Date: March 2022 Volume 2

The "AZ-LZ"

Vietnam Veterans of America - Arizona State Council

Special points of interest:

- The 50th Commemoration coming to an end.
- Your personal **ARCHIVE**
- Teaching and showing what Vietnam was all about.
- Walt Schumacher's 5th award on Newsletters
- Remembering Vietnam in a GOOD WAY.

The 50th Commemoration Is Coming To An End!!

The Vietnam 50th Commemoration started in 2010 for a period of fifteen years which was the length of the Vietnam War. However, in June of 2020, The Department of Defense changed the start of the Vietnam War from 1960 to 1955, thus, changing the "start of the war" backwards by five years from 1955 to 1975. At this point, the actual Commemoration will end in the year 2025 for its total of fifteen (15) years of celebrating and honoring those Vietnam Veterans who have served in America's longest war.

Few people know the "**actual reason**" for the Vietnam War and that was to keep Communism out of the Eastern Hemisphere. There "*could've been a good chance*" that between the Soviet Union, China and North Vietnam might have made good strides in doing so. But after the war and all that was said and done, none of those countries had a chance of that happening.

May I highly recommend, now, that we are all in our 70's and some in our 80's that we (Vietnam Veterans) "***ARCHIVE OUR PERSONAL HISTORY"?*** Once we are gone, there will be no one that knows what we did except **US**. No one is or ever will be a mind reader and it would be a good idea to put your Vietnam story on paper with images about "**what** you did in SE Asia, **where** you served in South Vietnam, maybe **how** you did some of your task, and **who** you might served with and if it applies **why** you did what you did. Only you knows you story and if I was related to you, then I personally would want to know all of the details of your tour in Vietnam in the 1960's and 1970's..

Whenever I write about Vietnam, I **ALWAYS**, repeat, **ALWAYS** tell the ***good parts***. We all know there were some things, we'd like to forget, therefore, "***forget them***" and tell all of the ***good times***, the interesting times, the times you truly enjoyed and have good memories of. And your family, your children, your grandchildren and great-grand children would love to read about their grandfather who served America to keep Communism free from Vietnam and in the Eastern Hemisphere.

I was in Vietnam in 1967-68 when I was 20 years old and in that timeframe is one that I can recall so many things in great detail and that may be the case with all of you reading this. So, start your archived history of Vietnam and work on it until you are done without stopping. Use MS Word Publisher and place pictures in there of locations that you may have been stationed in. It will be a memory that you will **NEVER** forget.

Don't waste any time that you have left, why? Because **NONE** of us knows the time we have left. Best to you as you write it.

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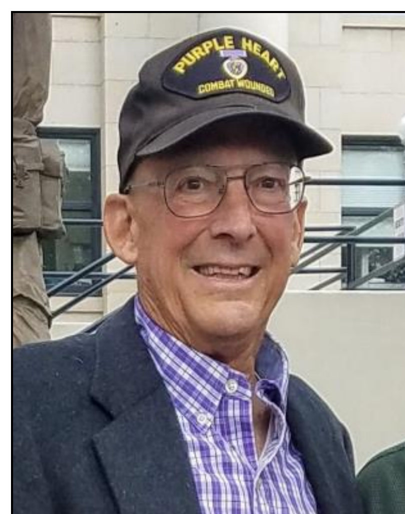
The "AZ-LZ"

The Life of Charles Anthony (Tony) Shaw



Charles Anthony (Tony) Shaw, 75, passed away on December 1, 2021 in his home in Prescott, Arizona after a hard fought battle with cancer stemming from the ravaging effects of exposure to Agent Orange during his service in the Vietnam War in 1969-70.

He was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri to Charles M. and Joyce Shaw. He met his beloved wife, Patricia, in high school, and they became best friends and committed companions for over 53 years of marriage.

In his youth, Tony was an avid fisherman and outdoorsman, exploring the wooded forests of Missouri with his father and brothers. He was also a good athlete who enjoyed baseball, and in high school ran cross country and track, setting the record for the mile at Ladue High School. Additionally, his involvement in the Boy Scouts of America culminated in him becoming an Eagle Scout.

He attended West Point and received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and History from the University of Missouri. One year later, he served his country as a 1st Lieutenant in Vietnam in the Armored Cavalry of the 25th Infantry Division of the U.S. Army. He received the Purple Heart for being wounded in combat, and the Bronze Star Medal for heroic or meritorious achievement in a combat zone.

After Vietnam, he attended the University of New Mexico School of Law, and received his Doctor of Jurisprudence and embarked on a 46-year career as a lawyer in Prescott, Arizona. He was known and respected all over the state for taking on the big guys to help the little guys fight for their rights. He worked in the areas of criminal defense, civil rights and personal injury, eventually becoming preeminent in employment law. As an employment lawyer, he wrote topics in handbooks, taught courses to other attorneys and mentored dozens of younger lawyers. In 2012, he received the Jack L. Ogg Award for Community Service and Advancing and Improving the Legal Profession.

Tony further served his community as an active member of Trinity Presbyterian Church, the Sunup Rotary Club, Vietnam Veteran's of America, the Veterans Vietnam Restoration Project, and the Yavapai County Education Foundation Board, as well as the YMCA and Sharlot Hall Boards. He made 4 different trips back to Vietnam after the War, participating with other vets in humanitarian aide missions. In 1989, he gave the dedication speech for the Veterans Memorial Statue at the Yavapai County Courthouse in Prescott, and the rededication in 2006, and again in 2021, just two months before he died.

Tony loved camping, fishing, boating, hiking and mountain biking in his chosen state of Arizona. He is survived by his spouse, Pat Shaw, daughter Bonnie Sanderford (Dorian), twin sons Michael (Sebrina) and Daniel (Alyssa) Shaw and five grandsons. He was a War hero, but also a hero to the common man. He was a very big fish, and he will be greatly missed

EDITOR'S NOTE: I have known Tony for more than ten (10) years and have **ALWAYS** found him to be a "Man's Man". He was honest, grateful, pleasant, a veteran, a very gracious person, a good father, a superb husband and a caretaker of those many, many children in Vietnam that he wanted to make a difference in. He is a guy that cared about others, rather than himself and that says a lot.

I always enjoyed hearing of Tony's trips to Vietnam and the photos and how he cared for so many people and children over there. To me, and many others, he made a huge difference in those children as though they were his. For those of that were in Vietnam, we too, saw those children that lost their families. Those are memories that he had for a long time and that of his family.

He was devoted to people in his home city, to his family and to others that did not know him. He has ALWAYS had an over-sized heart for the Vietnamese people who lost their parents,, their homes, their family and everything else, all due to war. What a shame, but men like Tony Shaw was one of the few that made it a point to go back to Vietnam to get a different perspective on what people should do for people as this world is and been about people. Tony, to you; thank you.

Traveling to Vietnam with War Veterans by Mike Shaw

For five weeks from late March to early May, 2011, I spent time with Vietnam Veterans going back to Vietnam on a humanitarian aid mission. My Dad, Tony Shaw, was a Veteran who fought in Vietnam with the 25th Infantry Division of the U.S. Army in 1969-1970. He was a 1st Lieutenant in charge of a small tank division which patrolled the area of Tay Ninh Province, in South Vietnam. My Dad was hit in battle, and earned the Purple Heart for his injuries and the Bronze Star for his courage. He also developed bladder cancer later in his life as a result of his exposure to Agent Orange during the War, and he died of that condition on December 1, 2021.

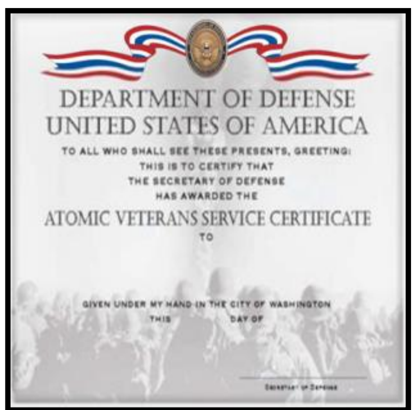
In the years following the Vietnam War, my Dad had grown disillusioned and angry about our country's involvement in that War. He came to believe that the War was a grave mistake that cost nearly 59,000 American lives. He became a lover of peace. He had to battle his own personal demons from that War for most of his adult life.

In 2006, my Dad became aware of a Non-Governmental Organization called the Veterans Vietnam Restoration Project. VVRP's mission is to improve the relationship between the United States and Vietnam through humanitarian aid work in Vietnam, and also to heal the emotional scars of Vietnam Veterans by sending them back "in country" to experience the people and the culture of Vietnam in peacetime. The idea is for the Vets to replace their old, bad memories from the War with new, positive memories of today's Vietnam and the hard-working, generous and friendly people that live there.

My Dad went to Vietnam on a VVRP project in 2007, and loved it so much he went back a total of 4 times. He took me with him in 2011, with VVRP Team 26, to build a kindergarten and nursery in Ta Ri, a resettlement village deep in the jungle of Central Vietnam. Ta Ri is inhabited by the Ca Tu minority tribal people, a very close knit group with customs and traditions all their own. This was a life affirming trip for me, as I was able to experience a completely different lifestyle. I immersed myself in the people. I was invited into homes for meals, permitted to babysit children, and even invited to a wedding. I felt very honored to have been accepted by these people as I was. Equally as importantly, I was able to be a "fly on the wall," listening to the stories and emotions of the six War Veterans who were members of Team 26. The Veterans started out as a very diverse group of people who didn't get a long particularly well, and could be a bit prickly. But they became a unit of men who formed very strong bonds, and cared deeply about each other. I was able to witness the healing of their souls, including the soul of my own father. I believe that these four trips to Vietnam after the War helped to complete my father's life before he died. I believe he was able to fully forgive those people for what they did to him, and he was able to forgive himself for what he believes he did to them.

