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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SENATE FLOOR STATEMENT:

CONCERN FOR P.O.W.'S, M.I.A.'S ON MEMORIAL DAY

On Memorial Day we pause to honor the memory of those who died in the fight for freedom for our country and our way of life. This commemoration of our dead servicemen originated on the 25th of April, 1866, when the Daughters of the Confederacy at Columbus, Mississippi, decorated the graves of Federal and Confederate troops alike. Today, we pay honor, not only to those soldiers killed in the tragic War Between the States, but to all Americans who have given their lives that we may enjoy freedom.

During the lifetime of our Nation more than one million men and women have lost their lives defending her borders and her ideals. Their sacrifice has made America free, but it is now our job, our responsibility, to keep America free.

Today, as often in the past, there is unrest in America. We have been engaged in a war in Southeast Asia since 1962, a long and difficult war. Many have doubts and reservations about this war --- as I do myself. But, American involvement in Vietnam is ending. President Nixon promised de-escalation of our involvement in Southeast Asia, and he is keeping that promise. And, he is keeping that promise in such a way that those who answered America's call during this time of crisis will not have spent their lives in vain. The heroism and courage of those men and women has not been wasted in the war in Vietnam.

During this Memorial Day as we honor our fallen heroes, it is proper that we think of another group of heroic men who have given and sacrificed a great deal for America. I speak of those who now languish in enemy prison camps.

As American involvement in the war is wound down, more attention is being focused on the plight of the 1,600 American servicemen who are held captive or who are listed as missing in action in North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. President Nixon has consistently urged the release of these prisoners and has repeatedly stressed the United States' desire for the immediate release of all prisoners by all parties to the the conflict. However, every proposal including the recent Swedish initiative to provide for internment of prisoners in a neutral country has been categorically rejected by the North Vietnamese.

Nonetheless, we must continue to do everything possible to obtain the freedom of these men. We must show by our resolution that we stand ever ready to support them as they stood ready to defend us.

And so on this Memorial Day as we honor our dead, let us also remember those who still live and who need our continuing and determined support. Let us unite to give them the support they so justly deserve. And let us resolve that they shall not be forgotten by their fellow citizens. And let us make our concern a living memorial to their sacrifice and an end to their imprisonment.