



# POW/MIA Reference Guide

A guide to creating initiatives and generating results



## POW/MIA COMMITTEE PURPOSE & MISSION

### OUR PURPOSE

The purpose of this guide book is to provide departments and chapters with basic information in developing a committee responsible for undertaking POW/MIA endeavors and increasing awareness within local communities.

An unfortunate reality of military engagement is that sometimes service members are held against their will as Prisoners of War (POWs) or, even worse, their whereabouts become unknown and they are classified as Missing in Action (MIA).

DAV has a strong history of advocating on behalf of our nation's wartime ill and injured veterans. This advocacy also extends to supporting the needs and interests of the families for those who served. As an organization, with delegates to DAV national conventions, it is mandated that DAV support said efforts as we recognize the importance of our involvement in POW/MIA activities and the responsibility we have as a country to ensure the fullest accountability for our POWs and those who are listed as MIA.

### OUR MISSION

The POW/MIA Committee is committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting for United States personnel still held captive, missing or unaccounted for from all of our nation's wars, which includes bringing the remains of our fallen comrades home and repatriating any living United States POW's. Our mission is carried forward by:

- ▶ Demanding the immediate release of any American POW and obtaining the most up-to-date information and fullest accountability of those that remain MIA;
- ▶ Preserving the legacy and memory of former, current and future POW's and those missing in action to ensure that their inhumane experiences are calculated as part of the cost of war and remain part of the national consciousness;
- ▶ Creating awareness of the POW/MIA experience to include its lasting effects on families of those held captive or who remain unaccounted for;
- ▶ Engaging in local activities such as meetings, dedications and ceremonies relative to POW/MIA concerns; bringing awareness, greater understanding and knowledge to all;
- ▶ Increasing awareness and responsiveness surrounding POW/MIA accountability and recovery;
- ▶ Supporting efforts to provide adequate resources for POW/MIA initiatives;
- ▶ Encouraging DAV departments and chapters to support POW/MIA initiatives.



## IMPORTANT FACTS

**National POW/MIA Recognition Day** is observed annually (by Presidential Proclamation) on the third Friday of September. Observances are held across the country on military installations, ships at sea, state capitols, schools and veterans' facilities.

**The POW/MIA Flag** is flown in observance of National POW/MIA Recognition Day, Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day. On August 10, 1990, Congress passed U.S. Public Law 101-355, designating the POW/MIA Flag as "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..."

The flag is flown at major military installations, national cemeteries, all post offices, VA medical facilities, the World War II Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the official offices of the secretaries of state, defense and veterans affairs, the director of the selective service system and the White House.

**POW/MIA Empty Chair** is placed at all official meetings as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIA's still unaccounted for from all wars and conflicts involving the United States of America. This symbol serves as a reminder to all of us to spare no effort to secure the release of any American prisoners from captivity, the repatriation of the remains of those who died bravely in defense of liberty and a full accounting of those missing.





## RESOURCES

The websites provided below will enable you to gain additional insight and information into POW/MIA related matters.

As a reminder, please exercise caution when acting on behalf of DAV. Before entering into any formal relationships, or making statements on behalf of the organization, please check with the National Legislative Department first to ensure that you are in compliance and in alignment with our national Constitution and Bylaws and resolutions.

GOVERNMENT	WEBSITE
Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency	<a href="http://www.dpaa.mil">www.dpaa.mil</a>
Library of Congress POW/MIA Database	<a href="http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pow/powhome.html">lcweb2.loc.gov/pow/powhome.html</a>
Russian-American Joint Commission on POW/MIA	<a href="http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/tfr">lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/tfr</a>