VA amplifies access to home service, community services for eligible Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care is expanding its Home-Based Primary Care, Medical Foster Home and Veteran-Directed Care programs to make them available at all VA medical centers by the end of fiscal year 2026. VA will add 58 medical foster homes and 70 Veteran-directed care programs to VAMCs across the nation and add 75 home-based primary care teams to areas with the highest unmet need. "These evidence-based programs allow Veterans to age-in-place, avoid or delay nursing home placement and choose the care environment that aligns most with their care needs, preferences and goals," said Executive Director of VA Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care Scotte Hartronft, M.D. **"**Veterans using these programs have experienced fewer hospitalizations and emergency department visits, reduced hospital and nursing home days and fewer nursing home readmissions and inpatient complications**."** According to VA's Policy Analysis and Forecasting Office, the number of Veterans of all ages who are eligible for nursing home care is estimated to expand from approximately 2 million Veterans in 2019 to more than 4 million by 2039. As this population grows, VA remains steadfast in providing the highest levels of care to Veterans in the least-restrictive settings. These programs provide an in-home or smaller care setting than traditional institutionalized long-term care. This smaller setting of care supports less risk of transmission of COVID and other infectious diseases. Many Veterans have chosen these programs instead of institutionalized care during the pandemic for more flexibility in care preferences and less risk of COVID transmission.


DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
HAS AWARDED THE
ATOMIC VETERANS SERVICE CERTIFICATE
TO
GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON
THIS DAY OF
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Atomic Veterans—Get WWII Commemorative Medal

After decades fighting for recognition of their sacrifices to their country — to include getting cancer and dying — veterans exposed to radiation while serving may be eligible for a new medal. Under a law passed by Congress in late December, the Department of Defense must design and create an "Atomic Veterans Commemorative Service Medal" for those who were "instrumental in the development of our nation's atomic and nuclear weapons programs." Exactly who would be eligible for the new award isn't stipulated by the law; the legislation leaves eligibility determination to the secretary of defense, with members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committee able to weigh in on any recommendations.

Walt Schumacher - Chapter 835 given VVA National Convention Newsletter Award

It was a real honor to receive my fifth award for newsletters within Vietnam Veterans America, four of them for "**THE AZ-LZ**" Newsletter starting in 2011 and the **Chapter 835 Newsletter** award for "<199 Chapter Members" in an electronic format.

I have always enjoyed writing and consider it a gift as I started when I was a kid and it has been a blessing all of these years to pass on a lot of information to people, veterans and so many others.

To me, it is imperative to pass on information to others in your family, within Veteran organizations and others within your life. I thank those that made this award possible for me.

It has been a real joy for me to write "**The AZ-LZ**" for all of these years along with the **Yuma Chapter 835 Newsletter** for nearly fifteen years.

GOVERNOR DOUGLAS A. DUCEY

STATE OF ARIZONA

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, forty-seven years ago, on March 29, 1973, the last 2,500 American troops were withdrawn from South Vietnam, ending military involvement in what is now the longest war in our country's history; and

WHEREAS, due to the turbulent cultural climate of the era and unpopularity of the eleven-year conflict, many of the returning veterans did not receive the respect and gratitude they richly deserved for serving their nation so ably and honorably; and

WHEREAS, more than 600 men and women from the great State of Arizona made the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of our country during the war; and

WHEREAS, in the spirit of pride and gratitude, it is time to honor the heroic accomplishments of the 58,000 service men and women whose names are listed on the Vietnam Memorial Wall; and

WHEREAS, the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act authorized the United States Secretary of Defense to conduct a program to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War and provided that "the Secretary shall coordinate, support and facilitate other programs and activities of the federal government, state and local governments, and other persons and organizations in commemoration of the Vietnam War"; and

WHEREAS, the State of Arizona and Arizona Department of Veterans' Services are Commemorative Partners of The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration; and

WHEREAS, this state desires to pay solemn tribute to our Vietnam Veterans.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Douglas A. Ducey, Governor of the State of Arizona, do hereby proclaim March 29, 2020, as

ARIZONA VIETNAM WAR VETERANS DAY

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Arizona

GOVERNOR

DONE at the Capitol in Phoenix on this seventeenth day of March in the year Two Thousand and Twenty and of the Independence of the United States of America the Two Hundred and Forty-Fourth

ATTEST:

SECRETARY OF STATE

RECOGNIZING AND REMEMBERING 50 YEARS

You are cordially invited to attend

National Vietnam War Remembrance Day Ceremony

Come join us for lunch to thank a Veteran for his/her service to our Country

Lunch • Door Prizes • Awards Ceremony

(sponsored by AZ Department Veteran Services with the Vietnam Veterans of America)

March 26, 2022 at 1100-1400

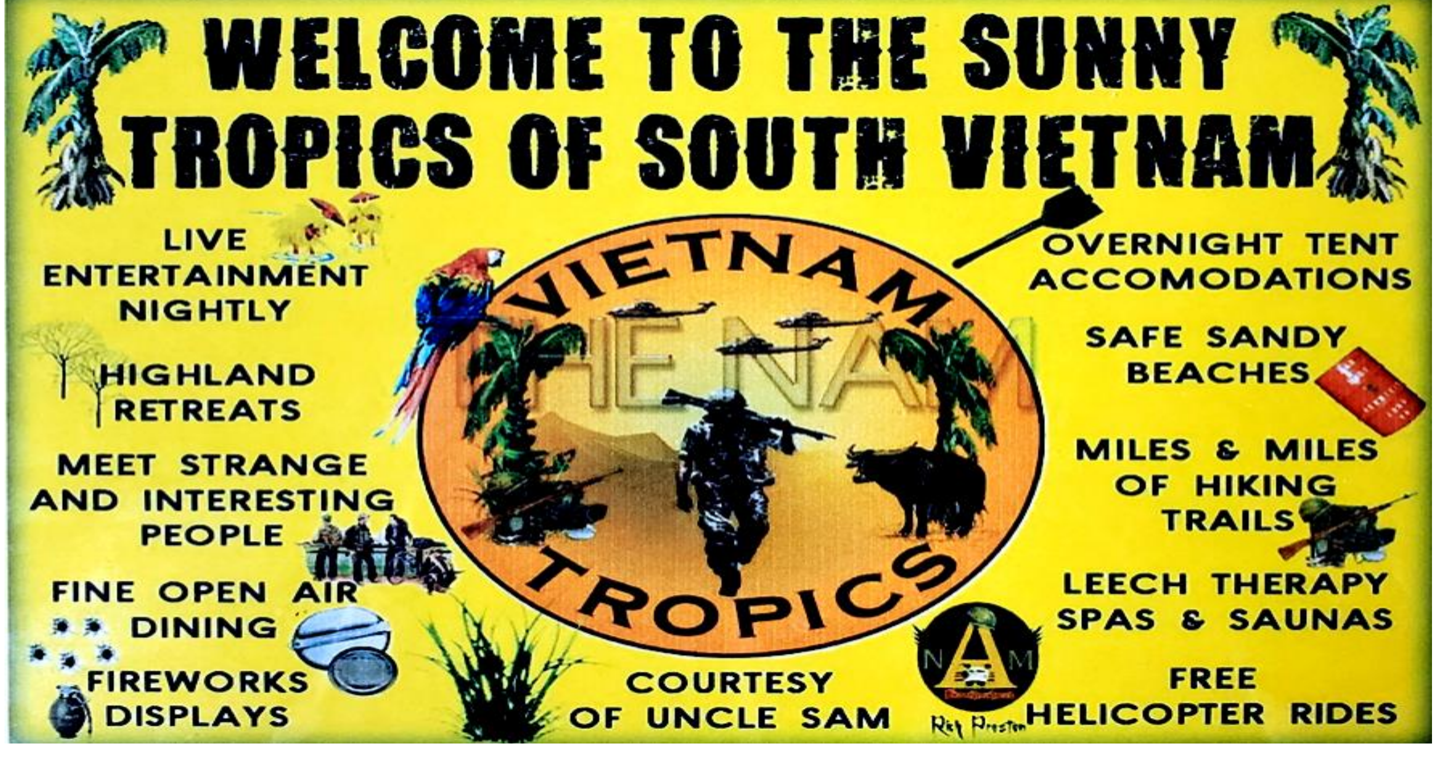
1749 E Broadway, Tucson AZ 85711

Seating is limited to the first 100 guests.

Please RSVP no later than March 18, 2022

via email to vva106@live.com or call

Butch Morgan 520-838-0528 • Martin Belden 520-975-3310 • Terry Byron 520-982-0023



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION

“SITREP” 2022 – Issue 2

Special Edition: 2021 in Review

Monday, January 31

Dear Commemorative Partners,

Congratulations! Since 2012, ***you*** have ***inspired*** and ***united*** millions of Americans to thank and honor ***3.2 million*** Vietnam veterans and their families during nearly ***22 thousand*** events in neighborhoods and communities across the country! In 2021 alone—**despite COVID**—more than ***200 thousand*** of these previously unsung heroes were safely honored during ***1,732*** events.

Thanks to your efforts, ***Vietnam veterans*** were highlighted ***21,433*** times in both traditional and social media last year! Americans “engaged” in **social media** through posting, tagging, sharing, or viewing videos about Vietnam veterans ***more than 406 thousand times***. In fact, Commemoration content on Facebook and YouTube alone reached ***3.5 million*** view-screens.

Top Performing Social Media Post *Media Mentions by Month*

National Vietnam War Veterans Day

March 29, 2021 resonated with the Nation as President and Dr. Biden (at left) visited the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial](#) to pay tribute to our service members who gave their lives in the Vietnam War and each of their families. Earlier that morning, Secretaries Austin and McDonough (at right) joined together for a national wreath-laying ceremony at **The Wall**. All in all, nearly ***60 thousand*** Vietnam veterans and their families were thanked and honored during ***565 events*** on and around ***March 29.***

(L-R): DPAA Director Kelly K. McKeague, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis R. McDonough & former WHS Acting Director Thomas M. Muir

Join the Nation ... thank a Vietnam veteran!

