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National P.O.W./M.I.A. Recognition Day, 1988

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

From America's earliest hours as a free Nation, we have known that the cost of liberty is steep. The bill has been paid in full by the courageous members of our Armed Forces. We owe a great debt to all who have served so faithfully and sacrificed so much for our land. Among their ranks are former prisoners of war and those still missing in action, including men known to be alive after the end of hostilities. We will never forget these gallant Americans, or their brave families, or our obligations to them.

We have a deep moral responsibility in this regard—a duty to make every possible effort to account for and return missing Americans to their homeland and to their loved ones. Until the P.O.W./M.I.A. issue is resolved, this issue stays, and will stay, among our Nation's highest priorities.

Similarly, our country has recognized the prolonged and acute suffering of the families of those who remain missing or unaccounted for. We pledge again our unflagging determination to obtain the fullest possible accounting of those still missing, to repatriate all recoverable American remains, and to relieve the suffering and uncertainty of their families.

We will also continue our intelligence efforts to confirm reports of Americans still held in captivity in Southeast Asia. Each of these reports is investigated thoroughly, and both the Executive branch and the Congress scrutinize them. We have not yet been able to confirm such reports; but, if we do, I have pledged to take decisive action to return our men. We have raised this issue repeatedly in negotiations with governments involved, despite their denials.

Our search for the truth is bound up closely with our heritage as a Nation that respects the inherent dignity and worth of every individual. Our liberty is secure because every life is precious to us; we, therefore, can write no final chapter to the story of those who answered their country's call and did not return. They gave without limit, and we owe them, and their families, no less.

To symbolize our continuing national commitment, the P.O.W./M.I.A. Flag will fly over the White House, the Departments of State and Defense, the Veterans Administration, the Selective Service System headquarters, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on September 16, 1988. It will also fly over the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

In recognition of the special debt of gratitude all Americans owe to those who sacrificed their freedom in the service of our country and to their courageous families, the Congress, by House Joint Resolution 453, has designated September 16, 1988, as "National POW/MIA Recognition Day" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this occasion.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Friday, September 16, 1988, as National P.O.W./M.I.A. Recognition Day. I call upon all Americans to join in honoring all former American prisoners of war, those still missing, and their families who have made extraordinary sacrifices on behalf of our country. I also call upon State and local officials and private organizations to observe this day with every appropriate ceremony and activity.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twelfth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

Ronald Reagan