



How to Display the POW/MIA Flag*

The POW/MIA flag is to be flown on all of the days in which the flag of the United States of American is to be flown.

It is displayed in the following manner:

- If displayed on the same flagstaff, the POW/MIA flag should fly directly below, and be no larger than, the flag of the United States.
- If displayed on a separate flagstaff, place it at the same level or lower. If placed at the same level, place it to the right of the US Flag (on the viewer's left).
- When flying at half-staff, fly the POW/MIA flag (and any other flags) at half-staff as well.

*From the National League of Families POW/MIA

For more information or to procure a POW/MIA flag, contact the National League of POW/MIA Families at <http://www.pow-miafamilies.org/>.



BACKGROUND OF THE MIA/POW MOVEMENT

Prisoners of War (POWs) and soldiers Missing in Action (MIA) are an inevitable consequence of war. These brave men and women were ordinary people, like you and me, who were caught up in extraordinary circumstances, one of many tragedies of war.

The Vietnam War, however, was different from other wars in which the US has engaged. It was the first war in the history of the United States of America that we lost. There were no empty battlefields to search, there was no occupied territory wherein prisons and cemeteries could be searched. And, even though the Paris Peace Accords, which ended the Vietnam War, required the return of all POWs, as time passed there was a growing suspicion that not all POWs had been released. At the time the POWs were released, approximately 2500 servicemen were designated as Missing in Action; some 42 years later, more than 1600 were still unaccounted for.

The Vietnam POW issue grew to become a major controversy prompting congressional hearings, partisan politics, the production of major motion pictures and the formation of a number of POW organizations. Some 20 years later, a News Poll revealed that 69% of Americans still believed that US POWS were still being held in Indochina.

The POW/MIA flag was created for the National League of Families POW/MIA and officially recognized by the US Congress in conjunction with the Vietnam POW/MIA issues. Congress deemed it "as a symbol of our Nation's concern and commitment to resolving as fully as possible the fates of Americans still imprisoned, missing and unaccounted for in SE Asia, thus ending the uncertainty for their families and the Nation."

The flag was designed to be intentionally ambiguous. Although the official US government position was that there was no compelling evidence to prove any American remained alive in captivity in SE Asia, the flag was designed so as to imply that personnel listed as MIA may in fact be held captive.



The POW/MIA flag was first flown over the White House in September 1982. The colors of the flag have sometimes been altered, and the POW/MIA has at times been revised to MIA/POW, but the message has always remained the same, "You Are Not Forgotten."

GRASSROOTS SUPPORT FOR MIAs/POWs.



While WW II was the largest war, Vietnam was the longest war in which the US was involved. In the early 1970s an organization called VIVA (Voices in a Vital America) launched the first public awareness campaign for POW/MIAs. VIVA aimed to gain publicity for the POW/MIAs through the distribution of bracelets. These bracelets were engraved with the name of an MIA or POW serviceman, rank and date of loss. The supporter was to wear the bracelet until the POW or MIA was accounted for or brought home.

Interest in these bracelets continued to grow first among the student activists and protestors and soon by the wives and parents of POWs/MIAs. These wives, children, parents, siblings and relatives of POW, MIA and killed in action servicemen were members of an organization called the National League of Families. With the profits from the bracelets, the group purchased bumper stickers and buttons to publicize the POW/MIA issue. With the Vietnam War having ended, VIVA disbanded in 1976 and the League of Families took up the POW/MIA issues.

THE POW/MIA FLAG



The POW/MIA flag was created in 1971 under the auspices of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia. League Member Mary Hoff, whose Navy pilot husband had been missing for a year, proposed the idea of creating a flag as the group's symbol. Evelyn Grubb, wife of a POW, oversaw the development of the Flag. The job of designing the flag was given to graphic artist Newton F. Heisley.

Heisley himself had served in WW II as a transport pilot and was awarded the Bronze Medal for his service. Once getting the assignment, he sketched three possible designs. The one he chose had the profile of a gaunt man, a guard tower and a strand of barbed wire. He modeled the silhouette after his 24-year-old son who was recovering from hepatitis. Below the sketch stitched on a banner were the words "You are not forgotten."

POW/MIA MILESTONES

September 1982 - POW/MIA flag flown over White House

March 9, 1989 - WH flag installed in Capitol rotunda

August 10, 1990 - Congress passes US Public Law 101-355, which recognizes the League's POW/MIA flag as a National Symbol.

November 1997 - 1998 Defense Authorization Act specifies the POW/MIA flag be flown on Armed Services Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, National POW/MIA Recognition Day and Veterans Day.

October 2017 - State of Maryland begins flying the flag outside of government buildings.

November 7, 2019 - The National POW/MIA Flag Act was signed into law, requiring the POW/MIA Flag to be flown on certain federal properties, including the US Capitol Building on all days the US Flag is flown.