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION

Starting in June, we hailed the Services during their birthday months. From the Army, Marines, Navy and Air Force, to our newest branch–the Space Force, as well as the Coast Guard and National Guard, we highlighted their significant involvement and sacrifices during the Vietnam War period.

In August, while underway on the *USS Constitution*, we were privileged to recognize **225 Vietnam veterans and their families** …

**Photos by Patrick J. Hughes*

and American Gold Star Mothers, Gold Star Wives of America and the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

**AGSM*
- 15 AGSM chapters hosted 182 events, 2012-21
- 4,300 Vietnam veterans and families honored

**GSWA*
- 2 Vietnam Gold Star wives were honored for their unimaginable sacrifices

**NSDAR*
- 2,044 DAR chapters hosted 5,728 events, 2013-21
- 328,000 Vietnam veterans and families honored

Lisa Marie Brunner's resilient words echo powerfully, representing Gold Star Mothers everywhere …

We are not a club of grieving mothers to be pitied and coddled, but rather a stronger version of motherhood working to honor the legacy of our sons and daughters through service to others.

We also took this opportunity to recognize the contributions and sacrifices of **3 of our 5 allies** in the Vietnam War –

**Republic of Korea*
- 1964-1973; more than 300,000 served
- At least 5,000 Killed in Action

**Commonwealth of Australia*
- 1962-1973; nearly 60,000 served
- More than 500 Killed in Action

New Zealand
- 1964-1972; nearly 5,000 served
- 37 Killed in Action

Join the Nation … thank a Vietnam veteran!

vietnamwar50th.com

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION

August also brought sorrow, as we lost our dear friend and colleague, renowned war correspondent and co-author of *We Were Soldiers Once and Young*, **Joseph Lee Galloway**. We invite you to view a **4-minute excerpt** from Joe's final interview with us recorded during National Vietnam War Veterans Day.

Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Jack Sanders

In September, on **National POW/MIA Recognition Day**, we remembered the hardships endured by Americans captured during the war, the loss of those still missing and unaccounted for, and the grief endured by more than **81 thousand families** awaiting news of their loved ones. Of that number —**1,584** (1,556 military and 28 civilian) remain from the Vietnam War. Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen H. Hicks (shown second from left), along with Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency Director Kelly K. McKeague (far right) and staff, helped unveil the 2021 poster at the Pentagon on July 27.

November marked Veterans Day, and our partners thanked and honored more than 18,300 Vietnam veterans and their families during 223 special lapel-pinning ceremonies (see photos at right).

During a ***November ceremony***, one of our 167 congressional partners stated, "These lapel pins are a token of gratitude from us to you for the service and the sacrifices you made. You know how many people have signed up to be pinned so far [in my district] – 1,500. I've been pinning and pinning and pinning." Our congressional Commemorative Partners combined hosted **77 events in 2021** with planned outreach to **7,500 Vietnam veterans**!

Rounding out the year, ***on December 17*** we accepted—***on your behalf***—the **2021 Founder's Award** from another of our remarkable Commemorative Partners, *Wreaths Across America*. This award recognizes those who "exemplify the mission to Remember, Honor, and Teach," and who show active support of our Nation's military and veterans. **You, as partners with us in this noble mission, exemplify each of those traits. Congratulations!**

2021 Founder's Award

We invite everyone to visit our **website** for our new Year-in-Review video!

A quote from the Honorable Richard L. Armitage, Vietnam veteran and former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, from his **Oral History Interview** (18:07-18:35) captures the **significant, yet often unrecognized, impact of the service and sacrifice of Vietnam veterans –**

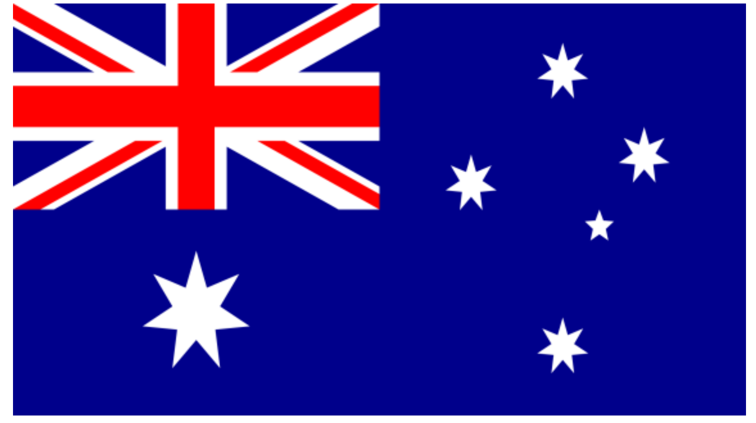
The former Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew one day said publicly to me that 'you and your fellow veterans should feel quite proud. You may not have accomplished your objectives in Vietnam, but you accomplished your objectives in Southeast Asia. Because the rest of us—Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore—were poised for a communist juggernaut, and you gave them the time—your sacrifice gave them the time—to develop beyond the reach of the communists.'

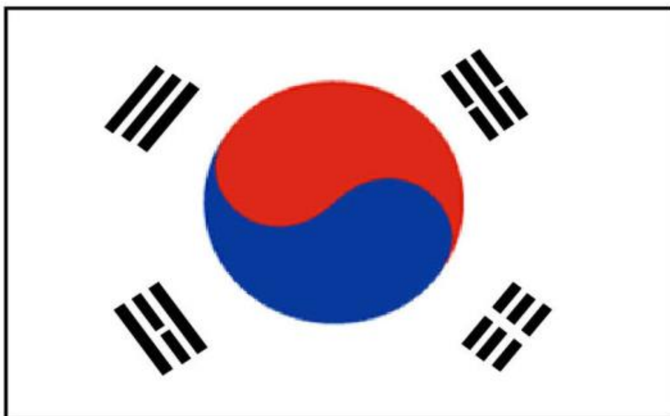
~ The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration Staff ~

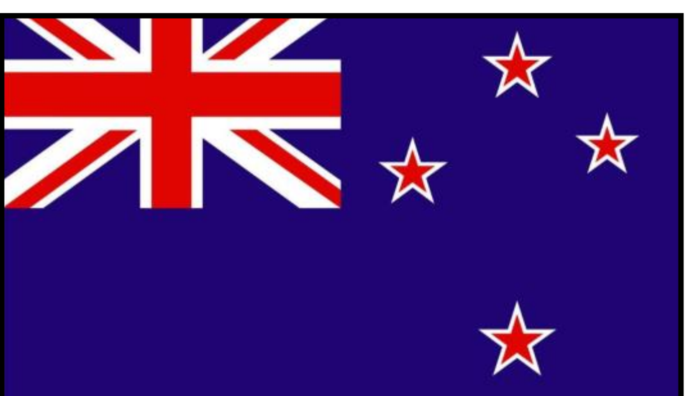
Join the Nation ... thank a Vietnam veteran!

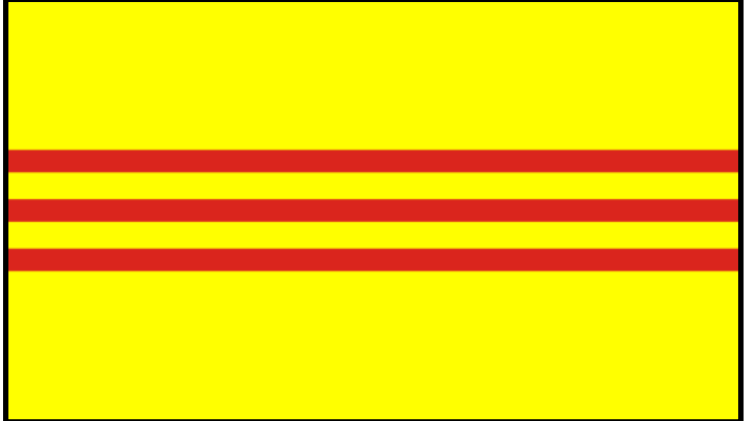
vietnamwar50th.com

Allied Nation Flags







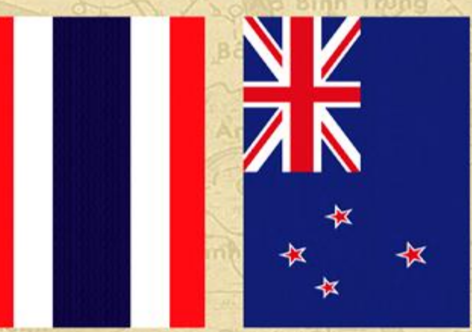


<u>Ques#1</u>: Many younger people and some older people and that is to include Vietnam Veterans are not sure what allied countries helped support the Vietnam War. So, this is a test for you Vietnam Veterans. Can you name **<u>ALL</u>** of the allied countries that were involved in the Vietnam War?

<u>Ques#2</u>: How about the time frame that the Vietnam War lasted. In June 2020, DoD, changed the start date to five (5) years earlier than what is imprinted on the Vietnam Campaign ribbon. Consider testing your children or grandchildren for the correct answer if you are not sure of what it might be.

UNITED STATES ALLIES IN THE VIETNAM WAR

INTRODUCTION (PART 1 OF 5)



American Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen fought side by side with their counterparts from five allied nations in defense of the Republic of (South) Vietnam. The American people thank, honor, and commend the fighting forces of our allies in the Vietnam War for their service and sacrifice.

For the United States and its allies, the Vietnam War was a multinational effort to stem the tide of communist expansion—supported by America's Cold War rivals, the Soviet Union and China—in Southeast Asia. South Vietnam was a hot spot in a larger Cold War context. As in all conflicts, a complex web of motivating forces animated the combatants. Lofty ideals such as friendship, allegiance, and freedom spurred some to engage. Money, recognition, shared interests, and geo-political advantage played important roles in inciting action as well.

An American and Korean officer inspect a unit of Korean, American, Australian, and Vietnamese military policemen in Saigon. (National Archives)

Many nations provided assistance, both military and humanitarian, to the South Vietnamese people from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s. A total of six nations sent combat troops to fight in South Vietnam against North Vietnam and the southern-based Viet Cong insurgency in the 1960s and 1970s. These nations were the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Republic of (South) Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines.

