

# American Prisoners of War WWI, WWII, Korea & Vietnam

Statistical Data Concerning Numbers  
Captured, Repatriated and Still Alive as of January 1, 1989

Prepared for the VA Advisory Committee on Former POWs  
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American Ex-Prisoners of War Association  
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Data for this report was developed in cooperation with the Department of Defense, National Research Council, National Archives and other sources. As such, it reflects consensual agreement as to the accuracy and acceptability of the information presented. Inquiries or comments should be directed to Dr. Charles A. Stenger, American Ex-Prisoners of War Association, 7425 Democracy Blvd., Bethesda, MD 20817, PH: (301)365-5452.

	ALL WARS				
	Total	WWI	WWII	Korea	Vietnam
Captured & Interned	142,227	4,120	130,201	7,140	766
Still Classified as POW	1	-	-	-	1
Died While POW	17,026	147	14,072	2,701	114
Refused Repatriation	21	-	-	21	-
Returned to US Military Control	125,171	3,973	116,129	4,418	651
Alive on Jan. 1, 1982	93,029	633	87,996	3,770	650
Alive on Jan. 1, 1989	75,812	188	71,620	3,394	610 (est.)

**NOTE:**

1. Jan. 1, 1982, data is provided since it most clearly approximates the POW population at the time PL 97-37 went into effect (Oct. 1, 1981). As of Jan. 1, 1989, the POW population has decreased through death by 17,217 (18%).

2. While not appropriate for inclusion in POW statistics, 92,693 servicemen were lost in combat and never recovered, as follows: WWI - 3,350; WWII - 78,773; Korea - 8,177; Vietnam - 2,393.

3. Data for WWII does not include U.S. Merchant Marine casualties which were 4,780 missing; 882 dead (including 37 POWs); and 572 released POWs and one POW unaccounted for. (*Summary of Merchant Marine Casualties, WWII*, from July 1, 1950, report of U.S. Coast Guard.)

4. World War II data, also, does not include construction workers and Pan American employees (from Guam) on Wake Island who, as a class, were deemed to be veterans for VA purposes in accordance with DOD Directive 1000.20 (PL 95-202). Originally, there were 1,146 of the former and 69 of the latter. An estimated 600 were evacuated. Approximately 600 in all may have been captured. An unofficial estimate of survivors until January 1, 1989, would be 240.

5. During the Civil War 220,000 were captured by the North, with 26,436 dying during confinement; and 126,950 were captured by the South, with 22,576 dying during confinement. (*The Civil War*, Garden Press, New York, New York.)

## WORLD WAR II TOTALS ARMY, AIR CORPS, NAVY AND MARINES

Captured and Interned	130,201
Died While POW	14,072
Returned to U.S. Military Control	116,129
Alive on January 1, 1982	87,996
Alive on January 1, 1989	71,620





## American Prisoners of War in World War I, World War II, Korea & Vietnam, cont'd...

### Army and Air Corps

	Total	ETO/Medit. <sup>a</sup>	Pacific	Other	Philippine Is. (12/7/41- 5/10/42) <sup>bc</sup>
Captured & Interned	124,079	93,941	27,465	2,673	(25,580)
Died While POW	12,653	1,121	11,107	425	(10,650)
Returned to U.S. Military Control	111,426	92,820	16,358	2,248	(14,930)
Alive on Jan. 1, 1982	84,753	71,736	11,280	1,737	(10,295)
Alive on Jan. 1, 1989	69,078	58,800	8,866	1,412	(8,068)

<sup>a</sup>Includes 23,554 captured during Battle of Bulge (Ardennes, Dec. 16, 1944-January 25, 1945)

<sup>b</sup>Also known as the Bataan-Corregidor combat zone. Statistics in this column are incorporated in the Pacific totals.

<sup>c</sup>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 80% of the Filipino Scouts died. Data is unclear as to the proportion 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 and 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.

### Navy and Marine Corps

	Total	Navy <sup>a</sup>	Marine Corps <sup>b</sup>
Captured & Interned	6,122	3,848	2,274
Died While POW	1,419	901	518
Returned to U.S. Military Control	4,703	2,947	1,756
Alive on Jan. 1, 1982	3,243	2,032	1,211
Alive on Jan. 1, 1989	2,542	1,590	952

<sup>a</sup>Navy casualty data related to naval vessels, not to theater of operation.

<sup>b</sup>Marine Corps personnel captured in Philippine Island December 1941-May 1942 totalled 1,388. Data on numbers dying during captivity, repatriated, and still living are not available for this theater of operations.

