



**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES
OF AMERICAN PRISONERS AND MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

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HISTORY OF THE POW/MIA FLAG

(Revised August 18th 2020)

In 1970, MIA wife and member of the National League of POW/MIA Families, Mrs. Michael Hoff, recognized the need for a symbol of our POW/MIAs. Prompted by an article in the Jacksonville, FL, *Times-Union*, Mrs. Hoff contacted Norman Rivkees, Vice President of Annin & Company, which had made a banner for the newest member of the United Nations, the People's Republic of China (PRC), as part of their policy to provide flags of all UN member states. Mrs. Hoff found Mr. Rivkees very supportive of POW/MIA accounting efforts; he and contracted employee Newt Heisley came up with our Vietnam War POW/MIA flag design.

After the League's Board of Directors approved the design on January 22-23, 1972, POW/MIA flags were manufactured for distribution. To ensure the widest possible dissemination and use of this symbol to advocate for improved treatment for America's POWs and answers on our MIAs, no trade mark or copy-right was sought. As a result, extensive use of the League's POW/MIA flag is not restricted legally. The large volume of commercial production and sales required to meet demands of federal and state laws does not benefit the League financially.

The importance of the POW/MIA flag lies in its visibility as a constant reminder of America's UNRETURNED VETERANS. Other than "Old Glory," our POW/MIA flag is the only flag ever to fly over the White House, first displayed in this place of honor by President Ronald Reagan on National POW/MIA Recognition Day, 1982.

On March 9, 1989, an official League flag – flown over the White House on National POW/MIA Recognition Day 1988 – was installed in the US Capitol Rotunda after legislation passed overwhelmingly during the 100th Congress. In a demonstration of further bipartisan Congressional support, the leadership of both Houses hosted the installation ceremony, at which Ann Mills-Griffiths, then League Executive Director, now Chairman of the Board/CEO, delivered remarks representing the POW/MIA families.

The League's POW/MIA flag is the *only* flag ever displayed in the US Capitol Rotunda where it stands as a powerful symbol of America's determination to account for US personnel still missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. On August 10, 1990, the 101st Congress passed bipartisan legislation and President George H.W. Bush signed PL 101-355, recognizing our POW/MIA flag and designating it *"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 in Southeast Asia, thus ending the uncertainty for their families and the Nation"*.

On November 7, 2019, President Donald J. Trump signed PL 116-67, amending Title 36, Section 2 (Days on Which the POW/MIA Flag is Displayed on Certain Federal Property), and Subsection 902(c) (Days for Flag Display). For the purposes of these sections, POW/MIA flag display days are all days on which the flag of the United States is displayed. The Federal property locations where the POW/MIA flag must be displayed in a manner visible to the public are: The US Capitol; the White House; the WWII Memorial; the Korean War Veterans Memorial; the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial; each national cemetery; buildings containing the offices of the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Veterans Affairs; office of the Director of the Selective Service System; each major military installation as designated by the Secretary of Defense; each Veterans Affairs medical center; and each office of the US Postal Service. Most states have adopted similar laws as have local governments nationwide.

Public Law 116-67 designates the League's POW/MIA flag *"as the symbol of the Nation's concern and commitment to achieving the fullest possible accounting of Americans who, having been prisoners of war or missing in action, still remain unaccounted for; and . . . Americans who in the future may become prisoners of war, missing in action, or otherwise unaccounted for as a result of hostile action."*

LEAGUE POLICY ON POW/MIA FLAG DISPLAY was adopted at the League's 32nd Annual Meeting in June 2001. Members present overwhelmingly passed the following resolution: *"Be it RESOLVED that the National League of POW/MIA Families strongly recommends that state and municipal entities fly the POW/MIA flag daily to demonstrate continuing commitment to the goal of the fullest possible accounting of all personnel not yet returned to American soil."*