> *In 1965, when the U.S. military moved massively into South Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines faced internal threats from armed communist insurgencies, and the communist underground was still active in Singapore. . . . America's action ... enabled non-communist Southeast Asia to put their own houses in order. By 1975, they were in better shape to stand up to the communists. Had there been no U.S. intervention, the will of these countries to resist them would have melted and Southeast Asia would most likely have gone communist. The prosperous emerging market economies of ASEAN [the Association of South East Asian Nations] were nurtured during the Vietnam War years.*
>
> — Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore

U.S. citizens and their allies continue to wrestle with the Vietnam War's legacies. While western nations mostly regard the war's outcome as a defeat of the United States and its allies, that is not the consensus everywhere. Thailand, for example, celebrates "the American War" as an unmitigated victory, and it is a viewpoint shared by others in Southeast Asia. While Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam came under Communist regimes, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand did not. For many people in these nations, Communist revolutionaries represented a grave national threat. From their perspective, the war in Vietnam successfully halted that threat. To one degree or another, leaders in these countries acknowledge that the multi-decade American presence in Southeast Asia—and the Vietnam War in particular—was a positive factor in the prevention of communist domination in the region.

More Flags

On April 23, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson for the first time publicly stated, "I would hope that we would see some other flags in [South Vietnam] ... and that we could all unite in an attempt to stop the spread of communism in that area of the world, and the attempt to destroy freedom." His appeal became the basis of the American "More Flags" campaign, an endeavor to encourage wider international participation in the security of South Vietnam. The United States used the term "Free World" in its efforts to garner participation especially by Western Bloc and other non-communist countries. Bilateral diplomacy was also brought to bear.

Free World Allies

The contributions of the Free World combat allies in Vietnam were significant, both from political and military standpoints. Historians and commentators differ in interpreting the motivations not only of the participating governments, but also of the individual participants. The South Koreans, Thais, and Filipinos received considerable American financial support to facilitate their military participation in South Vietnam. The Australians and New Zealanders, by contrast, served in Vietnam at their own expense. Negative or ambivalent political impressions notwithstanding, there was a general consensus among American military leadership at that time that the Free World allies fought well. Taken as a whole, the combat effectiveness of the Free World forces relieved significant pressure on American troops, and played a critical role in pacifying and securing their assigned areas of operation. Perhaps even more importantly from the American psychological perspective, every allied soldier, sailor, marine, or airman who served in Vietnam meant one less American Soldier, Sailor, Marine, or Airman who had to deploy. For that simple (if imperfect) calculus alone, Americans were grateful.

The Free World Military Assistance Forces Headquarters building in Saigon. An Australian Land Rover 1/4 ton truck and three Volkswagen Kombi Vans (with red kangaroos) are parked in the car park. (U.S. Department of the Army)

The inauguration ceremony marking the formal opening of the International Military Assistance Office building (IMAO) of the Republic of Vietnam. The Color Guards represent South Vietnam, the United States, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Australia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), New Zealand, and Thailand. Cholon, Vietnam, April 8, 1965 (National Archives)

By the Numbers

A quick glance at the numbers provides an indication of the service and sacrifice of the Free World allies. The New Zealanders had the highest ratio of fatal casualties to participants at 2.18 percent, with the Americans a very close second at 2.15 percent. The South Koreans were next at 1.4 percent, and both the Thais and Australians were under 1 percent. Nine Filipinos were killed in the conflict. Of the allies, the Australians served in Vietnam for the longest period of time, but they deployed relatively few military personnel before 1965, and, as with the Americans, they were advisers rather than combatants before then. The first South Korean combat troops arrived shortly after the Americans escalated their involvement by deploying combat troops in 1965.

Allied Nation	Timeframe	Total Number of Military Participants	Total Number Killed
United States of America	1962–1973	2,709,918	58,318
Republic of Korea	1965–1973	320,000+	4,407
Australia	1962–1972	61,000+	500
Thailand	1965–1972	40,000+	351
New Zealand	1964–1972	3,800+	83
Philippines	1966-1969	10,000	9

Allied Strength in Vietnam, 1964–1972					
Year	Australia	South Korea	New Zealand	Philippines	Thailand
1964	200	200	30	20	—
1965	1,560	20,620	120	70	20
1966	4,530	25,570	160	2,060	240
1967	6,820	47,830	530	2,020	2,220
1968	7,660	50,000	520	1,580	6,000
1969	7,670	48,870	550	190	11,570
1970	6,800	48,540	440	70	11,570
1971	2,000	45,700	100	50	6,000
1972	130	36,790	50	50	40

Source: *The Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History*, edited by Spencer C. Tucker

A GRATEFUL NATION THANKS AND HONORS OUR VIETNAM WAR VETERANS

WWW.VIETNAMWAR50TH.COM

United States Allies in the Vietnam War

The Republic of (South) Korea (Part 2 of 5)

Korean Tiger Division instructor supervises Vietnamese students on the rifle range, August 1968. (National Archives)

This is a famous picture in South Korea. The words 정조준 사격금지구역 written across the center mean: "Do not aim at this area." Above that is a girl's name and an expression of loving sentiments.

The Vietnam War was South Korea's first major military engagement since the signing of the Korean War armistice in 1953. All Korean troops in Vietnam were volunteers. The United States thanks and honors the Korean veterans who served in Vietnam.

South Korean military participation in the Vietnam War began in the autumn of 1965 and did not end until the last American combat troops departed. The first Republic of Korea soldiers and marines (commonly referred to by American forces as ROKs, pronounced "rocks") began arriving several months after the first American combat troops arrived. Military observers asserted that the ROKs fought bravely; many said fiercely. Their tactics and techniques have often drawn criticism from some commenters as being unnecessarily brutal, but their bravery and discipline were not questioned, even by their enemies.

The success and contributions of Korean forces in Vietnam are to some degree unsung and underappreciated outside of military circles. Indeed, for many Americans who served with them, their fighting abilities were the stuff of legend. Korean troops recorded a high casualty ratio against Communist forces and captured a large number of prisoners and vast stores of weapons and war materiel. In so doing, they denied sanctuary to the communist insurgency and disrupted Viet Cong activity in their assigned areas of operation.

ROK code of conduct in the Vietnam War:

To the enemy, be courageous and fearless.
To the Vietnamese people, behave with kindness and warmness.
To our allies, show them we are well disciplined and reliable.

Perhaps most importantly from the United States' perspective, contemporaries believed Korean troops were as effective as their American counterparts in combat, which took the burden off U.S. troops in the Koreans' area of operations. The United States subsidized Korean forces' participation, and in some ways the Vietnam War proved an economic boon for the fledgling nation.

From 1965 to 1973, more than 300,000 ROK soldiers and marines served in South Vietnam. That number is second only to U.S. and South Vietnamese service members, and more than all the rest of the allies combined. Nearly 5,000 Koreans sacrificed their lives in the war.

ROK Areas of Operation

In March 1965, a CIA report described South Vietnam's principal problem thus: "The Viet Cong are continuing to make significant gains … particularly along the low coastal regions. … The [South Vietnamese] government is clearly on the defensive …. Pacification remains stalled and further deterioration of rural security is expected."

The response to the CIA's assessment arrived in the form of the ROK Army Capital "Tiger" Division and the ROK 2nd Marine "Blue Dragon" Brigade. These Korean units were primarily responsible for the pacification and

Korean troops use chart to show villagers types of Viet Cong booby traps. (National Archives)

security of the coastal provinces of Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa and Ninh Thuan in II Corps. They undertook the task with vigor. The coastal areas, especially south of Qui Nhon down to Phan Rang, remained relatively secure from then onward under the watchful eye of the ROKs.

In September 1966, South Korea sent a second army division, the 9th "White Horse" Division, to take over operations in the southern part of II Corp's coastal region. This freed up the ROK marines to move north to assist the U.S. Marines in Quang Nam province, in I Corps, a dangerous and volatile region aptly nicknamed "Marine Country" by American servicemen.

An analysis of a combat action by Korean Capital Division forces from January 1968 clearly illustrates the Korean technique. After contact with an enemy force near Phu Cat, the Koreans "reacting swiftly . . . deployed six companies in an encircling maneuver and trapped the enemy force in their cordon. The Korean troops gradually tightened the circle, fighting the enemy during the day and maintaining their tight cordon at night, thus preventing the enemy's escape. At the conclusion of the sixth day of fighting, 278 NVA had been KIA with the loss of just 11 Koreans, a kill ratio of 25.3 to 1.

(*Vietnam Studies: Allied Participation in Vietnam*, by Lieutenant General Stanley Robert Larsen & Brigadier General James Lawton Collins, Jr., U.S. Department of the Army)

American military observers recorded that the ROK forces served with distinction and valor in Vietnam. Korean troops attained an almost mythic status among friends and foes alike, and some contemporaries also accused South Korean troops of using overly aggressive, even brutal tactics. Tales and legends abounded among U.S. service people of the ROKs' strict discipline, toughness, and military prowess. They were said to be especially efficient and effective in counterinsurgency warfare, small unit tactics and operations, and hand-to-hand combat.

One legend oft-related by American servicemen was particularly revealing. A typical version went something like this: "I've seen captured enemy

A squad leader keeps in touch with other elements as 1st Battalion, Cavalry Regiment, ROK Tiger Division move through dense Central Highlands near Binh Khe in search of enemy, September 1969. (National Archives)

documents that ordered NVA [North Vietnamese Army] units to avoid contact with ROKs at all cost, unless 100 percent certain of victory." While most of the apocryphal stories about which units the North Vietnamese truly feared inevitably included the teller's own, nearly every version of the tale included Korean troops.

An official U.S. Army study perhaps summed up the general feeling best: "Considered opinion was that it was good the Koreans were 'friendlies.'"

