



U.S. Navy Captain Michael Paul Cronin (Ret.) **Prisoner of War Served in Vietnam, *May 1965 to March 1973***

Captain Michael Paul Cronin served as a U.S. Navy Pilot during the Vietnam War. He flew his first mission for the Navy from the aircraft carrier Midway in May 1965. He flew additional bombing missions over North Vietnam and provided close air support for American and South Vietnamese ground forces. After two tours of duty and 175 missions, then Lieutenant Cronin was shot down over North Vietnam on January 13, 1967. He was captured by the North Vietnamese Army and held in captivity for 2,243 days or 6 years and 2 months. He was released after the Paris Peace Accords were signed on March 4, 1973. He returned to the United States and served as a flight instructor in the Navy. Upon leaving active military duty in June 1976, Cronin joined the U.S. Naval Reserve and served as a reserve C-9 pilot from 1976 to 1980 with Squadron VR-55.

After returning home, Cronin was amazed to learn no U.S. law existed to declare war crimes to be an offense that U.S. courts would prosecute because, after six years of torture, he understood that such a law was crucial to protecting U.S. service personnel and U.S. citizens and ensuring justice. Accordingly, during the mid-1990's, while flying as a commercial airline pilot and while studying for his law degree, Cronin conceived the idea of the War Crimes Act of 1996, which states simply that any war crimes committed by or to a U.S. Armed Services member or U.S. national are federal crimes as required by the Geneva Conventions. Cronin persuaded Representative Walter Jones, Jr., a new republican Congressman from North Carolina to introduce the bill, which earned bipartisan support, and was signed by President Bill Clinton on August 21, 1996, to become Public Law No. 104-192.

During his tenure in the Navy, Cronin was awarded two Silver Star medals, the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, four Bronze Star medals, 15 air medals, two Purple Heart medals, two Navy Commendation medals, two Navy Unit Commendations, and the Prisoner of War medal, all with Combat V. He was promoted to Captain in 1982, a senior officer rank. Cronin served in the Naval Reserve on non-flying status till August 1, 1992, when he retired.

After serving in the Navy, Cronin flew with American Airlines for over 25 years, until his mandatory retirement in 2001. He flew jet airplanes, including the 727, MD80, 757, 767, DC-10, A300, and 777, on a mix of domestic US and international routes, including to Europe, Japan, South America and the Caribbean.

He attended U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis and studied electrical engineering and graduated in June 1963. Cronin was a long-time resident of North Potomac, Maryland with his wife, Jackie, and their two daughters. He died Wednesday, June 17, 2020 after battling Glioblastoma brain cancer for over 14 months.