

CITIZENSHIP DAY AND  
CONSTITUTION WEEK**HON. JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR.**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, September 21, 2001*

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, although we were not in regular session this past Monday, I would like to remind my Colleagues that September 17th was Citizenship Day and that this week is Constitution Week. The tragic events of the past week should remind us just how important our Citizenship and our Constitution are and what they mean to each and everyone of us.

This year's observances of Citizenship Day and Constitution Week come as we mourn for those who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks of September 11th. The National Conference on Citizenship urges every American to honor the victims by working constructively within our democratic process, so the United States will remain the world's foremost defender of freedom and a beacon of tolerance toward all men and women of good will.

The National Conference of Citizenship was founded in 1946 to sustain the unity of purpose that had bound together all Americans during World War II. In 1953, Congress granted this Conference a Charter that charged the organization "To encourage ever more effective participation in citizenship activities and to promote a spirit of cooperation on the part of all citizens."

Given the events of the past week, let us rededicate ourselves to this purpose. We are about to enter a period of our history that will perhaps be as important to our freedom as were the trials and tribulations of World War II. Over the past few days, we have seen how all our lives are bound together. Today, let all Americans continue to express this newfound sense of unity of purpose that we have not seen since World War II and remember that we are a nation of laws and principle.

## POW/MIA DAY 2001

**HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, September 21, 2001*

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring to my colleague's attention that tomorrow has been designated as National POW/MIA Day for 2001. This is an annual commemoration, designated by the President, for Americans to remember the sacrifices of those armed service-members who were captured in wartime, and those whose ultimate fate remains unknown.

Our nation fought four major conflicts in the 20th century. In those wars, over 142,000 Americans were taken prisoner-of-war. Those servicemen and women experienced numerous hardships and treatment which could often be described only as barbaric during the course of captivity. Those Americans imprisoned by the Japanese during World War II faced the worst possible conditions in captivity and were firsthand witnesses to the utter depravity of their fellow men. Americans imprisoned in North Korea and Southeast Asia suffered similar treatment.

The vast majority of these individuals, ore than 134,000, were eventually returned to U.S. control. However, more than 17,000 did not come home, and joined the ranks of the missing-in-action. According to the Congressional research service, over 88,000 Americans remain unaccounted for from 20th century wars. The bulk of these, 78,794, are remains not recovered from World War II. Approximately 1,600 Americans remain missing from the first World War, and more than 8,100 individuals remain missing from the Korean War. Korean War figures have been notoriously inaccurate, and of this aforementioned figure, "only" 2,195 cases exist where death was not witnessed or otherwise well-documented. Regarding the Vietnam War, 1,956 Americans remain missing from that conflict, of which the defense department believes 657 are definitely dead, including 459 who were lost at sea or over water.

I have been a strong advocate of an accounting of our POW/MIA's since I first came to the Congress in 1973. I was introduced to the issue through the experience of two friends and constituents, George and Gladys Brooks, who had lost their son in Vietnam. They were early members of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, an advocacy group for the families that continues to play a key role in this issue to this day. At the time, the POW/MIA issue did not resonate with the American public, who wanted to forget the whole Vietnam experience as soon as possible. Along with like-minded colleagues in the House, I sought to work closely with the National League of Families to raise the profile of the POW/MIA issue with the American people and force the Department of Defense to adopt a sustained policy of seeking a full accounting for all those individuals who did not come home, especially with those who were last known to be alive in captivity.

From 1975-77, I served as a member of the Montgomery Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia, a body which held numerous hearings on the issue of whether live Americans were left behind in our Exodus from Vietnam. Subsequent to this, I co-chaired the House Select task force on this issue with my former colleague from Virginia, Lester Wolf. During this time, I made numerous trips to Southeast Asia, beginning with a trip to Hanoi in 1975.

In 1995, I introduced H.R. 945, The Missing Service Personnel Act of 1995, which was eventually incorporated into the Defense Authorization Act for FY '96. Included in this legislation was language which required the Secretary of Defense to centralize the responsibility for search and rescue operations under one office; instruct the Secretary to establish procedures for dealing with the families of missing persons by protecting the interests of the families; and provide a means by which the families of MIA's can express their concerns and questions about the missing family member. It also called for greater consultation between DOD and family members, and incorporated provisions create accountability and punishment for those in DOD who refuse to follow the law in this area.

Many of the good provisions in the bill were stripped out at the request of DOD in the House/Senate conference on the following year's authorization bill. The bulk of these, however, were overwhelmingly restored by the House in the FY 98 Defense Authorization bill.

Two years ago, I introduced legislation to declassify all of the classified documents from these hearings that were in the possession of the national archives. This resolution, which the House adopted unanimously, made available hundreds of formerly secret documents, allowing family members and academic researchers the opportunity to review previously unavailable material, which might eventually help with securing a final resolution for some MIA cases.

Permit me to focus special recognition on those POW/MIA's from Korea and Vietnam. Despite the prior administration's best assurances to the contrary, many of us in Congress remained unconvinced that the governments of North Korea and Vietnam have been fully cooperating with the united states on this issue. Regrettably, by normalizing relations with Vietnam, I believe that we have withdrawn our leverage over the Vietnamese government on this issue.

It bears noting that we have made some progress. Since the end of the war, 586 sets of remains have been returned from Vietnam, with 285 returned since 1991. However, despite an official position to the contrary, U.S. government efforts on the POW/MIA issue have traditionally focused on remains recovery, with little, if any, emphasis on the live Americans issue. In fact, in answers to questions I posed in hearings on recovery efforts back in 1996, Clinton administration officials admitted that the discussion of live American prisoners was not even on the agenda when U.S. officials met with their North Korean, Vietnamese, or Laotian counterparts. Rather, they preferred to focus solely on the issue of remains recovery as a measurement of cooperation on the MIA issue from those countries.

The U.S. government, particularly the last administration, has often appeared to equate activity on recovery efforts, regardless of any subsequent results, with progress on the issue. This is not an insignificant point, the Defense Department has expended a substantial amount of money on remains recovery over the past decade, which begs the following question. Are North Korea, Vietnam and Laos truly interested in bilateral cooperation on this issue, or are they using it as a source of badly needed hard currency?

This is especially pertinent concerning the case of North Korea. According to the Congressional research Service, 208 sets of remains were repatriated from North Korea between 1990-96, and 107 sets since 1996 when joint exhumation efforts began. During the period of

Given that only eight sets of remains have been identified as U.S. soldiers, although ten more appear to be so, we have in effect been paying the North Koreans \$400,000 per body, an outrageous sum and certainly not evidence of North Korean "cooperation."

While the Vietnamese were not quite so brazen in their profiteering on the MIA issue, there is considerable evidence that they maintained a mortuary storehouse of sorts of U.S. remains, and doled these out over time. Most analysts, including those at the Library of Congress, agree that if this did occur, the supply of stored bodies was depleted in the early 1990s.