The Koreans were thorough in their planning and deliberate in their execution of a plan. They usually surrounded an area by stealth and quick movement… The enemy feared the Koreans both for their tactical innovations and for the soldiers' tenacity… The Koreans might not suffer many casualties, might not get too many of the enemy on an operation, but when they brought in seventy-five or a hundred weapons, the Americans wondered where in the world they got them. They appeared to have a natural nose for picking up enemy weapons that were, as far as the enemy thought, securely cached away.

(*Vietnam Studies: Allied Participation in Vietnam*, by Lieutenant General Stanley Robert Larsen & Brigadier General James Lawton Collins, Jr., U.S. Department of the Army)

Vietnamese students practice the art of Tae Kwon Do under the supervision of their Korean instructors, August 1968. (National Archives)

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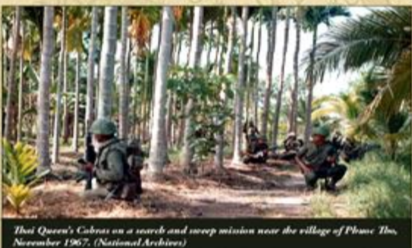
UNITED STATES ALLIES IN THE VIETNAM WAR

THAILAND (PART 3 OF 5)

Queen's Cobra arrival in the Republic of Vietnam, unloading from U.S. Navy Troop Ship Navarro, September 1967. (National Archives)



Thai Queen's Cobras on a search and sweep mission near the village of Phuoc Tho, November 1967. (National Archives)

Queen's Cobra during a search and sweep mission in Phuoc Tho, November 1967. (National Archives)

Thailand was a staunch supporter of United States involvement in Vietnam from the outset. Thailand maintained that it sided with South Vietnam and the United States out of a desire to help the South Vietnamese and to halt the rise of communism in the region. Some have also pointed to the economic benefits they received from the U.S. for supporting the Saigon government as another motivating factor. Regardless, almost all agree that Thai participation benefited President Johnson's Free World alliance. The United States owes the Thai veterans of the Vietnam War a debt of gratitude.

From the American government's point of view, it was critical for American public support of the war that Thailand accepted shared responsibility for the defense of Southeast Asia. President Johnson's 1964 appeal to Thai Prime Minister Kittikachorn Thanom is telling:

> *I am very much aware of and deeply appreciative of steady support you and your Government are providing. ... It is, nevertheless, my hope that Thailand will find ways of increasing the scale and scope of its assistance to Vietnam, as a renewed demonstration of Free World determination to work together to repel Communist aggression.*

Several distinguishing factors made Thailand an excellent U.S. ally in the region.

Firstly, the Thai government keenly believed that communism posed a danger not only to their own nation but also to all of Southeast Asia. They were determined to stifle this threat before it could destroy them, which dovetailed nicely with American goals in the region.

Secondly, unlike most of Thailand's neighbors, colonialism had not left a mark on the collective psyche of the Thai people. Thailand had never been ruled by a colonial power, and while they had experienced pressure from the British in Burma to the west, and the French in Indochina to the east, they had never given up their national sovereignty. As a result, most Thais harbored notably less antipathy toward and distrust of Europeans and Americans than did their fellow Southeast Asians.

> *Thailand is situated near Vietnam and it will be the next target of communists, as they have already proclaimed. This is why Thailand realizes the necessity to send Military units to help oppose communist aggression when it is still at a distance from our country. The government has therefore decided to send a combat unit, one battalion strong, to take an active part in the fighting in South Vietnam in the near future.*
>
> — Statement by the Thai government, January 3, 1967.

Thirdly, Thailand's location was strategically optimal for air operations in both North and South Vietnam (and also over Laos and Cambodia). The U.S. Air Force began flying missions from bases in Thailand in 1961, and by the end of the war in 1975 it was operating out of all seven Royal Thai Air Force bases (Udorn, Ubon, Korat, Takhli, Nhakhon Phanom, U-Tapao, and Don Muang at Bangkok). The U.S. spent $250 million on construction at these bases, part of the $2 billion overall that was pumped into the Thai economy over the course of the war.

By October 1967, the first Thai combat troops had arrived in Vietnam to fight alongside the Australians, New Zealanders, and U.S. Soldiers stationed at Camp Bearcat, near Bien Hoa, in II Corps. They were the Royal Thai Volunteer Regiment (a.k.a. the Queen's Cobras). In 1968, the Queen's Cobras were replaced by the Royal Thai Army Expeditionary Division (a.k.a. the Black Panthers).

Most observers reported that Thai soldiers fought bravely and well in Vietnam. They were generally well-liked by American service people, who apocryphally regarded them as the "luckiest" soldiers in Vietnam. Many Thai troops attributed this legendary luck to the protective powers of their Buddhist amulets, which they professed to believe rendered them bulletproof. Some Americans claimed to share that belief, and were grateful that the Thais were quite willing to share the talismans of their good fortune.

A controversy surrounding Thai soldiers erupted in the United States when the international press took note of their delight in American material goods and their rumored association with the Saigon black market. That coupled with the revelation that the U.S. was subsidizing their involvement in the war led some antiwar activists to argue that Thai troops were mercenaries.

The Thai government did receive more U.S. foreign aid during the Vietnam War than any other country in Southeast Asia save South Vietnam. Like South Vietnamese troops, Thai soldiers were trained and equipped by the United States, transported in U.S. ships and planes, and funded by American taxpayers.

Nonetheless, Thailand shouldered a significant burden in the wars in Southeast Asia, both in Vietnam and in Laos, where the United States was embroiled in a covert war against the Communist Pathet Lao insurgency. Though Laos did fall to a communist regime, the Thai strategy of containing the threat outside their own borders succeeded. Thai counterinsurgency skill and expertise helped stanch the spread of communism into their own country, which in turn furthered the U.S. goal of maintaining stable non-communist nations in Southeast Asia.

Between September 1967 and February 1972, nearly 40,000 Thai military personnel served in South Vietnam. Of those, 351 were killed and 1,358 were wounded. The United States remained grateful for their service and sacrifice.

Thai lieutenant, wearing an assortment of Buddhist amulets, maps out the route the platoon will take for the day's operations near Nhon Trac, October 1967. (National Archives)

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United States Allies in the Vietnam War

ANZAC (Part 4 of 5)

Three Royal Australian Air Force Caribou aircraft arrive at Tan Son Nhut Air Base with crew and maintenance personnel to aid in the airlift support mission in South Vietnam, August 1965. (National Archives)

Members of the 1st Field Squadron of the Royal Australian Engineers use American mine detectors to search for mines on a small dirt road, August 1970. (National Archives)

The Australian army's only serving Victoria Cross recipients stand together in Saigon, May 1969. (Courtesy: Australian War Memorial)

The coalition of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) were valuable allies in the fight to prevent the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. While both countries faced growing antiwar sentiment at home, neither wavered in their commitment to the United States and to South Vietnam throughout the war. Most American soldiers who had contact with these service people from "down under" were impressed by their military professionalism and charmed by their bearing. The United States is grateful to the Australian and New Zealand veterans of the Vietnam War.

ANZUS

In 1951, Australia, New Zealand and United States signed a Security Treaty (ANZUS), which was a trilateral agreement designed to protect the nations' mutual interests in the Pacific. Though the treaty was not formally invoked for the Vietnam War effort, Australia and New Zealand nevertheless sent forces—at their own expense—to support the United States in defending South Vietnam.

Australia

By 1961, the Australian government believed that defeating communism in South Vietnam was a matter both of principle and of self-defense, given the assumption that a communist-dominated Southeast Asia, just to Australia's north, represented a threat. By the end of the summer of 1962 they had sent a team of 30 advisers, the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV), to assist in training the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). Two years later, the team more than doubled in size to 80 advisers embedded with ARVN field forces and six Royal Australian Air Force DHC-4 Caribou transport planes (with pilots). They also suffered their first fatal casualty.

When the United States escalated its support for the South Vietnamese by sending combat troops in 1965, the Australians immediately followed suit. They committed the 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), plus support forces to serve under operational control of the US Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade at Bien Hoa. By the end of 1965, 1RAR had expanded to include an artillery battery, an engineer unit, an army aviation reconnaissance flight, and logistic support elements.

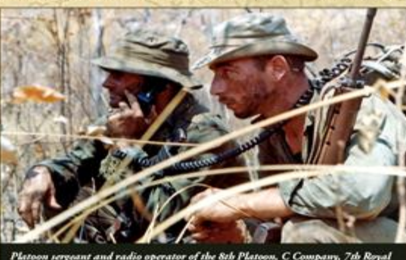
> *The takeover of South Vietnam would be a direct military threat to Australia and all the countries of South and South-East Asia. It must be seen as part of a thrust by Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.*
>
> — Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies, Hansard, 29 April 1965

Though the Americans and Australians cooperated and fought well together, the Australian command structure did not wholeheartedly endorse American tactics, or American rules of engagement, which they sometimes perceived to be unnecessarily restrictive and counterproductive. They wanted to fight their own way. So when, in 1966, the Australian government increased its troop commitment to a task force of two battalions with combat logistic support, the 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF), they took the opportunity to separate from the 173rd Airborne and become an independent command with its own area of operations in Phuoc Tuy Province, based at Nui Dat. The 1st Australian Logistic Support group (1ALSG) was established nearby at the port and airfield facility of Vung Tau.

The Australian "diggers" (a term widely used to describe ANZAC troops since the Gallipoli landings in World War I) were effective and capable soldiers. The Battle of Long Tan illustrates this point.

On August 18, 1966, Delta Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment—totaling about 108 men—set out to search and clear enemy forces from Binh Ba, an old French rubber plantation not far from Saigon. They were met by a combined Communist force of more than 1,500 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops.

