

One Hundred Fourth Congress  
of the  
United States of America

AT THE SECOND SESSION

*Begun and held at the City of Washington on Wednesday,  
the third day of January, one thousand nine hundred and ninety-six*

An Act

To amend title 18, United States Code, to carry out the international obligations of the United States under the Geneva Conventions to provide criminal penalties for certain war crimes.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of  
the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the “War Crimes Act of 1996”.

**SEC. 2. CRIMINAL PENALTIES FOR CERTAIN WAR CRIMES.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Title 18, United States Code, is amended by inserting after chapter 117 the following:

**“CHAPTER 118—WAR CRIMES**

“Sec.

“2401. War crimes.

**“§ 2401. War crimes**

“(a) OFFENSE.—Whoever, whether inside or outside the United States, commits a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions, in any of the circumstances described in subsection (b), shall be fined under this title or imprisoned for life or any term of years, or both, and if death results to the victim, shall also be subject to the penalty of death.

“(b) CIRCUMSTANCES.—The circumstances referred to in subsection (a) are that the person committing such breach or the victim of such breach is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States or a national of the United States (as defined in section 101 of the Immigration and Nationality Act).

“(c) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this section, the term ‘grave breach of the Geneva Conventions’ means conduct defined as a grave breach in any of the international conventions relating to the laws of warfare signed at Geneva 12 August 1949 or any protocol to any such convention, to which the United States is a party.”.

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(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of chapters for part I of title 18, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to chapter 117 the following new item:

**“118. War crimes ..... 2401”.**

*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

*Vice President of the United States and  
President of the Senate.*