

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



FORMER AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR (POWs) **Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Planning, and Preparedness (OPP&P)**

Robert E. Klein, Ph.D., Office of the Actuary, OPP&P,
Michael R. Wells, M.S., Office of Data Management and Analysis, OPP&P,
Janet Somers, B.A., Office of Data Management and Analysis, OPP&P

April 2005

***FORMER AMERICAN
PRISONERS OF WAR (POWs)***

"The men and women who suffered through the atrocious conditions of internment deserve our utmost gratitude and respect. Their fortitude serves as an example of placing the ideals of freedom and self-government above one's own interests..."

President George W. Bush, from his first
Proclamation of National POW/MIA Recognition Day, April 2, 2001

Introduction

This report is based on original official battle reports and records on casualties, POWs and MIAs for WW I, WW II and Korea. Estimates of surviving WW II and Korean Conflict POWs alive at the end of calendar year 2004 are based on estimated male veteran deaths and population by period of service for that year (Source: VA Office of the Actuary, VetPop2004, Version 1.0, December 2004). For POWs of the Vietnam period, counts of surviving POWs alive at the end of 2004 are based as much as possible on records of individuals kept and followed under various auspices (please see acknowledgments and sources at the end of this report). Because the Defense POW/MIA Personnel Office (DPMO) does not officially keep track of the status of ALL repatriated POWs, this report assumes those of periods after Vietnam were alive at the end of 2004.

A comparison of data and estimates from the end of calendar years 2003 and 2004 shows notably that during 2004:

- The estimated number of living POWs decreased from nearly 36,000 to about 32,500, caused mainly by estimated death rates for WW II and Korean POWs of about ten percent and four percent, respectively.
- There were four reported deaths among Vietnam POWs, reducing their number from 591 to 587.
- Progress continued on reducing the number classified as missing in action (MIA) in Vietnam, from 1,858 to 1,842.

AMERICAN FORMER POWs

From

WORLD WAR I, WORLD WAR II, KOREA, VIETNAM, GULF WAR (DESERT STORM), SOMALIA, BOSNIA, KOSOVO, AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ

Table 1. SUMMARY OF ALL WARS

	Captured and Interned	Died While POW	Returned to U.S. Military Control	Refused to Return	Alive at end of 2004
GRAND TOTAL	142,246	17,009	125,214	21	32,550 ^(a)
WW I	4,120	147	3,973	--	--
WW II	130,201	14,072	116,129	--	29,850 ^(b)
Korea	7,140	2,701	4,418	21 ^(c)	-2,100 ^(b)
Vietnam	725	64	661	--	587
Gulf War (Desert Storm)	47 ^(d)	25 ^(d)	21 ^(d)	--	21 ^(d)
Somalia	1	--	1	--	1 ^(e)
Kosovo	3	--	3	--	3 ^(e)
Bosnia	--	--	--	--	--
Iraq	9 ^(f)	--	8	--	8 ^(f)

^(a) Number rounded to nearest 50.

^(b) Number alive at end of 2004 is based on mortality estimates derived from VA Office of Actuary data and rounded to nearest 50. Because of the advanced age of WW I veterans, estimates of those alive at end of 2004 would be too unreliable to report. However, the number might be zero. Estimated death rates in 2004 for "WW II only" and all "Korean War only" male veterans are used to estimate living POWs of WW II and the Korean War, respectively.

^(c) While initially 21 Korean Conflict POWs refused repatriation, only one remained in China, one died and 19 left China for Western countries.

^(d) The DPMO lists 47 captives (including Navy Captain Michael Scott Speicher, who is listed as "missing/captured"). Of the 47, 25 are listed as killed in action (the remains of 2 have not been returned because they were in aircraft lost at sea), and 21 were repatriated. The 25 killed in action are listed here as died while POW. Since DOD indicates that it does not officially maintain contact with ALL living POWs, it cannot say for certain how many are still alive. The assumption for this report is that those of this era were still alive at the end of 2004. Captain Speicher is not included in the number alive at the end of 2004, but this in no way is meant to suggest anything about his status.

^(e) The assumption for this report is that those of this era were alive at the end of 2004.

^(f) This number in the first column includes Spc. Keith Mathew Maupin, who is listed as "missing/captured." The number in the last column pertains only to those who were returned to U.S. military control; all are assumed to be alive at the end of 2004. Spc. Maupin is not included in the number, but this in no way is meant to suggest anything about his status.

