



Until the Last Man Comes Home: POWs, MIAs, and the Unending Vietnam War

Michael J. Allen

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Fewer Americans were captured or missing during the Vietnam War than in any previous major military conflict in U.S. history. Yet despite their small numbers, American POWs inspired an outpouring of concern that slowly eroded support for the war. Michael J. Allen reveals how wartime loss transformed U.S. politics well before, and long after, the war's official end.

Throughout the war's last years and in the decades since, Allen argues, the effort to recover lost warriors was as much a means to establish responsibility for their loss as it was a search for answers about their fate. Though millions of Americans and Vietnamese took part in that effort, POW and MIA families and activists dominated it. Insisting that the war was not over "until the last man comes home," this small, determined group turned the unprecedented accounting effort against those they blamed for their suffering. Allen demonstrates that POW/MIA activism prolonged the hostility between the United States and Vietnam even as the search for the missing became the basis for closer ties between the two countries in the 1990s. Equally important, he explains, POW/MIA families' disdain for the antiwar left and contempt for federal authority fueled the conservative ascendancy after 1968. Mixing political, cultural, and diplomatic history, *Until the Last Man Comes Home* presents the full and lasting impact of the Vietnam War in ways that are both familiar and surprising.

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