



## **Annual observance will take place Sept. 19; Post 19 in Arizona will continue its annual tradition of honoring those still prisoners of war or missing in action.**

September 19 is National POW/MIA Recognition Day, held each year on the third Friday of September. According to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, more than 81,000 U.S. servicemembers are unaccounted for from World War II to the present.

Through [resolution](#), The American Legion remains committed to achieving a full accounting of all U.S. servicemembers from all war eras who are either imprisoned or listed as missing in action. The organization also works to ensure that those outside of the military and veteran communities don't forget that thousands of U.S. military personnel never came home.

For years American Legion Post 19 in Yuma, Ariz., has taken on that responsibility. This year, on Sept. 19, the opportunity to share that information comes via the post's POW-MIA Recognition Breakfast, inviting the community to honor those yet to return home and learn more about why accounting for them matters.

“When this got started many years ago, it was to help educate the community in the fact there were members of their community who volunteered to serve their country and never made it back,” Post 19 Commander Walt Blakesley said. “It’s important to us that they were given the recognition they were deserving of, with the hopes that the accounting would take place to bring them back home or bring their remains back home to be properly buried.”

Information on the importance of POW-MIA Recognition Day will be shared, while Yuma High School JROTC Senior Instructor is James Branch, a retired U.S. Army major, will serve as guest speaker. The ceremony also will include the [Empty Chair Ceremony](#).

Blakesley served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1967 to 1971, including being deployed to Chu Lai Air Base in Vietnam from 1969 to 1970 in the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing. That service – and the fact more than 58,000 U.S. personnel who served in the war remain unaccounted for – brings an even bigger significance to the POW-MIA issue to him.

“I would say that’s primarily the reason why I have been involved with and continue to be involved with this ceremony,” Blakesley said. “And that’s why I still serve.”

*American Legion Family members are encouraged to share how they observe POW/MIA Recognition Day by posting stories on our Legiontown website, [www.legiontown.org](http://www.legiontown.org).*