

ASIA-PACIFIC

## Former PACOM deputy becomes Vietnam's first honorary consul to US

By WYATT OLSON

STARS AND STRIPES • October 12, 2023



Retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dan "Fig" Leaf speaks at the Pentagon on May 8, 2019, during a ceremony commemorating the 20th anniversary of Operation Allied Force. (Adrian Cadiz/U.S. Air Force)

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Vietnam has appointed a former deputy commander of U.S. Pacific Command as its first honorary consul to the United States.

The appointment of retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Daniel "Fig" Leaf to the Honolulu-based position was announced last week by Nguyen Quoc Dzung, Vietnam's ambassador to the United States.

Leaf "has made significant contributions, promoting the comprehensive partnership (now comprehensive strategic partnership) between Viet Nam and the United States," Nguyen said in the Oct. 5 announcement.

Many nations appoint honorary consuls in lieu of establishing consulates. Appointees are often local citizens of the host country whose aim is to promote economic and cultural ties between the two nations.

They also assist in typical consular matters, such as assisting with lost passports or visa requests.

“We choose to represent the sending country and further educational, business and, where appropriate, national security relations,” Leaf said in a phone interview Wednesday.

His appointment, which also required approval by the U.S. State Department, was long in the works.

“It took probably four and a half years, in some measure because of bureaucracy but also because of the pandemic,” he said.

Leaf, a fighter jet pilot, capped off his 33-year military career as PACOM’s deputy commander from 2005 to 2008. PACOM was renamed Indo-Pacific Command in 2018.

Leaf went on to direct the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu for five years beginning in 2012. He now works as a security consultant.

He credits the late Adm. Ronald Zlatoper with putting the bug in his ear about the possibility of serving as an honorary consul.

“He encouraged me to pursue this initiative,” Leaf said of Zlatoper, who was an honorary consul for Slovenia until his death last year.

Leaf has long advocated for a peace treaty with North Korea as a means to reduce the nuclear threat on the Korean Peninsula — a passion and pursuit that still remain his priority.

But he said he has come to view the history of war and reconciliation between America and Vietnam as a paradigm for what can happen between former enemies.

“As the deputy commander of PACOM, I was heavily involved in establishment of our military-to-military relations [in Vietnam], traveled to the country for the first time,” he said.

“And as somebody who’s a warrior long interested in peace, I saw the powerful exemplar of U.S-Vietnam reconciliation.

“We’ve been able to reconcile and build a productive relationship — not without argument or disagreement — but through very hard work.”

More information about the Vietnam consular services now being offered in Hawaii is at [vietnamconsulhi.org](http://vietnamconsulhi.org).



**WYATT OLSON**

Wyatt Olson is based in the Honolulu bureau, where he has reported on military and security issues in the Indo-Pacific since 2014. He was Stars and Stripes’ roving Pacific reporter from 2011-2013 while based in Tokyo. He was a freelance writer and journalism teacher in China from 2006-2009.

Subscribe to Stars and Stripes Just 99c a week!

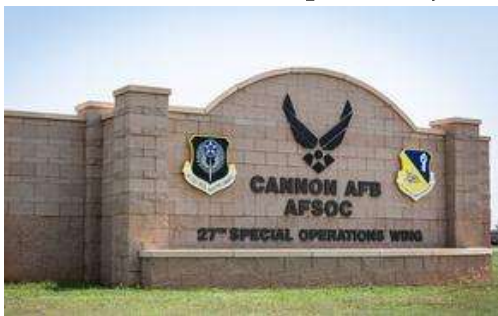
**SUBSCRIBE**

## STRIPES TOP NEWS



**U.S.**

**Senate to vote on 3 top military officers after Marine Corps commandant hospitalized**



**AIR FORCE**

**Air Force researching potential child cancer cluster at New Mexico base**

---



**U.S.**

**Air Force destroys Minuteman III missile off California coast due to ‘anomaly’**

© 2022 Stars and Stripes. All Rights Reserved.

# SIGN UP FOR DAILY HEADLINES

Sign up to receive a daily email of today's top military news stories from Stars and Stripes and top news outlets from around the world.

**SIGN UP NOW**