

H. Res. 360

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

February 12, 1998.

Whereas participation by United States Armed Forces in combat operations in Southeast Asia during the period from 1964 through 1972 resulted in as many as 8,000 United States servicemen being taken prisoner by enemy forces;

Whereas the first such United States serviceman taken as a prisoner of war, Navy Lt. Commander Everett Alvarez, was captured on August 5, 1964;

Whereas following the Paris Peace Accords of January 1973, 591 United States prisoners of war were released from captivity;

Whereas the return of these prisoners of war to United States control and to their families and comrades was designated Operation Homecoming;

Whereas many United States servicemen who were taken prisoner as a result of ground or aerial combat in Southeast Asia have not returned to their loved ones and their fate remains unknown;

Whereas United States prisoners of war in Southeast Asia were routinely subjected to brutal mistreatment, including beatings, torture, starvation, and denial of medical attention;

Whereas United States prisoners of war were held in a number of facilities, the most notorious of which was Hoa Loa Prison in downtown Hanoi, dubbed the “Hanoi Hilton” by the prisoners held there;

Whereas the hundreds of American prisoners held in the Hanoi Hilton and other facilities persevered under terrible conditions;

Whereas the prisoners were frequently isolated from each other and prohibited from speaking to each other;

Whereas the prisoners nevertheless, at great personal risk, devised a means to communicate with each other through a code transmitted by tapping on cell walls;

Whereas then-Commander James B. Stockdale, United States Navy, who upon his capture on September 9, 1965, became the senior POW officer present in the Hanoi Hilton, delivered to his men a message that was to sustain them during their ordeal, as follows: “Remember, you are Americans. With faith in God, trust in one another, and devotion to your country, you will overcome. You will triumph.”;

Whereas among the prisoners held in the Hanoi Hilton was then-Major Sam Johnson, United States Air Force, now a Representative in Congress from Texas, who was shot down on April 16, 1966, while flying his 25th mission over North Vietnam and while a prisoner conducted himself with such valor as to be labeled by the enemy as a die-hard resister and, notwithstanding the tremendous suffering inflicted upon him, continually demonstrated an unfailing devotion to duty, honor, and country, and who during his military career was awarded two Silver Stars, two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross,

one Bronze Star with Valor, two Purple Hearts, four Air Medals, and three Outstanding Unit awards, who retired from active duty in 1979 in the grade of colonel, and who personifies the verse in Isaiah 40:31 “They shall mount with wings as eagles”;

Whereas among the prisoners held in the Hanoi Hilton was then-Captain Pete Peterson, United States Air Force, a former Representative in Congress from Florida who is now serving, in a distinguished manner, as the United States Ambassador to Vietnam, who was shot down on September 10, 1966, and while a prisoner conducted himself with valor and, notwithstanding the tremendous suffering inflicted upon him, continually demonstrated an unfailing devotion to duty, honor, and country, and who during his military career was awarded two Silver Stars, one Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, three Bronze Stars with V Devices, two Purple Hearts, six Air Medals, one Air Force Commendation Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal with eight devices, and one Meritorious Service Medal, and who retired from active duty in 1981 in the grade of colonel;

Whereas the men held as prisoners of war during the Vietnam conflict truly represent all that is best about America;

Whereas the 25th anniversary of Operation Homecoming begins on February 12, 1998; and

Whereas the Nation owes a debt of gratitude to these patriots for their courage and exemplary service: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its gratitude for, and calls upon all Americans to reflect upon and show their gratitude for, the courage and sacrifice of the brave men, including particularly Sam Johnson of Texas and Pete Peterson of Florida, who were held as prisoners of war during the Vietnam conflict;

(2) urges States and localities to honor the courage and sacrifice of those brave men with appropriate ceremonies and activities; and

(3) acting on behalf of all Americans, will not forget that more than 2,000 members of the United States Armed Forces remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam conflict and will continue to press for a final accounting for all such service members whose fate is unknown.

Attest:

Clerk.