

OPENING STATEMENT FOR POW/MIA HEARING

Thank you Madam Chair. General McKeague, Secretary Winfield, and Dr. Goines, thank you for your service to our country and thank you for appearing before this panel today.

As you know, the Soldier's Creed includes the following words: "I will never leave a fallen comrade." These words that are memorized by our soldiers are just as true for our nation. Coming from a military family and as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I am determined to make sure that our nation does not waver from this vow.

That's why today's hearing is so important. We have a solemn duty to recover the remains of our service members who made the ultimate sacrifice in distant battlefields to preserve our freedoms and way of life. They have earned our enduring gratitude and stand as a lasting model of patriotism and courage for us all, and their

sacrifice has directly contributed to the freedom and safety we enjoy today. That is why it is important that we live up to the words on the POW-MIA flag: “You are not forgotten.”

According to the Defense Prisoner of War and Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), we cannot account for over 73,000 Americans who served in WWII, 8,000 in the Korean War, 125 in the Cold War, and over 1,600 in the Vietnam War. There have been 37 American POWs since 1973, and all have been returned except one, Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl. In my home state of New Hampshire, we are still waiting to learn the fate of six service members from the Vietnam War and 43 from the Korean War who remain unaccounted for.

We entrust the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command to work on behalf of the American people to fulfill our moral obligation to find and bring home the remains of American heroes who served overseas. In light of the great trust we place in you, I am

deeply disturbed by the findings of the internal review and the GAO report. Our fallen heroes deserve better, and the American people expect better. These reports raise serious questions that I hope you can answer for us today.

Thank you again for your service, and I look forward to hearing your testimony.