THE PACIFIC ISLAND OF PALAU.

**OR ARMY PRIVATE DAVID WOODRUFF OF
POPLAR BLUFF, MISSOURI, WHO WAS CAPTURED IN
1951 AND DIED IN A NORTH KOREAN PRISON CAMP.**

**OR MARINE GUNNERY SERGEANT RICHARD
FISCHER OF MADISON WISCONSIN, WHO HAD BEEN
MISSING SINCE 1968 WHEN HE WAS KILLED ON A
PATROL SOUTH OF DA NANG, VIETNAM.**

**AND MOST RECENTLY, NAVY CAPTAIN MICHAEL
SPEICHER [PRONOUNCED “SPIKER”], WHO WAS
SHOT DOWN ON THE OPENING NIGHT OF THE FIRST
GULF WAR, AND WHO FOR 18 YEARS WAS THE
ONLY MIA FROM OPERATION DESERT STORM.**

**AMERICA PERFORMS HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS
ALL AROUND THIS WORLD, YET THE FULL
ACCOUNTING MISSION IS THE ONLY HUMANITARIAN
MISSION OUR GOVERNMENT PERFORMS SOLELY
FOR THE BENEFIT OF FELLOW AMERICANS.**

**THEIR WORK IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT AND
DANGEROUS, YET THEY PERFORM EACH
INVESTIGATION AND RECOVERY OPERATION WITH
A SOLEMN PLEDGE TO RETURN A FELLOW
AMERICAN HOME TO A WAITING FAMILY.**

**THE MIA FAMILIES ALSO CELEBRATE EVERY
NEW IDENTIFICATION AS IF IT WERE THEIR OWN,
BECAUSE THEY KNOW THAT OUT THERE
SOMEWHERE IS ANOTHER AMERICAN FAMILY WHO**

**FINALLY HAS CLOSURE AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF
WAITING.**

**THE VFW STANDS BESIDE THESE FAMILIES
WHO CONTINUE TO BURN THAT CANDLE OF HOPE.**

**SINCE 1991, WE HAVE BEEN THE ONLY
VETERANS' ORGANIZATION TO SEND ITS SENIOR
LEADERSHIP TO VIETNAM EVERY YEAR TO ENSURE
THEIR GOVERNMENT UNDERSTANDS HOW
IMPORTANT THE FULL ACCOUNTING MISSION IS TO
AMERICA'S VETERANS AND TO THE AMERICAN
PEOPLE.**

**WE ARE ALSO THE ONLY VETERANS'
ORGANIZATION TO SEND ITS SENIOR LEADERSHIP**

TO MOSCOW EVERY YEAR SINCE 2004. WE DO THIS TO HELP GAIN ACCESS INTO THE FORMER SOVIET MILITARY ARCHIVES THAT MAY CONTAIN INFORMATION TO HELP DETERMINE THE FATES OF THOUSANDS OF MISSING SERVICEMEN FROM WORLD WAR II, KOREA, VIETNAM AND THE COLD WAR.

WE ENGAGE WITH THESE FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS ON THE HUMANITARIAN LEVEL. WE CAN DO THIS BECAUSE—POLITICS ASIDE—A VETERAN IS A VETERAN, REGARDLESS OF THE COLOR OF UNIFORM.

**OUR WARS ARE OVER. NOW LET US WORK
TOGETHER TO BRING CLOSURE TO THE FAMILIES
WHO CONTINUE TO WAIT.**

**AMERICA HAS RISEN TO GREATNESS ON THE
SHOULDERS OF ORDINARY CITIZENS WHO
REFUSED TO SHIRK THE RESPONSIBILITY OF
CITIZENSHIP ... AND WHO SELFLESSLY PAID THE
HIGHEST PRICE TO PRESERVE PEACE AND
FREEDOM.**

**FROM THE MOUNTAINS AND OCEANS TO THE
DESERTS AND JUNGLES, OUR BRAVE MEN AND
WOMEN IN UNIFORM TODAY GO WHERE DUTY
CALLS THEM.**

**THEY DON'T SERVE FOR FAME OR GLORY, AND
THEY DON'T SERVE FOR THE MONEY. THEY MARCH
ON BECAUSE THE PERSON IN FRONT—AND THE
PERSON BEHIND—CONTINUE TO MARCH. THEY
MARCH ON BECAUSE THEY KNOW THEY HAVE
EACH OTHER'S BACK.**

**THE FULL ACCOUNTING MISSION IS A PROMISE
TO THOSE WHO SERVE THAT WE ... YOUR NATION
... HAS GOT YOUR BACK, TOO.**

(PAUSE)

**IN CLOSING, I WANT TO THANK THE
ORGANIZERS OF TODAY'S CEREMONY.**

**I WANT TO SALUTE THOSE VETERANS AND
SERVICE MEMBERS IN THE AUDIENCE, AS WELL AS
THOSE CURRENTLY SERVING OVERSEAS ... AND
THEIR FAMILIES, TOO.**

**THANK YOU FOR HELPING TO RECOGNIZE OUR
NATION'S POWS AND MIAS.**

THANK YOU.

-VFW-

Additional Resources:

Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office

<http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/>

Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command

<http://www.jpac.pacom.mil/>

Armed Forces DNA Laboratory

<http://www.afip.org/consultation/AFMES/AFDIL/index.html>

American Ex-Prisoners of War

<http://www.axpow.org/>

Vietnam Prisoners of War

<http://www.nampows.org/>

National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia

<http://www.pow-miafamilies.org/>

Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs

<http://www.coalitionoffamilies.org/new/default.asp>