In the first serious exchange of gunfire, face to face with the enemy, the Australians suffered most of the casualties they would suffer all day. Following their initial encounter, once Delta Company had set up a defensive perimeter, the Australian troops fought off multiple waves of attacks over the next four hours in a heavy rainstorm. They were supported by artillery fire, resupplied by two Royal Australian Air Force UH-1 "Huey" Iroquois helicopter crews, and reinforced by another Australian company that arrived at nightfall in



Platoon sergeant and radio operator of the 8th Platoon, C Company, 7th Royal Australian Regiment during an ambush patrol in the Nui Thi Vai Hills, February 1968. (National Archives)

Members of Royal New Zealand Artillery carry out a fire mission. (National Archives)

armored personnel carriers with .50-caliber machine guns. In the end, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong broke off contact. The Aussies lost 18 killed and 24 wounded, while enemy casualties were officially estimated at some 245 dead and 350 wounded.

Between 1962 and 1973, nearly 60,000 Australian Army, Air Force and Navy personnel served in South Vietnam. At their peak, there were more than 8,300 Australians in-country at a time. More than 3,000 were wounded and 521 were killed during the course of the war.

New Zealand

Like Australia, New Zealand's government was a reliable ally in the war in Southeast Asia. As early as 1963, they provided concrete support to the South Vietnamese people by sending a civilian surgical team to provide medical assistance in Qui Nhon. By the summer of 1964, they had sent 25 Army engineers to assist with infrastructure reconstruction projects. In the summer of 1965, they sent combat forces.

The 161st Battery of the Royal New Zealand Artillery arrived at Bien Hoa in July 1965, initially to serve with the Aussies under command of the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade. They later moved with the Australian task force to Nui Dat, where they served with Royal Australian Artillery field regiments until May 1971.

In 1967, New Zealand further committed two rifle companies from the 1st Battalion of the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment, who fought side-by-side with the Australians in the 1ATF.

The nation also provided several New Zealand Royal Air Force UH-1 Iroquois helicopter pilots and, in 1969, sent a small troop of the New Zealand Special Air Service who were also attached to their Australian counterparts.

Between 1964 and 1972, about 3,500 New Zealand military personnel served in South Vietnam, though no more than 550 were in-country at any given time. They suffered 187 wounded and 37 dead during that timeframe.

> *The [Australian] army took over a stretch of Back Beach at Vung Tau, on the coast near Saigon, and during the war ran its own fortified recreation centre complete with surfboards, sailing boats, water skiing and go-karts, plus bars, a swimming pool, a concert stage and mini-golf beside the beachfront clubhouse. The one nod of recognition that a war was actually going on was there in the barbed wire and machinegun emplacements. At the Peter Badcoe surf club, named after an Australian Victoria Cross winner, the soldiers could stow their weapons, have a hot shower, change into civilian clothes, enjoy a meat pie and a beer.*
>
> — Stuart Scott, *Charlie Don't Surf, But Aussies Do*

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United States Allies in the Vietnam War

Philippines (Part 5 of 5)

PHILCAG-V provided medical care to Vietnamese families throughout Tay Ninh Province, September 1969. (National Archives)

PHILCAG-V brigadier general and Army of Republic of Vietnam Armored Forces major general discuss the civic action program being conducted in the hamlet of Ben Dinh, near Tay Ninh, September 1968. (National Archives)

The Philippines provided effective support to the United States and its allies in South Vietnam, initially with the Philippines Contingent (PHILCON) and later the Philippines Civic Action Group-Vietnam (PHILCAG-V). Most of the Filipinos who volunteered and were sent to serve in Vietnam did their duty with honor and dignity. And they achieved excellent results. The United States thanks and honors the Filipino veterans who served in Vietnam.

Note on civic action groups from an Australian observer:

"Results [of civil aid programs] were also forthcoming from the military point of view. ... Villages receiving civic action stated that these activities were one of the major factors in helping them decide to return to the Government. One villager commented that projects were being completed which the Viet Cong had promised years before but had never carried out."

— Ian McNeill,
To Long Tan: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War 1950-1966

Operation Brotherhood

In 1954, after Vietnam had been divided into a communist North and a non-communist South, thousands of northern Vietnamese fled south. Oscar Arellano, president of the Manila chapter of the Philippines Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees) saw it as a humanitarian crisis and enlisted the support of Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay, who responded thus: "We have been assisted in our hour of need by generous friends. Shall we then deny our help to our neighbors when they are in need of it? Human misery knows no national boundaries. By all means, help them. And if there is anything that I and this government can do to help, please feel free to come to me." Over the next two years, in what Filipinos designated Operation Brotherhood, the Jaycees, with the cooperation of the Philippine government, sent 235 doctors, nurses, social workers, dentists, and other workers, who treated some 730,000 patients in medical facilities throughout South Vietnam.

Philippines Contingent

In 1964, in response to U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson's "More Flags" campaign, Philippines President Diosdado Macapagal sought funds from the Philippine congress to send combat troops to South Vietnam.

Filipino medics fight to keep a U.S. Special Forces sergeant alive at a small hospital in Vietnam in 1965. (Mike Mealey, Stars and Stripes)

Instead, the Philippine house and senate approved an appropriation for civic assistance. In August 1964, the Philippines sent a contingent of 16 doctors, nurses, technicians, and civic action officers from the Philippine armed forces to assist "in the advisory effort directed toward psychological warfare and civil affairs in III Corps," according to the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) Command History (1964). The group was called PHILCON (the Philippines Contingent).

Philippines Civic Action Group-Vietnam

In 1966, the Vietnamese government requested increased aid from the Philippines, including combat troops. In response, the Philippines sent a new detachment to South Vietnam to replace PHILCON. The Philippines Civic Action Group-Vietnam (PHILCAG-V) included an engineer construction battalion, medical and rural community development teams, a security battalion, and a logistics and headquarters element. They set up base in Tay Ninh, 45 miles northwest of Saigon, in the summer of 1966. Over the next 40 months, PHILCAG-V performed a variety of civic action tasks, primarily in public works construction, rural development, and food and medical relief.

PHILCAG-V sergeant treats a little girl for body sores while her mother holds her during the civic action program in the hamlet of Ben Dinh, September 1968. (National Archives)

While made up of 2,068 Filipino soldiers at its peak, PHILCAG-V was a humanitarian mission, not a combat force. The PHILCAG-V motto sums up the ethos: To build, not destroy; to bring happiness, not sorrow; to develop good will, not hatred. Nevertheless, the Filipino soldiers sacrificed 9 dead and 64 wounded during their time in South Vietnam. PHILCAG-V was fully redeployed back to the Philippines by December 1969.

Notably, Philippine senator Ferdinand Marcos had led the country's refusal in 1964 to authorize combat troops to support the South Vietnamese war effort. Once he became president, however, he changed his position and agreed to provide a combat engineering battalion as part of an increased aid package.

"Philuatan"

PHILCAG-V was an effective agent of humanitarian aid and civic action, and was appreciated by the South Vietnamese. Several members of the first PHILCAG-V remember that the South Vietnamese had a special nickname for the Filipinos: "Everywhere they went, they were called 'Philuatan.' It means: 'Filipinos are Number One.'" Apparently, Filipinos were remembered fondly by many Vietnamese people. Operation Brotherhood had left its mark.

Air and Naval Bases

Perhaps the greatest contribution by the Philippine government to the U.S. war effort in Vietnam was the willingness to allow U.S. forces to continue operations out of Naval Base Subic Bay in Zambales and Clark Air Base at Angeles City in Luzon, both in the Philippines.

Cutters of Coast Guard Squadron One (RONONE) depart for Vietnam after being refitted for combat service at Subic Bay, Philippines, 1965. (USCG)

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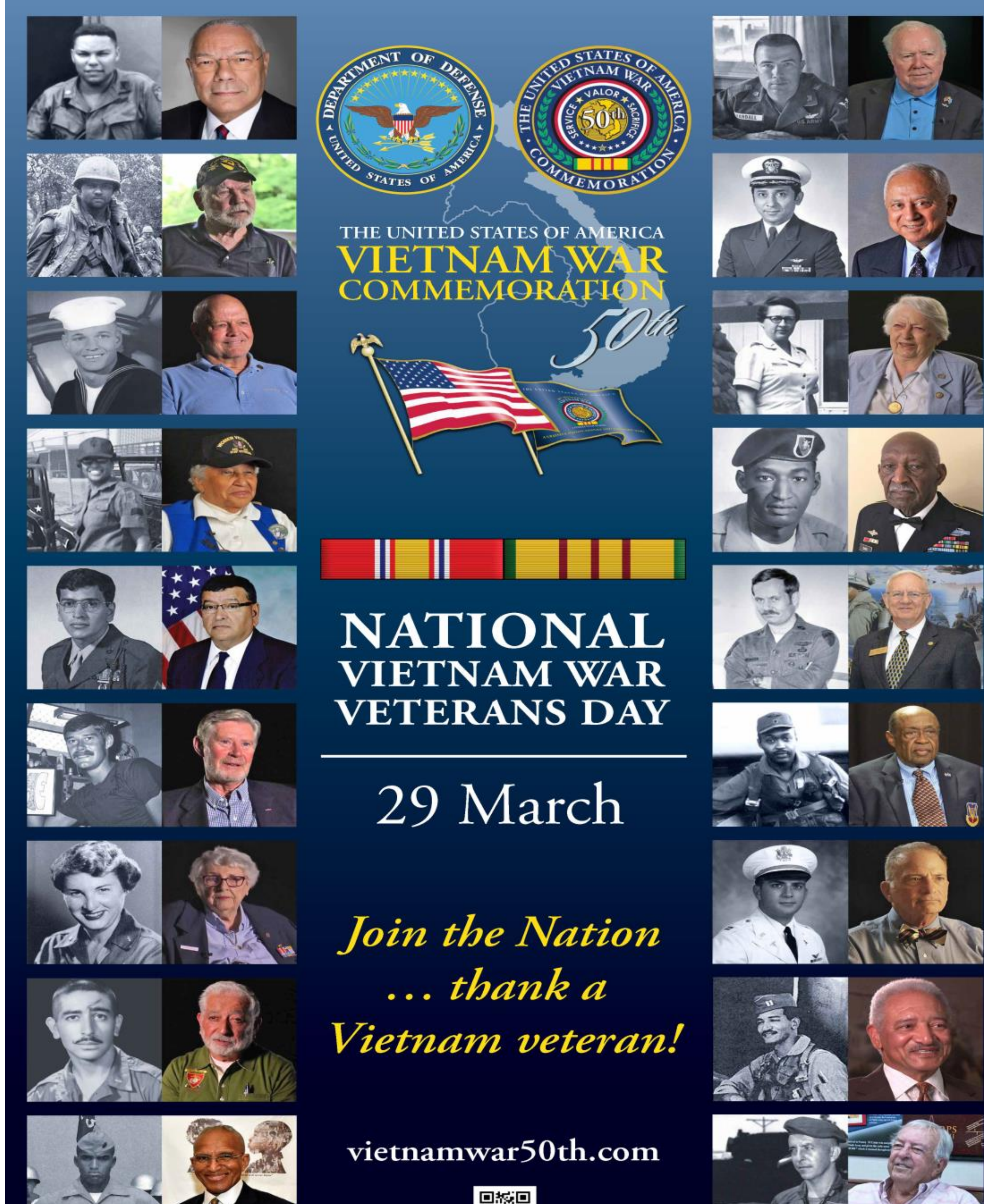
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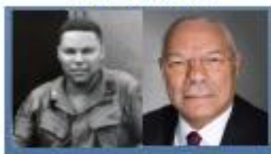
2022 National Vietnam War Veterans Day Poster – Veteran Photos (Descriptions)