### KOREAN CONFLICT<sup>a/b</sup>

	Total	Army	Navy	Marine	Air Force
Captured & Interned	7,140	6,656	35	225	224
Died While POW	2,701	2,662	4	31	4
Returned to U.S. Military Control	4,418	3,973	31	194	220
Refused Repatriation	21	21	--	--	--
Alive on Jan. 1, 1982	3,770	3,390	26	166	188
Alive on Jan. 1, 1989	3,394	3,050	22	151	171

<sup>a</sup>These data indicate status through November 4, 1954. As of that date 24 were still missing. By September 15, 1955, fifteen of these men had been released and the other nine were declared dead.

<sup>b</sup>Does not include eighty-one Navy personnel who were involved in the Pueblo incident.



## American Prisoners of War in World War I, World War II, Korea & Vietnam, cont'd...

	VIETNAM				
	Total	Army	Navy	Marine	Air Force
Captured & Interned	766	179	181	48	358
Still Classified as POW	1	0	0	0	1
Died While POW	114	45	36	9	24
Returned to U.S. Military Control Prior to Jan. 27, 1973 (escaped or released)	84	57	7	12	8
Returned to U.S. Military Control After Jan. 27, 1973	567	77	138	27	325
Total Returned to U.S. Military Control	651	134	145	39	333
*Alive on Jan. 1, 1982	630*	129	140	35	326
*Alive on Jan. 1, 1989	610	126	133	34	317

\*Estimated by Charles A. Stenger, Ph.D. Based in part on individual reports of deaths of Vietnam veteran POWs. (There is no organization currently monitoring mortality data on Vietnam POWs.)

### SOURCES

#### World War II

1. *Army Battle Casualties and Non-Battle Deaths in WWII*: Final Report, 7 December 1941-31 December 1946, Published 1 June 1953.
2. *Combat Connected Naval Casualties: WWII by States - 1946 UNS - MC - CG*, 2 Vol. Published by Casualty Section, Navy Department.
3. *History of Medical Department of Navy in WWII*: Statistics of Diseases and Injuries, US Govt. Printing Office (Nav. Med. p. 1318, Vol. 3).
4. *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

1. DOD Public Information Release No. 1088 - 54, Nov. 5, 1954.
2. DOD Tentative Final Report of U.S. Battle Casualties in the Korean War. Office of Secretary of Defense, Nov. 4, 1954.

#### Vietnam Conflict (Southeast Asia)

1. Data developed by National Archives Machine Readable Division from records provided by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and verified by the POW/MIA Office in the Pentagon.

#### General

1. Estimates for number of WWI, WWII and Korean Conflict returnees alive on January 1, 1989, are provided by Robert J. Keehn, Medical Follow-up Agency, National Research Council, as follows:
  - a. For WWI, the proportion assumed to be still alive on January 1, 1989, is based on U.S. Life Tables for White Males, 1969-1971, assuming they were living on January 1, 1919, at the rate predicted by the NAC Study of WWI veterans in 1960.
  - b. For WWII, proportion alive on January 1, 1989, is based upon a recent study of mortality of POWs to January 1, 1976, (American Journal of Epidemiology, February 1980), and the application of 1978 U.S. death rates for updating to January 1, 1989.
  - c. For Korean Conflict, survival data for January 1, 1989, is based upon the sample of Korean POW in the same mortality study and the application of the same 1978 U.S. death rate tables.



# INFORMATION ON U.S. MILITARY POWS HELD BY JAPANESE IN WWII.

There were 130,201 U.S. military captured and interned in WWII. As of January 1st, 1994, 60,933 were still alive (46%). Of the total count of U.S. POWs in WWII, 33,587 were captured and interned by the Japanese. On January 1st, 1994, 9705 were still alive (28%). Here is the grim news; the comparison of those military held by Germany and Japan.

<u>U.S. Military POWs held by Nazis</u>	<u>U.S. MILITARY HELD BY JAPANESE</u>
Captured & interned - 96,614	33,587
Died While POW - 1,121 (1.1%)	12,526 (37.3%)
Alive on Jan. 1, 1994 - 50,028 (51.2%)	9,705 (28.8%)

## U.S. CIVILIANS HELD BY JAPANESE IN WWII

There were 18,745 U.S. civilians captured and interned in WWII. As of January 1st, 1994, 4864 were still alive (25.9%). Of the total civilian POWs in WWII, 13,996 were captured and interned by the Japanese. On January 1st, 1994, only 2880 were still alive (20.6%). Again, here are the grim statistics; the comparison of U.S. civilians interned by Germany versus those held by Japan.