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS	WEBSITE
P.O.W. Network	<a href="http://www.pownetwork.org">www.pownetwork.org</a>
National League of POW/MIA Families	<a href="http://pow-miafamilies.org">pow-miafamilies.org</a>
National Alliance of Families	<a href="http://nationalalliance.org">nationalalliance.org</a>
Rolling Thunder	<a href="http://rollingthunder1.com">rollingthunder1.com</a>
Task Force Omega	<a href="http://taskforceomegainc.org">taskforceomegainc.org</a>
Honor, Release, Return, Inc.	<a href="http://honorreleasereturn.com">honorreleasereturn.com</a>
Coalition of Families of Korean & Cold War POW/MIA	<a href="http://coalitionoffamilies.org">coalitionoffamilies.org</a>
Operation Just Cause	<a href="http://ojc.org">ojc.org</a>
American Defenders of Bataan & Corregidor Memorial Society	<a href="http://dg-adbc.org">dg-adbc.org</a>

# RESOLUTIONS

The following are some examples of resolutions that have been adopted by the national organization. These resolutions, as adopted each year, allow DAV to officially engage on specific POW/MIA related matters.

NOTE: These resolutions may change, so it's important to check DAV's website to determine the most up-to-date resolutions relative to POW/MIA activities. [dav.org/learn-more/legislation/resolutions](http://dav.org/learn-more/legislation/resolutions)

## **SEEK THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF ANY AMERICANS WHO MAY STILL BE HELD CAPTIVE FOLLOWING ANY WAR AND THE RETURN AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE REMAINS OF ANY AMERICANS WHO DIED DURING THESE WARS**

Members of DAV are deeply concerned for the thousands of American servicemen still unaccounted for in the aftermath of wars; and numerous efforts by high-level American delegations, including members of Congress, have visited Southeast Asia in continuing efforts to solve the mystery of the whereabouts and fate of our missing in action (MIA) from the Vietnam War. The brave families of the missing continue to live in uncertainty and anguish regarding their sons, husbands and other family members. Still today, more than 73,000 are unaccounted for from World War II, some 7,500 from the Korean War, over 1,600 in Southeast Asia from the Vietnam War, two from the Persian Gulf War and two from the Afghanistan/Iraq War, who have not been forgotten.

DAV was disappointed with the timing of our government's decision to normalize relations with the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV), prior to the fullest possible accounting of our prisoners of war (POW) and missing in action from Southeast Asia. DAV believes that the SRV can increase its unilateral efforts to account for Americans still missing in action, especially those who were last known alive in captivity.

Consequently, DAV urges the United States government to ensure this issue be considered as one of America's highest priorities by accelerating efforts to obtain the release of any American who may still be held captive and obtain, to the fullest possible extent, an accounting of those still missing and the repatriation of the remains of those who died while serving our nation. DAV also urges the government of the SRV to increase its unilateral efforts to account for American POW/ MIAs, including locating and making available remains of Americans last known alive in captivity that have not previously been returned.



## SUPPORT FOR DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY

Members of DAV have long been deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting for United States personnel still held captive, missing and unaccounted for from all of our nation's wars. Personnel and funding for the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Accounting Agency (DPAA) have not been increased at a level commensurate with the expanded requirement to obtain answers on Americans unaccounted for from all of our country's wars and conflicts, and it is the responsibility of the United States government to account as fully as possible for America's missing veterans, including—if confirmed deceased—the recovery of their remains when possible.

DAV deeply appreciates Vietnam's 2009 proposal to expand the pace and scope of POW/MIA accounting cooperation, including use of United States Navy vessels for underwater operations, and the accounting effort should not be considered complete until all reasonable actions have been taken to achieve the fullest possible accounting.

Thus, DAV remains steadfast in its commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all United States military and designated civilian personnel missing from our nation's wars. We call upon our government to support personnel increases and full funding for the efforts of DPAA, the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, including specific authorization to augment assigned personnel when additional assets and resources are necessary.



## **EXPAND PRESUMPTIONS FOR SERVICE CONNECTION FOR FORMER PRISONERS-OF-WAR**

Former prisoners of war (POWs) suffered cruel and inhumane treatment, together with nutritional deprivation at the hands of their captors, which resulted in long-term adverse health effects. POWs were subjected to numerous and varying forms of abuse dependent upon the place, time and circumstance of their captivity by the enemy. For these reasons, former POWs suffer from a wide range of physical and psychological maladies.

