

# The Missing

by

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“**Non sibi sed patriae**”  
not for self but country

“God and the soldier all men adore In time of trouble—and no more, For when war is over, and all things righted, God is neglected—and the old soldier slighted.”

*Unknown poem found in an old sentry box in Gibraltar*

Every day, America’s service members selflessly put their lives on the line to keep us safe and free. But like a tool, no longer needed, we put these dedicated people on a shelf, to rust and decay until they are needed again. This is such an ugly analogy, but it describes how shameful our lack of care and caring for our servicemen, veterans, and those missing in action actually is.

In the past 8 decades the US has fought in more than 30 conflicts or wars. In that time, as of May 22, 2023, **more than 81,000** Americans remain missing from WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and the Gulf Wars/other conflicts.

(<https://www.dpaa.mil/Our-Missing/Past-Conflicts/>).

We call these missing Americans, MIAs – Missing In Action. Becoming MIA has always been an occupational risk for as long as there are wars. They may have been killed, wounded, captured, executed, or deserted. Typically, after an MIA is missing for at least 2 years he/she is declared dead. However such a declaration does not bring closure to those who are left behind, the mothers and fathers, the wives and children, the friends and relatives.

At this point we should take a look at our constitution and what it says.

“We **the People of the United States**, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, **provide for the common defense**, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Note the two highlighted phrases – “We the people ...provide for the common defense” This means that we are to have a standing army. However, it wasn’t until 1940, when Congress enacted the “Selective Training and Service Act,” commonly known as “the Draft” that citizens were required to perform military duty. However since 1973, US has relied on a military comprised solely of volunteers. In 1980, President Carter unsuccessfully attempted to reinstate the draft, but was defeated by the House Democrats.

Let’s now look at what our founding father had to say about service to country:

“It may be laid down as a primary position, and the basis of our system, that every Citizen who enjoys the protection of a free Government, owes not only a proportion of his property, but even of his personal services to the defense of it...”  
George Washington

In essence, Washington said that every citizen owes personal service in defending our nation. While the majority of citizens are not willing to serve their country, they certainly enjoy its freedoms and protection. However, there should be recompense by supporting our democracy and those who serve to protect its freedoms and rights.

At the same time, some do not honor our military personnel, veterans, or MIAs as they should. National holidays, like Memorial Day, that are set aside to honor those who have given of themselves to protect our nation and its people are viewed as holidays with parties, vacations, and food and drink. That says a lot about us, and our morals and ethics.

Less than 1% of today’s adults serve in our military. That is a dismal number when you consider that 61% of the population is between the ages of 18 to 64 and 35.9% are between 18-44 years of age (Wikipedia). While there are many factors for this low percentage, the largest is that there is little desire to serve our nation. Since there is this lack of desire, it is no wonder that finding and identifying our MIAs is not high on any priority list.

The DOD has approximately 600 service members and civilians (0.03% of military & civilian employees) researching and deploying to recover the remains of our MIAs. While the best approach to identifying MIAs remains is through DNA analysis, most of the identification is based on items found with the remains.

In 2022, 160 MIAs were accounted for (identified and family notified). This number however could be increased if DOD’s Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) had a larger civilian DNA database to compare to unidentified remains. The problem,

however, with such a database, are the legal implications. The government cannot mandate such a database and DNA collection has to be voluntary. . Beyond this, there are no concerted programs to advertise for this effort. As a result, most next of kin aren't even aware how their DNA can be used to identify MIAs related to them.

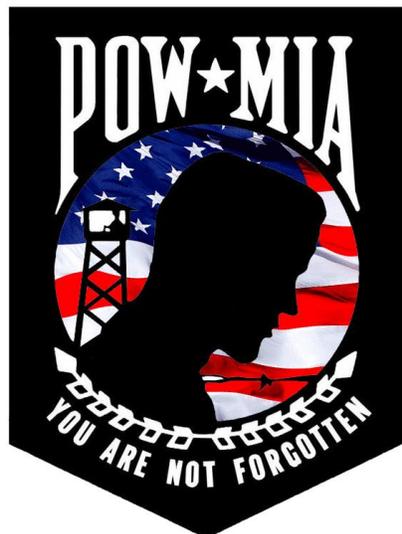
The quest to identify MIA remains is difficult at best. However, it can be made easier with the cooperation of various organizations and families that have a member who has been declared MIA.

- Organizations such as
- Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW),
- American Legion,
- AMVETS, and
- the other 100+ veterans' service organizations

can play an important role by conducting informational campaigns at each "post" to inform their local communities about our missing brothers and sisters in arms.

As part of these campaigns, the posts can encourage families of a deceased MIAs to provide their DNA to DPAA (<https://www.dpaa.mil/>).

### Initiate **Operation Bring Them Home**



73,515 from World War II  
7,841 from the Korean War  
1,626 from Vietnam  
126 from the Cold War

6 from conflicts since 1991