<u>U.S. Civilians held by Nazis</u>	<u>U.S. CIVILIANS HELD BY JAPAN</u>
Captured & interned - 4749	13,996
Died While Interned - 168 (3.5%)	1536 (11%)
Alive on Jan. 1, 1994 - 1984 (41.7%)	2880 (20.6%)

### **The Center For Civilian Internee Rights, Inc.**

6060 La Gorce Dr.  
Miami Beach, FL 33140



August 1945  
Atomic bombs end WW II

## **URGENT MESSAGE ENCLOSED!**

FOR WWII - PACIFIC THEATER - **MILITARY** / **CIVILIAN**  
EX-POWS / INTERNEES / OR THIER N.O.K.

\* COMPENSATION CLAIMS AGAINST JAPAN HAS BEEN EXTENDED \*  
ALL CLAIMS/APPLICATIONS MUST BE MAILED NLT 11/1/95 TO MEET  
12/1/95 CUTOFF! PLEASE NOTIFY ALL ELIGIBLE CLAIMANTS OF THE  
NEW CUTOFF DATE!



COL CHARLES C UNDERWOOD  
5837 WINDING RIDGE  
SAN ANTONIO, TX 78239



## Never sorry enough to satisfy Japan

The Japanese as a culture seem to be big on apologies. A few years ago, the U.S. government, by act of Congress, paid compensation to Japanese-Americans interned in concentration camps during World War II.

Last year, many Japanese wanted apologies for the accidental shooting of a Japanese student in Colorado.



Samuel Francis

Now they would like yet another apology for America's dropping the atomic bomb on them in 1945, which President Clinton wisely has declined to give. Wouldn't it be nice if the Japanese apologized for something they did for a change?

Well, like what, you ask. Well, like the murder, torture and brutalization of thousands of prisoners of war, including Americans, to whom no compensation has ever been provided. Late in January, the dwindling band of Americans who enjoyed the hospitality of the Japanese during the war and who have lived to tell the tale brought a lawsuit in a Tokyo court to get such compensation.

The ex-prisoners are not confined to Americans but also include British, Australian and New Zealander prisoners, and the American chapter of their organization, the Center for Civilian Internee Rights Inc., based in Miami Beach (305-864-2558) is looking for other survivors in this country who will join the suit. Survivors of the Japanese camps, it seems, are not so easy to find.

In World War II, 130,201 American servicemen were captured and held as POWs, about 75 percent of them by the Germans and a quarter by the Japanese. Of those held by the Germans, all of 1.1 percent (a little more than a thousand) died while they were prisoners. Of those held by the Japanese, no fewer than 37 percent — 12,526 men — never came out of the camps alive.

On Jan. 1, 1994, a total of 60,933 former World War II American POWs were still living. Of those held by the Germans, more than 51 percent were still alive on that date.

Samuel Francis, a columnist for The Washington Times, is nationally syndicated. His column appears here Tuesday and Friday.

Of those held by the Japanese, less than 29 percent, less than a third, still lived. Think about those numbers. You were better off being captured by the Nazis than by the Japanese.

A book published last year, "Prisoners of the Japanese," by historian Gavin Daws, details the atrocities the Japanese reserved for white prisoners in particular. Though the Japanese captured about 180,000 Asian prisoners in their swath through Southeast Asia in 1941-42, most of these were released within a few months. Not the white prisoners.

"In the eyes of the Japanese," writes Mr. Daws, "white men who allowed themselves to be captured were despicable. They deserved to die," and the Japanese regarded them as racial inferiors who were barely human.

The Japanese "beat them until they fell, then beat them for falling, beat them until they bled, then beat them for bleeding. They denied them medical treatment. They starved them. . . . They sacrificed prisoners in medical experiments. They watched them die by the tens of thousands. . . . If the war had lasted another year, there would not have been a POW left alive."

One of the most fun things the Japanese found to do with their prisoners was to cut off their heads, "often as not just for Japanese warrior sport, and as often as not incompetently, needing one or more hacking blows to finish the bloody work." One Japanese officer, educated and trained in the United States, personally supervised the

*Wouldn't it be nice if the Japanese apologized for something they did for a change?*

beheading of some 300 prisoners.

The litigants in the Tokyo suit are not asking the U.S. government for money, and they are not asking for justice against their killers and torturers, but they are asking for \$20,000 in compensation from the Japanese for survivors or their heirs. That's little enough, and more or less what we paid the Japanese-Americans interned under far less murderous conditions. The Japanese court has ruled that the litigants have until Aug. 10, 1995, to provide names and information about those on whose behalf they are suing. That's not much time.

Reviewing Mr. Daws' book in the Wall Street Journal last year, former Navy Secretary John Lehman told of a clergyman he used to know at Cambridge who had been captured by the Japanese. Whenever a Japanese entered the same room with the man, the former prisoner would turn pale, start shaking uncontrollably and have to leave. Mr. Lehman said he and his friends always thought this was a bit overdone. After reading Mr. Daws' book, he wrote, "I now understand."