Left column



Gen. Colin L. Powell, U.S. Army, Ret. (Infantry)

- 1962-1963 – Advisor to a battalion of the 1st ARVN Division (Vietnam)
- 1968-1969 – Assistant chief of staff of operations, 23rd (Americal) Infantry Division (Vietnam).
- Soldiers Medal, Purple Heart.

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/powell,-colin/

Colonel Robert L. Helvey, U.S. Army, Ret. (Infantry)

- 1965-1966 – ARVN advisor with Advisory Team 3 (Vietnam).
- 1967-1968 – Company commander in the 2d Battalion, 12th Cavalry (Vietnam).
- Distinguished Service Cross, 3 Silver Star Medals, 3 Purple Hearts.

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/helvey,-bob/

Kenneth F. Borchers, U.S. Coast Guard

- 1968 – Crewman on 82-foot Patrol Boat *Arden* Coast Guard Squadron One, Danang (Vietnam).
- Military presenter / escort at the 1968 Miss America pageant.

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/future posting

CW4 Doris "Lucki" Allen. U.S. Army, Ret. (Military Intelligence)

- 1967-1970 – 3 tours; started as senior intelligence analyst, tours culminated with promotion to warrant officer and service as officer-in-charge of translation services in Saigon (Vietnam).
- Only black American military woman in the Intelligence Hall of Fame, Fort Huachuca, Arizona.

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/allen,-doris/

Jose J. Anzaldua, U.S. Marines (Infantry)

- 1969 – Marine Scout with 2d Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division (Vietnam).
- 1969-1973 – Prisoner of War (camps on Vietnam-Laotian border and in Hanoi [Hanoi Hilton]).
- Navy & Marine Corp Medal.

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/anzaldua,-jose-/

Roger W. Jordheim, U.S. Army (Military Intelligence)

- 1970-1971 – Phoenix Program Advisor; conducted more than 100 missions.
- Led building of a Catholic orphanage in Duc Pho (Vietnam).

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/jordheim,-roger/

Lt. Cmdr. Vila J. "Bobbi" Hovis, U.S. Navy, Ret. (Flight Nurse)

- 1963 – "Advisory period" volunteer; 1 of only 7 Navy woman nurses in Vietnam at that time.
- Shot at by an insurgent; saved by a balcony balustrade and lucky ricochet; still has the bullet

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/hovis,-bobbi/

Col. Joaquin C. Gracida, U.S. Marine Corps, Ret. (Infantry)

- 1967-1968 – 2 tours, first as platoon leader, then CORDS advisor, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division (Vietnam).
- 2 Bronze Star Medals with "V" device (for valor), 2 Purple Hearts

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/future posting

Maj. Gen. Arnold Fields, U.S. Marine Corps, Ret.

- 1969-2004 – 34-year career
- 1971 – 81mm mortar platoon commander, 3d Marine Division, Okinawa, Japan
- Bronze Star Medal with "V" device (for valor) (Kuwait)

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2022 National Vietnam War Veterans Day Poster – Veteran Photos (Descriptions cont.)

Right column

Col. Bruce P. "Snake" Crandall, U.S. Army, Ret. ("Huey" UH-1 Pilot)
- 1965-1966 – Company A, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division (Vietnam).
- 1967-1968 – B Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment (Vietnam).
- Medal of Honor recipient (for gallant actions during the 1965 Battle at LZ-X-Ray, Ia Drang Valley).

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/crandall,-bruce-perry/

Cmdr. Everett Alvarez, Jr., U.S. Navy, Ret. (Naval Aviator)
- 1963-1964 – Gulf of Tonkin; 1964 – 1st U.S. aviator shot down and captured in North Vietnam.
- 1964-1973 – Prisoner of War (8 1/2 years).
- Distinguished Flying Cross, Silver Star Medal.

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/alvarez,-everett/

Brig. Gen. Wilma L. Vaught, U.S. Air Force, Ret.
- 1966 – 1st woman deployed with a Strategic Air Command bomb wing (Vietnam).
- 1968 – Comptroller and analyst for MACV (1 of only 4 women at HQ) (Vietnam).

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/vaught,-wilma/

Sgt. Maj. Ernest J. Davis, U.S. Army, Ret. (Special Forces)
- 1967-1968 – 5th Special Forces Group, Kien Phong Province and Canto (Vietnam).
- 1969 – 5th Special Forces Group (Vietnam).
- 1971-1972 – 5th Special Forces Group, USARV ITG, Dong-Ba-Thin (Vietnam).
- Bronze Star Medal with "V" device (for valor).

Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmie W. Spencer, U.S. Army, Ret. (Infantry)
- 1965-1966 – 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division (Vietnam).
- 1968-1969 – adviser to Regional Forces / Popular Forces (Vietnam).
- Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart.

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/future posting

Brig. Gen. J. Timothy Boddie, Jr., U.S. Air Force, Ret. (Fighter Pilot)
- 1966-1967 – 559th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 12th Tactical Fighter Wing (Vietnam).
- 201 combat missions (57 over North Vietnam) in the F-4 Phantom II.
- Distinguished Flying Cross, 14 Air Medals.

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/boddie,-james-timothy/

Col. F. Harold "Hal" Kushner, U.S. Army, Ret. (Flight Surgeon)
- 1967 – Flight surgeon, 1st Squadron, 9th U.S. Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division (Vietnam).
- 1967-1973 – Prisoner of War (shot down and captured, November 1967)
- Silver Star Medal, Air Medal, Bronze Star Medal, 3 Purple Hearts.

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/kushner,-hal/

The Honorable John Allen, Superior Court Judge, U.S. Air Force (Fighter Pilot)
- 1968 and 1969 (2 tours) – Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand.
- 170 high-altitude interdiction missions, North Vietnam and Laos.
- 5 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 23 Air Medals.

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/allen,-john/

Cmdr. Charles S. Sapp, U.S. Navy, Ret. (HA(L)-3 "Seawolves" Aviator)
- 1965 – Rescue missions over North Vietnam.
- 1967-1968 – Helicopter gunship missions over RVN (Vietnam).
- 4 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 4 Air Medals, 26 Strike Flight Air Medals, Purple Heart.

https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/history_and_legacy/oral_history/future posting

Join the Nation ... thank a Vietnam veteran!

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

VIETNAM WAR

COMMEMORATION

Certificates of Honor

The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration designed Certificates of Honor and their accompanying lapel pins to thank and honor four distinct categories of Vietnam veterans and their families:

Former, Living American Military POW
This certificate and lapel pin are presented to Vietnam veterans living in America and abroad who are former American Military POWs from the Vietnam War as listed by the Department of Defense. If the former POW is deceased, the lapel pin may be presented to the surviving spouse.

Unaccounted For
This certificate and lapel pin are for the immediate family members (i.e., parents, spouses, siblings, children) of American military personnel listed as missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War by the Department of Defense.

In Memory Of
This certificate and lapel pin are for the immediate family members (i.e., parents, spouses, siblings, children) of a veteran who is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Deceased Vietnam Veteran's Surviving Spouse
This certificate and lapel pin are for the surviving spouse at the time of death of a veteran who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time during the period from November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of location.

Certificates and lapel pins can be requested by Commemorative Partners via the Commemorative Partner Portal on the website listed below. For further questions, email whs.vnwar50th_cpp_coh@mail.mil or call 877-387-9951.

