

Remarks by  
General James E. Cartwright  
Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff  
September 18, 2009  
Pentagon Ceremony  
National POW/MIA Recognition Day

Thank you to all for attending this important event. We come together to recognize the sacrifice of those taken prisoner and to acknowledge those still missing.

As we conduct this ceremony, our thoughts are never far from those who make these sacrifices for our freedom.

Thank you to those participating in the ceremony today. By sharing your talents, you are honoring your missing comrades in your own special way.

To the families of the missing who are here today. We cannot fully understand your experience, but are committed to bringing you resolution.

We welcome Admiral Denton and his family. Sir, your story provides an outstanding example of integrity and loyalty to our country. Your actions serve as a beacon for all of us to follow.

Families who send their loved ones into harm's way, do so with the expectation that our nation will do all it can to bring them home. We must maximize our efforts to meet this expectation.

As the Department continues its efforts toward full accounting, let us remember to act with unity of effort, as we establish and maintain the international relations that are critical to success.

Our efforts must be transparent, not only to strengthen public trust but also to honor our fallen comrades. Full transparency will also foster enhanced relationships with the families, and our veteran's service organizations.

Advancements in forensics technology -- some recently realized, and some yet to be discovered -- motivate us toward greater progress. The identification process is difficult and often lengthy, but we can be encouraged that these emerging technologies will speed along our efforts.

Our lessons learned from past conflicts provide opportunities to improve accounting efforts for the future. We are committed to planning for the future intelligently, and be mindful of the need for experienced personnel to transfer their knowledge to the next generation.

When circumstance calls for family notification and acceptance, our service casualty teams will continue to act with grace and dignity.

Today, we are a nation at war. And our country's bravest young men and women continue to be exposed to war's dangers.

Over 200 years ago, General George Washington said, "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in war, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by our nation."

A key part of that treatment relates to our efforts to account for our missing and recover our prisoners.

As we recommit to never loose focus on the past, let us hope that the future list of missing is short, and the future tenure of those taken prisoner, is as short as possible.

Ladies and Gentleman, I thank you again for your attendance at today's ceremony.

I would now like to introduce, the Secretary of Defense, Secretary Gates