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## Japan's Darkest Secret

By JOHN LEHMAN

Through much of the postwar period there was at Cambridge University a legendary rowing coach and man of God called Canon Noel Duckworth. Those of us who rowed on his teams were utterly charmed by him but also perplexed by occasional embarrassing incidents: Whenever he found himself in the presence of a Japanese student or visitor, he would immediately turn pale and begin to shake uncontrollably, abruptly leaving the room. We knew he had been a POW of the Japanese, captured as a British army chaplain in the fall of Singapore, but we always thought this a bit theatrical.

Having read Gavin Daws' "Prisoners of the Japanese" (Morrow, 448 pages, \$25), I now understand. It is difficult to read such a relentlessly horrifying story. Except for the Nazi treatment of the Jews, there is no parallel to the organized, systematic, genocidal cruelty inflicted by the Japanese government on white prisoners of war in World War II.

It is a disgrace, really, that because of political priorities this story has never been systematically recorded or documented, and hence it has never fully been told to the public. Partly because it was a political embarrassment to the British and American armies, and especially to Gen. Douglas MacArthur and other Allied leaders, there were no official histories written. Because it soon became necessary to rebuild Japan as a bulwark against Asian communism, the story was rapidly shoved into the memory hole. The U.S. occupation forces made an initial attempt to bring the evildoers to justice, and 920 were tried and hanged as war criminals. (The Japanese then quietly built a monument to the most prominent of these, including Gen. Tojo.) But thousands more were quickly rehabilitated and some went on to power in government; at least one became prime minister. Some of the most evil scientists from the army's Unit 731, which killed thousands of POWs in gruesome medical experiments, were not prosecuted at all in exchange for their sharing their findings on germ warfare.

Nearly all of the 140,000 Western POWs were American, British, Australian, New Zealand and Dutch soldiers and sailors captured in the first months of the war when Guam, Wake Island, Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore, Indonesia, Burma and the Philippines fell to Japan. Some 180,000 Asian soldiers were captured as well, but nearly all were released in a few months. Almost without exception, those who remained in the camps were white.

"In the eyes of the Japanese," Mr. Daws writes, "white men who allowed themselves to be captured in war were despicable. They deserved to die." They viewed Caucasians as racially inferior, incomprehensible—and, indeed, barely human. "They beat them until they fell, then beat them for falling, beat them until they bled,

then beat them for bleeding. They denied them medical treatment. They starved them. . . . They sacrificed prisoners in medical experiments. They watched them die by the tens of thousands. . . . If the war had lasted another year, there would not have been a POW left alive. . . ."

Mr. Daws, an experienced scholar and a prolific writer, spent decades doing archival research and interviewing survivors. He wisely allows the survivors' oral



### Bookshelf

*"Prisoners of the Japanese: POWs of World War II in the Pacific"*  
By Gavin Daws

histories to carry the narrative, while documenting their accounts and providing background and commentary. The latter, written in a matey Australian style, evinces a strong prejudice against all the officers who were POWs, but especially English ones.

There is new material in the chapter on the Bataan Death March. Gen. MacArthur had 78,000 men in uniform. Only 54,000 survived the death march, and of these 9,000 more died within six weeks. A favorite activity of the Japanese guards was chopping off POW heads with their samurai swords as "often as not just for Japanese warrior sport, and as often as not incompetently, needing one or more hacking blows to finish the bloody work." One Japanese officer, a graduate of Amherst College and Fort Benning, personally supervised the butchering of 300 POWs in cold blood, using only swords and bayonets.

As the tide of war turned, the government of Japan decided to move all the POWs back to Japan. They were crammed into cargo ships with no ventilation, water or sanitation. Thousands died en route, and thousands more drowned as U.S. submarines sank ships that Japan refused to mark as prison vessels.

About as many Allied boys died in Japanese prison camps as died in the entire Vietnam War, but there is no memorial to them. Mr. Daws notes with bitter irony the refusal of the U.S. or Japanese government to provide any compensation to these victims of Japanese policy while the U.S. government provided \$20,000 to each Japanese interned in the U.S.

The persistence of the survivors of Japanese genocide in bringing their vile suffering to public knowledge is an acute embarrassment to the curators of the Smithsonian Institution and other purveyors of the politically correct myth that Japan was a victim of American racism and imperialism. I wonder when Mr. Daws's excellent book will make its way to the Smithsonian's gift shops.

Mr. Lehman was secretary of the Navy in the Reagan administration.