Therefore, DAV supports legislation which would add those medical conditions which are characteristically associated with or can be reasonably attributed to the POW experience as presumptive disorders for former POWs.



## **SUPPORT MOVE TO RENEW PRISONER-OF-WAR/MISSING-IN-ACTION DISCUSSIONS**

DAV has long been and is now deeply committed to fully accounting for United States service personnel previously listed as prisoners, missing and unaccounted for from all of our nation's past wars. DAV recognizes the utility and importance of bilateral humanitarian discussions separate from those held on strategic issues, in an effort to reach agreement for proceeding on a humanitarian basis with prisoner-of-war/missing-in-action accounting cooperation. DAV also recognizes the lead time required between renewing bilateral discussions and restoring actual operations.

DAV supports renewing direct bilateral humanitarian efforts for the purpose of restoring agreements and processes required to account as fully as possible for unreturned American military personnel.



## **SUPPORT FORMER PRISONER-OF-WAR SLAVE LABOR CLAIMS AGAINST JAPANESE FIRMS**

On May 30, 2009, the government of Japan, through then–Ambassador to the United States Ichiro Fujisaki, offered an official apology to American prisoners of war (POWs) for their abuse, misuse, pain and suffering caused by Imperial Japan. In September 2010, the government of Japan reinforced its apology by initiating a visitation program for former POWs to visit Japan, to return to the sites of their imprisonment and to receive the apology directly from senior Japanese government officials.

The United States owes much to these soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen, the majority of who fought in the early heroic battles of World War II in the Philippines, on Wake Island, Guam, Java and in the Sunda Strait. American POWs of Imperial Japan were forced into slave labor throughout the Japanese Empire in the most unjust, brutal and inhumane conditions.

DAV supports and commends the efforts of the American POWs of Japan to reclaim their dignity and attain full justice from the government of Japan and those Japanese private companies that enslaved them. Moreover, DAV insists the government of Japan provide and publicize an official transcript in English and Japanese of the government’s 2009 apology to the American POWs.

DAV also insists Congress and the Administration work with all parties involved to ensure the continuation of the POW visitation program to Japan, that it be expanded to include family members and descendants, and funds be provided for a dedicated program of research, documentation, exchange and education.

DAV will work with all parties involved to persuade the private Japanese companies that benefited from POW slave labor during World War II, especially those companies now doing business in the United States, to follow the Japanese government’s lead in acknowledging their use and abuse of American POW labor, and join with the Japanese government to create a fund for remembrance, research, documentation, exchange and education on the POW experience in the Pacific and its lessons for war and peace.





**FULFILLING OUR PROMISES**  
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED

### **DAV MISSION STATEMENT**

We are dedicated to a single purpose: empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. We accomplish this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them; fighting for the interests of America's injured heroes on Capitol Hill; and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life. This mission is carried forward by:

- ▶ Providing free, professional assistance to veterans and their families in obtaining benefits and services earned through military service and provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs and other agencies of government;
- ▶ Providing outreach concerning its program services to the American people generally, and to disabled veterans and their families specifically;
- ▶ Representing the interests of disabled veterans, their families, their widowed spouses and their orphans before Congress, the White House and the Judicial Branch, as well as state and local government;
- ▶ Extending the DAV's mission of hope into the communities where these veterans and their families live through a network of state-level departments and local chapters; and
- ▶ Providing a structure through which disabled veterans can express their compassion for their fellow veterans through a variety of volunteer programs.

### **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY OF DAV**

Disabled American Veterans has a non-discrimination policy whereby all requests for aid and assistance are given equal consideration without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, handicap, age or any other legally protected classification. Further, such non-discrimination policy applies to all qualified applicants for employment by DAV for all positions, and to all activities in which DAV has been engaged, is now engaged, or in any way may be engaged at any time in the future. *N.E.C. Regulation 9*





---

**NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**

3725 Alexandria Pike  
Cold Spring, KY 41076  
859-441-7300  
Toll Free 877-426-2838

---

**NATIONAL SERVICE AND  
LEGISLATIVE HEADQUARTERS**

807 Maine Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20024  
202-554-3501

**DAV.ORG**