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**Remarks at the Unveiling Ceremony
for the POW/MIA Postage Stamp**
May 29, 1995

Thank you very much, Secretary Brown, for your remarks and for your service. Postmaster General Runyon, Senator Simpson, Congressman Bishop, Secretary and Mrs. West, General and Mrs. Shalikhshvili, to the distinguished service chiefs who are here, members of the Armed Forces, and especially to our veterans on this Memorial Day: We are proud to have you all here at the White House and honored to have the opportunity to unveil this stamp, which honors the extraordinary sacrifice of American prisoners of war and the memory of all those who never came home. It will help to ensure that all these Americans who gave so much to our freedom are never forgotten.

We are especially fortunate to have a number of former prisoners of war joining us here today. They represent a half-century of commitment to the principles that our Nation has stood for throughout the world. They embody a level of devotion and service almost unimaginable. And I am proud to recognize several of them who are here today.

Lt. Colonel Charles Prigmore was a young bombardier during World War II. On his 14th mission over Germany, his plane was shot down, and he spent a year as a POW. Today he is the national commander of the American Ex-Prisoners of War. Colonel Prigmore, would you be recognized, please? [Applause] Thank you.

Infantryman Bill Rolan fought at Anzio Beach and helped to liberate Rome. During the invasion of southern France he was captured and forced to spend the rest of the war in a slave labor camp. Mr. Rolan, welcome. [Applause] Thank you.

When the Philippines were attacked in 1941, Ruby Bradley had already been an Army nurse for 7 years. She was captured just days after Christmas, and her internment lasted until 1945. Ms. Bradley. [Applause] Thank you.

Robert Fletcher was serving in Korea in 1950 when he was captured. He spent nearly 3 years as a prisoner of the North Korean and Chinese forces before he finally could return home. Mr. Fletcher. [Applause] Thank you.

Captain Isaac Camacho, a green beret, was captured outside Saigon when his camp was overrun in 1963. He endured the jungle prisons of the Viet Cong for nearly 2 years and was one of the very few to escape and to survive. It is especially appropriate to have him here today because he is still a servant of our country; he is the U.S. Postal Service station master in El Paso, Texas. Captain Camacho [Applause] Thank you, sir.

And finally, Lt. Colonel Rhonda Cornum is a flight surgeon who served in Operation Desert Storm. On a rescue mission in Iraq her helicopter was shot down. She was badly injured, with broken arms and a gunshot wound, captured by Iraqi forces and held until the end of the fighting. Colonel Cornum. [Applause] Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, these and the others who have suffered similar fates are American heroes, among the finest and bravest individuals our Nation has ever produced. They had to bear hardships but never faltered. They inspire us still, and will for generations to come. I am pleased now that millions of Americans will be reminded every day of the extraordinary service they rendered, and all others like them rendered, by this new stamp.

On this Memorial Day, as every year, we also remember those who answered the call but never came home. Their loss is the greatest cost our Nation has paid for freedom. We can only imagine the pain their families have experienced, the grief that comes with uncertainty, the grief that comes with being denied a proper and clear grave. We know very well our obligation to them and their families to leave no stone unturned as we try to account for their fate and, if possible, to bring them home.

We have worked hard and made good progress. We have put the issue of MIA cases ahead of all others in our dealings with Vietnam. And today I am proud to say that we are receiving more cooperation from Hanoi than ever before.

A Presidential delegation headed by the Veterans Department Deputy Secretary, Hershel Gober, has just returned from Vietnam and Laos, and we believe that cooperation with both these nations will continue. Our joint investigations are moving forward, and the Vietnamese are turning over essential documents. More than 200 sets of remains have been returned since I became President. Of the nearly 200 so-called discrepancy cases, we have confirmed the fate of all but 55. And we will not stop until we have taken every possible step for every MIA and every MIA family.

I want to say a special word of appreciation to all those who have participated in this remarkable effort. There is nothing like it in all the history of warfare. Never has so much been done to get this kind of accounting. I thank the families involved, the veterans groups involved, those who have served in the active duty military as a part of this, and others who have played critical roles.

I also thank the Americans who have worked to help the Vietnamese to identify their MIA's as well. That, too, is an astonishing development in the history of warfare. And the American people are indebted to all of you who have played a role in this remarkable endeavor.

Thanks to our new relationship with Russia, we're also making progress on the MIA cases from World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, and a number of cold war incidents. The U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW-MIA's has gained access to thousands of pages of once-classified documents, conducted hundreds of interviews in Russia and in the other new independent states, received important information about the fate of American service personnel.

Those missing from the war in Korea, along with the MIA's from all our Nation's conflicts, will not be forgotten in the heart of America. Our work will go forward until we have done all there is to do. We owe it to them, to their families, and to our country to work on this until the job is done.

