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# Presidential Documents

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Title 3—

Proclamation 6983 of April 8, 1997

The President

National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

## A Proclamation

Throughout the annals of American military history, our men and women in uniform have placed themselves in great peril for the benefit of our Nation. Many of these courageous guardians of our freedoms have been held against their will as prisoners of war. The American people, including those now serving in our Armed Forces, continue to hold in the highest esteem these men and women who suffered the loss of their personal freedom and, in some instances, their lives.

Although there is no threat of a major conflict in our immediate future, we face continuing military challenges, and our Armed Forces still deploy “in harm’s way” to maintain American interests and stability throughout the world. Whether attempting to keep the peace in Bosnia, evacuating American citizens from Albania, or patrolling the world’s seas and skies, our service men and women risk capture by unfriendly foreign forces.

American prisoners of war have always proudly struggled for their freedom and have demonstrated a profound dedication to their country. Although international law, as set forth in the Geneva Convention, confers a protected status on prisoners of war, many Americans faced difficult conditions, including torture, but they persevered, taking comfort in their love of God, family, and country. We can never know the extent of the brutality and hardships many of them encountered, but we can express our sincere admiration for their courage and bravery.

As we observe National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, we honor and recognize all American service personnel who endured detention or captivity in the service of their Nation. We take comfort in knowing that despite enduring daily physical and mental trials, many survived and returned to productive lives at home. But we remember and pay homage and respect to those who made the ultimate sacrifice while in enemy hands. Today, we enjoy the freedoms that generations of American men and women have fought to defend. Let us extend to Americans who were prisoners of war, and to their families, our profound gratitude for their unselfish contribution to the preservation of our country. We will never forget.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 9, 1997, as National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day. I call upon all Americans to join in remembering former American prisoners of war who suffered the hardships of enemy captivity. I also call upon Federal, State, and local government officials and private organizations to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies, programs, and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

*William Clinton*

[FR Doc. 97-9475

Filed 4-9-97; 8:45 am]

Billing code 3195-01-P