

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY

FRIDAY, JULY 20, 1984

Today is a special kind of memorial day, a day of somber reflection made more significant this year with the entombment at the Arlington National Cemetery of an Unknown Soldier of the Vietnam War. While this soldier will be laid to rest, we must never lay to rest our efforts to gain a full accounting of those still missing in action or prisoners of war in southeast Asia.

American POWs and MIAs are not forgotten heroes. They symbolize the kind of devotion that has repeatedly proven instrumental in shaping our nation's destiny. This country can never forget nor fail to honor those who have so courageously earned our highest regard.

There is another group that requires our admiration and respect -- the families of those prisoners of war and those missing in action. For them, the nightmare lives on while the hope remains. The families of those 2,500 men missing in southeast Asia have suffered greatly. While the U.S. is committed to the fullest possible POW/MIA accounting, we must never forget our obligation to their families. Though it has been nearly ten years since we disengaged from Vietnam, the American people still feel a special bond with those families who are missing loved ones. In a real sense, they have become part of our extended American family.

While our efforts to gain a full accounting goes on, it is quite appropriate that the Congress take time to honor our POWs/MIAs. Last year, the Congress approved an amendment to the fiscal year 1984 defense authorization, to authorize a special commemorative medal to be awarded to those American personnel still missing, or otherwise unaccounted for in southeast Asia, and to be presented to their families. In honor of those Kansans who are still missing in southeast Asia, I have invited members of the Kansas Congressional delegation to participate in a commemorative medal ceremony. The tentative date is Friday, July 27.

For relatives of America's missing service members, the continuing U.S. military effort to locate, identify and bring home the remains of MIAs should serve as a confirmation that their sacrifices have not been forgotten.