And we must remain true to our entire commitment to stand by all those who stood watch for freedom. Whether it is protecting benefits that veterans have earned or improving health care or breaking the cycle of de-

spair for homeless veterans or confronting the legacy of Agent Orange or getting to the bottom of Gulf war-related illnesses, we must uphold our solemn obligation to our veterans, not for a few months or for a few years but for the entire lifetime of this Nation.

And we owe it to the legacy of our veterans to protect the national security in the future. We are working hard to end the legacy of the cold war. The United States and Russia are destroying nuclear arsenals. And I am proud that for the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age, there are no nuclear weapons pointed at the children of the United States of America. I am proud that the United States and Russia joined together to secure the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, so that more and more nations will be making and keeping a promise not to develop nuclear weapons.

But we know that we have challenges from other weapons as well, from biological and chemical weapons. We must work to contain them. And we know that we have the challenge not only of nations that still seek to do us and other freedom-loving peoples harm but also from terrorists around the world and here at home who would threaten our security and our way of life.

We must stand up to all these security threats as a way of honoring those who have sacrificed and served our country. They brought us to this point, and we owe it to them to give our children the opportunities we have all enjoyed.

So on this Memorial Day, I say to all of you, we honor the sacrifices of those who never came home, the sacrifices of those who were imprisoned but came home, the sacrifices of all who gave and all who serve. God bless you all, and God bless America.

And now, for the proper unveiling of this much-deserved stamp, let me introduce our very fine Postmaster General, Mr. Marvin Runyon, and thank him again for the outstanding job he has done.

Mr. Runyon.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

**Remarks at a Memorial Day
Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia**

May 29, 1995

Thank you very much, Secretary Perry, Secretary Brown, Major General Gorden, Chaplain Cottingham, General and Mrs. Shalikhshvili and to the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their wives, to all the members of the Armed Forces who are here, and the veterans, especially to the POW's and their family members and the family members of MIA's whose sacrifice and service we honored today just a few moments ago with the unveiling of the special stamp in honor of POW's and MIA's, and of course, to Sergeant Major Rodriguez and Mrs. Rodriguez.

Sergeant Major, if you had known 50 years ago you were going to be here today and had 50 years to get ready, you could not have done any better job than you did, and we thank you. This fine American was decorated by President Roosevelt with the Purple Heart for his action in combat on Iwo Jima. He later led an honor guard for President Truman. He represents the vital ties to the past that inspires us today, and we thank him and all others for their service.

Today we feel close to that past and to all those who stood fast when our freedom was in peril 50 years ago. We remember the valiant individuals from all of our wars who fell while defending our Nation. They fought so that we might have the freedom which too many of us take for granted but, at least on this day, we know is still our greatest blessing.

At this sacred moment, we put aside all that might otherwise divide us to recall the honor that these men and women brought to their families and their communities and the glory they bestowed upon our beloved Nation. All across our great country today, in cities and towns great and small, wreaths and flags adorn our cemeteries. Friends and family members and those who simply are grateful for their liberties will gather for a parade or visit the graves of some of these heroes, tell a new generation the stories of how America was kept free and strong. We must remember to do justice to their memo-

ries. We must remember that so we can go forward.

Especially in this last year, the 50th since World War II, we Americans have remembered and paid homage to the generation that fought that great struggle in ceremonies in Normandy, at Nettuno Beach in Italy, at Cambridge Cemetery in England, the Manila Cemetery in the Philippines, the Iwo Jima Memorial here in Arlington, and in Moscow.

As we look across the gulf of time and look at the veterans of that conflict who still are among us, we continue to draw strength from their marvelous achievement. We remember anew the indomitable power of free men and women united by a just cause.

Fifty years ago today, the war in Europe was over. American armed forces worked to restore order to a wrecked continent, taking charge of shattered communities, tending to the survivors of the awful concentration camps. But the celebration of victory was short because our battle-weary Nation was shifting troops and energies from one theater to another. Little was certain. Virtually every household still had someone in uniform, and no one could say even then who would survive.

In the Pacific war, fighting raged on in the Philippines. Okinawa, the bloodiest battle in the Far East, was already almost 2 months old and far, far from over. By the time it ended on June 22, that small island would claim the lives of more than 12,000 Americans.

Still, our forces never faltered. Half a world away from their homes, far from their families, they fought for their country, their loved ones, and for the ideals that have kept this country going now for more than 200 years. They knew their mission was unparalleled in human history: to fight for freedom, for democracy, and for human dignity all the world over. In those distant places and harrowing times, ordinary people performed extraordinary deeds.

Many who fell there are now here in Arlington, in this hallowed ground. We come here to honor their sacrifice, to give them thanks for safeguarding our homes and our liberties, and for giving us another 50 years of freedom. But we also come here because we understand what they fought for. Here,