Excluded from Table 1 are:

- The crew of the U.S.S. Pueblo, captured on January 23, 1968, because those captured were not considered POWs of the Vietnam War, the era in which the incident occurred. North Korea captured this naval vessel and held the entire crew as POWs. One died during captivity and 82 were held captive, including two civilians. Of the 80 military POWs that were repatriated, 70 were alive at the end of 2004.
- Merchant Marine casualties in WW II: 4,780 missing, 882 dead, including 37 POWs, and 572 released from captivity and one civilian POW accounted for. An estimated 150 were alive at the end of 2004 (applying estimated death rates of male WW II only veterans and rounding to nearest 50). Merchant Marines were granted veteran status after WW II, not during the time of their service. (Summary of Merchant Marine casualties, WW II, from U.S. Coast Guard report dated July 1, 1950.)
- Approximately 600 captured construction workers on Wake Island and American Airlines workers on Guam; an estimated 100 were alive at the end of 2004 (applying estimated death rates of male WW II only veterans and rounding to nearest 50). Construction workers on Wake Island and American Airline employees on Guam were treated as veterans for purposes of VA benefit eligibility in accordance with DOD Directive 1000.20 (P.L. 95-202).
- POWs from wars prior to WW I: during the Civil War, 220,000 were captured by the North, with 26,436 dying during confinement; 126,950 were captured by the South, with 22,576 dying during confinement. (*The Civil War*, Garden Press, New York, New York.) During the American Revolution, unofficial reports indicate up to 11,000 died during captivity, most while confined in prison ships in New York harbor.

**Table 2. WORLD WAR II POWs by Status, Branch
and Theater (for Army and Air Corps)**

	Captured and Interned	Died While POW	Returned to U.S. Military Control	Estimated Alive at End of 2004
GRAND TOTAL	130,201	14,072	116,129	29,850
Army & Air Corps – Total	124,079	12,653	111,426	28,800
European theater/ Mediterranean ^(a)	93,941	1,121	92,820	24,500 ^(b)
Pacific (Other than the Philippines)	1,885	457	1,428	350 ^(b)
Other Theaters of Operation	2,673	425	2,248	600 ^(b)
The Philippines ^(c) (Dec. 7, 1941 thru May 10, 1942)	25,580	10,650	14,930	3,350 ^(b)
Navy & Marine Corps – Total	6,122	1,419	4,703	1,050
Navy ^(d)	3,848	901	2,947	650 ^(b)
Marine Corps ^(e)	2,274	518	1,756	400 ^(b)

- (a) Includes 23,554 captured during the Battle of Bulge (Ardennes, December 16, 1944 – January 25, 1945).
- (b) The calculation uses an estimated 2004 death rate for male “WW II only” veterans and makes no distinction among WW II branches and theater with respect to death rate. Estimates of survivors are rounded to nearest 50.
- (c) Also known as the Bataan-Corregidor combat zone. Data include Filipino Scouts. U.S. Forces captured included approximately 17,000 American nationals and 12,000 Filipino Scouts. During the first year of captivity, a reported 30% of the Americans and 8% of the Filipinos died. Data are unclear as to the number of each group surviving to repatriation, but a very rough estimate would be 11,000 Americans and 4,000 Filipino Scouts. This information is based on military records developed during the war, but no accurate breakdown was made after repatriation. In addition, some 7,300 American civilian men, women, and children were involuntarily incarcerated by the Japanese in 1941 – 1942. An additional 13,000 of mixed American and Asian parentage holding American citizenship hid out during this period and were never interned.
- (d) Navy casualty data are allocated to naval vessels, not to theater of operations.
- (e) Marine Corps personnel captured in the Philippines December 1941 – May 1942 totaled 1,388. Data on numbers dying during captivity, repatriated, and still living are not available for the Philippines.

Table 3. KOREAN CONFLICT POWs by Status and Branch

	Captured and Interned	Died While POW	Returned to U.S. Military Control	Refused to Return	Estimated Alive at end of 2004 ^(a)
GRAND TOTAL	7,140	2,701	4,418	21	2,100
Army	6,656	2,662	3,973	21	1,900 ^(a)
Navy	35	4	31	--	^(b)
Marine Corps	225	31	194	--	100 ^(a)
Air Force	224	4	220	--	100 ^(a)

- (a) The calculation uses an estimated 2004 death rate for male "Korean Conflict only" veterans and makes no distinction among branches with respect to death rate. Estimates of survivors are rounded to nearest 50.
- (b) Less than 25.

