



National POW/MIA Recognition Day is September 15, 2023.

Though not here... their sacrifice is not forgotten. Their story is one of sacrifice and courage; their legacy, the gift of liberty.

According to the [Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency](#) more than **81,000 Americans** remain missing as well as approximately **132,000 Americans** were held captive as prisoners of war (POW) in all US conflicts and wars combined to date since the 1941 ([U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.](#)).

Since 1950 the wars in Korean and Vietnam saw a significant increase in Americans being held as POWs. Many endured physical and mental abuse as their captors attempted to indoctrinate them or coerce statements for propaganda purposes. As a result in 1979 through a proclamation signed by President Jimmy Carter the National POW/MIA Recognition Day was established. Since then, each subsequent president has issued an annual proclamation commemorating the third Friday in September. This year the National POW/MIA Recognition Day is September 15, 2023.

The Missing Man Table ceremony is a dignified and solemn moment for all to reflect on the service and sacrifice of our Fallen or Missing. It involves a round table to signify the never-ending concern for those missing. The tablecloth is white to represent the purity of the servicemember's heart. A single rose for the loved ones left behind, and a yellow ribbon to convey the hope that their loved one will return home. A single lemon slice for the bitterness of their fate, while a pinch of salt represents that uncertainty. A glass rests turned over representing their inability to share in a toast. And a lit candle serves as a beacon for their eventual return.

Those that survived captivity as a POW and were repatriated have a unique perspective on freedom. American POWs are the only ones that truly understand what it means to have their unalienable rights stripped from them. The men and women of this country who have been forced by circumstances to become prisoners of war truly know what freedom means. They know it has not come free but rather with the heaviest of costs. For those who never returned we wait in the hopes that tomorrow's promise brings everyone home.