Table 4. VIETNAM POWs/MIAs by Status and Branch

	Captured and Interned ^(a)	POWs Dying in Captivity	POWs Returned to U.S. Military Control	POWs Alive at End of 2004	MIAs	
					Remains Returned	Still MIA ^(b)
GRAND TOTAL	725	64	661 ^(c)	587	741 ^(d)	1,842
Army	168	29	139	119	125 ^(d)	585
Navy	160	9	151	135	155 ^(d)	379
Marine Corps	46	8	38	32	66 ^(d)	234
Air Force	351	18	333	301	383 ^(d)	610
Coast Guard	--	--	--	--	1 ^(d)	0
Civilians	--	--	65 ^(c)	--	14 ^(d)	34

- (a) Includes "POWs Dying in Captivity" plus "POWs Returned to U.S. Military Control".
- (b) Source: DPMO, *Vietnam-Era Unaccounted for Statistical Report*, 1-7-05, p.1. At the conclusion of hostilities, League of Families data indicated 2,583 were classified as MIAs (including 48 civilians).
- (c) Civilians are not included in grand total for this column. Source of data: www.NAMPOWS.org.
- (d) The sum of MIA "Remains Returned" by branch, including civilians, is 3 more than the grand total shown. The source of the branch data is DPMO, *U.S. Unaccounted-For from the Vietnam War* for each branch, 3-22-05, whereas the source for the total is the DPMO report cited in footnote b above.

Gulf War (Desert Storm)

The total number of American servicemen captured was 21 and all were immediately repatriated when hostilities ceased. See Table 1, note (d) for more details. Source: DPMO web site (www.dtic.mil/dpmo/gulfwar.htm)

SOMALIA/BOSNIA/KOSOVO

One U.S. serviceman was captured and briefly held prisoner in Somalia, none in Bosnia, and three in Kosovo.

AFGHANISTAN

No POWs / MIAs to date.

IRAQ (Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom)

9 POWs / One MIA to date.

Additional Sources

Estimated Deaths and Estimated Population for Computing Death Rates among WW II and Korean Conflict

VetPop2004 Version 1, December 2004, Washington, DC: VA Office of the Actuary.

World War II

Army Battle Casualties and Non-Battle Deaths in WWII: Final Report, 7 December 1941 – 31 December 1946, Published 1 June 1953.

Combat Connected Naval Casualties: WWII by States – 1946 UNS – MC – GC, 2 Vol. Published by Casualty Section, Navy Department.

History of Medical Department of Navy in WWII: Statistics of Diseases and Injuries, US Govt. Printing Office (*Navy Med.* P. 1318, Vol. 3).

History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in WWII: Volume V. Appendix A, Published 1968 by Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps.

Korean Conflict

DoD Public Information Release No. 1088 – 54, November 5, 1954.

DoD Tentative Final Report of U.S. Battle Casualties in the Korean War, Office of Secretary of Defense, November 4, 1954.

Vietnam Conflict (Southeast Asia)

Number of Vietnam Era POWs still alive on December 31, 2004 provided by Mike McGrath, Historian, NAM-POWs Association (www.nampows.org).

Number captured and returned to US Military Control provided by the DPMO for Desert Storm, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Updates on remaining MIAs provided by Ann Mills Griffiths, National League of Families (www.pow-miafamilies.org); and from *Subject: Vietnam Era Unaccounted for Statistical Report* as of May 21, 2004, p. 1. <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/pmsea/index.htm>.

Post-Vietnam Era Conflicts

DPMO web site: www.dtic.mil/dpmo/generalinfo.htm

USS Pueblo Incident

Don Peppard, President, USS PUEBLO Veterans Association (www.usspueblo.org)

Acknowledgements

This report continues the series of annual reports and updates on the status of Americans who were POWs during various wars. Charles A. Stenger, Ph.D., a veteran of WWII and former POW of the European theater himself, produced the series almost single-handedly from 1977 until 2003. Dr. Stenger worked at VA in the Mental Health and Behavioral Science Service from 1964 through 1980. He continued preparing the POW report long after retirement from VA. OPP&P assumed the task of updating the report in 2004 not only because OPP&P serves as a VA center for data collection, data evaluation, and analysis, but also to honor all POWs and MIAs and to acknowledge the enduring contribution of Dr. Stenger.

We are grateful to Mike McGrath of Nam-POWS Association, Ann Mills Griffiths of the League of Families, and Don Peppard of the U.S.S. Pueblo Veterans Association for their invaluable assistance and to Stephen Meskin, Chief Actuary, VA, and Mike McLendon, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, VA, for their comments and suggestions. Any shortcomings remaining are the sole responsibility of the first author.

Contacts for this Report

Rob Klein at VA, 202-273-5101, Robert.Klein@va.gov or
Mike Wells at VA, 202-273-5106, Michael.Wells@va.gov.