July 2021

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vietnamwar50th.com

U.S. ARMY COMMANDS OF THE VIETNAM WAR

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1. Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam, 1955–1964, Saigon
2. U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, 1962–1973, Saigon
3. U.S. Army, Vietnam, 1965–1972, Saigon, Long Binh
4. I Field Force, Vietnam, 1966–1971, Nha Trang
5. II Field Force, Vietnam, 1966–1971, Long Binh
6. XXIV Corps, 1968–1972, Phu Bai, Danang
7. Capital Military Assistance Command, 1968–1972, Saigon
8. 1st Infantry Division, 1965–1970, Bien Hoa, Di An, Lai Khe
9. 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), 1965–1972, An Khe, Phong Dien, Bien Hoa
10. 4th Infantry Division, 1966–1970, Camp Enari (south of Pleiku City)
11. 9th Infantry Division, 1966–1969, Bear Cat, Dong Tam
12. 23d Division (Americal), 1967–1971, Chu Lai
13. 25th Infantry Division, 1966–1971, Cu Chi, Long Binh
14. 101st Airborne Division, 1965–1971, Bien Hoa, Phan Rang, Phu Bai
15. 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), 1968–1971, Dong Ha

16. 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, 1966–1971, Bien Hoa, Xuan Loc, Di An
17. 11th Infantry Brigade (Light), 1967–1971, Duc Pho
18. 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, 1968–1969, Phu Bai, Phu Loi
19. 173d Airborne Brigade, 1965–1971, Bien Hoa, An Khe, Bong Son
20. 196th Infantry Brigade (Light), 1966–1972, Tay Ninh, Chu Lai, Tam Ky, Danang
21. 198th Infantry Brigade (Light), 1967–1971, Duc Pho, Chu Lai
22. 199th Infantry Brigade (Light), 1966–1970, Long Binh, Bien Hoa
23. 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1964–1971, Nha Trang
24. 1st Logistical Command, 1965–1970, Saigon, Long Binh
25. 1st Aviation Brigade, 1966–1973, Long Binh, Saigon
26. 1st Signal Brigade, 1966–1972, Saigon, Long Binh
27. 18th Engineer Brigade, 1965–1971, Saigon, Dong Ba Thin
28. 18th Military Police Brigade, 1966–1973, Long Binh
29. 20th Engineer Brigade, 1967–1971, Bien Hoa
30. 44th Medical Brigade, 1966–1970, Saigon, Long Binh

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MAJOR MARINE CORPS UNITS IN THE VIETNAM WAR

1. Fleet Marine Force Pacific, 1965–1975, Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii
2. III Marine Expeditionary Force, later amphibious force (III MAF), 1965–1971, Da Nang, I Corps
3. 3d Marine Expeditionary Brigade, later amphibious brigade, 1965, 1971, Chu Lai, Da Nang
4. 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, later amphibious brigade, 1965–1969, 1972–1973, 1975, Da Nang, afloat
5. Special Landing Force (SLF)/31st & 33d Marine Amphibious Units (MAU), 1965–1975, afloat
6. 1st Marine Division, III MAF, 1966–1971, Chu Lai, Da Nang, I Corps
7. 3d Marine Division, III MAF, 1965–1969, Da Nang, Dong Ha, I Corps
8. 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, III MAF, 1965–1971, Da Nang, I Corps
9. Force Logistics Command/1st Force Service Regiment, 1967–1971, Da Nang, Camp Brooks
10. 1st Marines, 1st Marine Division, 1965–1971, Da Nang, Chu Lai, Phu Bai, Quang Tri, Hue, Camp J.E. Muir, Camp D.M. Perdue, Dong Ha, Cua Viet, Khe Sanh, Duong Son
11. 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division, 1966–1971, Rung Sat, Chu Lai, Phu Loc, Phu Bai, Hue, Que Son, An Hoa, Am Ky, Da Nang
12. 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division, 1965–1970, Qui Nhon, Chu Lai, Da Nang, Fire Support Base Ross, Landing Zone Baldy, Duc Pho, Dai Loc, Quan Que Son
13. 11th Marines, 1st Marine Division, 1966–1971, Da Nang, Chu Lai, Hue, Quang Tri, Phu Bai, Thua Thien, An Hoa
14. 27th Marines, 1st Marine Division, 1968, Da Nang
15. 3d Marines, 3d Marine Division, 1965–1969, Da Nang, Chu Lai, Hue/Phu Bai, Khe Sanh, Con Thien, Camp J.J. Carroll, Dong Ha, Quang Tri
16. 4th Marines, 3d Marine Division, 1965–1969, Chu Lai, Phu Bai, Dong Ha, Co Bi Thanh Tan, Camp Evans, Camp J.J. Carroll, Cam Lo
17. 9th Marines, 3d Marine Division, 1965–1969, Da Nang, Dong Ha
18. 12th Marines, 3d Marine Division, 1965–1969, Da Nang, Phu Bai, Chu Lai, Hue
19. 26th Marines, 3d Marine Division, 1966–1970, Da Nang, Khe Sanh, Quang Nam
20. Marine Aircraft Group 11, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, 1965–1971, Da Nang
21. Marine Aircraft Group 12, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, 1965–1970, 1971–1973, Chu Lai, Bien Hoa
22. Marine Aircraft Group 13, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, 1966–1970, Chu Lai
23. Marine Aircraft Group 15, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, 1968, 1972–1973, Da Nang, Nam Phong
24. Marine Aircraft Group 16, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, 1962–1964, 1965–1971, Da Nang, Marble Mountain, Dong Ha
25. Marine Aircraft Group 36, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, 1965–1969, Chu Lai, Ky Ha, Phu Bai
26. Marine Aircraft Group 39, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, 1968–1969, 1975, Quang Tri, afloat
27. Combined Action Program (CAP), 1965–1971, I Corps
28. Marine Advisory Unit, Vietnamese Marine Corps (VNMC), 1954–1973, South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos
29. 2d Brigade, Republic of Korea Marine Corps (ROKMC), 1966–1972, I & III Corps

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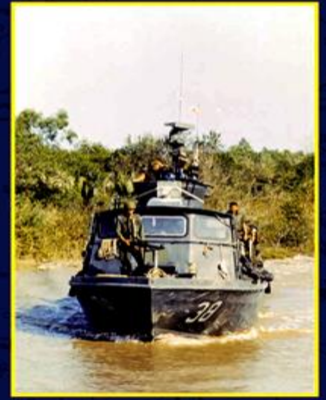
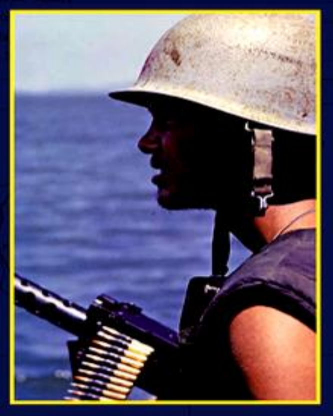
MAJOR U.S. NAVY ORGANIZATIONS VIETNAM WAR





PACIFIC FLEET, HAWAII

SEVENTH FLEET

U.S. NAVAL FORCES VIETNAM
1966–1973

U.S. NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY, DANANG

U.S. NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY, SAIGON

THIRD NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BRIGADE AND SEABEES
1966–1972

TASK FORCE 76
(Amphibious Task Force)
7th Fleet, 1965–1975

TASK FORCE 77
(Attack Carrier Strike Force)
7th Fleet, 1963–1976
Dixie Station, Yankee Station

TASK GROUP 70.8
(Cruiser-Destroyer Group)
7th Fleet, 1965–1972

NAVAL ADVISORY GROUP
USNAVFORV, 1953–1972

NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE GROUP
USNAVFORV

TASK FORCE 115
(MARKET TIME/COASTAL SURVEILLANCE)
USNAVFORV, 1965–1972

TASK FORCE 116
(GAMEWARDEN/RIVER PATROL FORCE)
USNAVFORV, 1965–1970

TASK FORCE 117
(RIVERINE ASSAULT FORCE)
USNAVFORV, 1967–1969

TASK FORCE 194
(SEALORDS)
USNAVFORV 1968–1970

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MAJOR U.S. AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE VIETNAM WAR

43.

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1. Pacific Air Forces (PACAF), 1965–1976, Hawaii
2. Seventh Air Force, 1966–1975, Tan Son Nhut Air Field, RVN and Nakhon Phanom Aprt, Thailand
3. Thirteenth Air Force, 1964–1975, Clark Air Base, Philippines
4. Eighth Air Force, 1970–1975, Andersen AFB, Guam
5. 2d Air Division, 1962–1966, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN
6. 834th Air Division, 1966–1971, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN
7. 3d Tactical Fighter Wing, 1965–1970, Bien Hoa AB, RVN
8. 8th Tactical Fighter Wing, 1965–1974, Ubon RTAFB, Thailand
9. 12th Tactical Fighter Wing, 1965–1971, Cam Ranh Bay AB, RVN and Phu Cat AB, RVN
10. 14th Air Commando (Later 14th Special Operations) Wing, 1966–1971, Nha Trang, AB, RVN and Phan Rang AB, RVN
11. 31st Tactical Fighter Wing, 1966–1970, Tuy Hoa AB, RVN
12. 34th Training Wing, 1963–1965, Bien Hoa AB, RVN
13. 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, 1966–1971, Da Nang AB, RVN and Phan Rang AB, RVN
14. 37th Tactical Fighter Wing, 1967–1970, Phu Cat AB, RVN
15. 43d Strategic Wing, 1970–Present, Andersen AFB, Guam
16. 56th Air Commando (later, 56th Special Operations) Wing, 1967–1975, Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand
17. 307th Strategic Wing, 1970–1975, U-Tapao AB, Thailand
18. 315th Tactical Airlift Wing, 1966–1972, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN and Phan Rang AB, RVN
19. 355th Tactical Fighter Wing, 1965–1972, Takhli RTAFB, Thailand
20. 366th Tactical Fighter Wing, 1966–1972, Phan Rang AB, RVN, Da Nang AB, RVN, Takhli RTAFB, Thailand
21. 374th Troop Carrier (later, 374th Tactical Airlift) Wing, 1966–1973, Ching Chuan Kang AB, Taiwan
22. 376th Strategic Wing, 1970-1991, Kadena AB, Japan
23. 388th Tactical Fighter Wing, 1966–1975, Korat RTAFB, Thailand
24. 405th Tactical Fighter Wing, 1959–1974, Clark AB, Philippines
25. 432d Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, 1966–1975, Udorn RTAFB, Thailand
26. 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, 1966–1971, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN
27. 463d Troop Carrier (later, Tactical Airlift) Wing, 1965–1971, Mactan Isle Airfield, Philippines and Clark AB, Philippines
28. 483d Tactical Airlift Wing, 1966–1972, Cam Ranh Bay AB, RVN
29. 553d Reconnaissance Wing, 1967–1970, Korat RTAFB, Thailand
30. 633d Special Operations Wing, 1968–1970, Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand
31. 3960th Strategic Wing, 1955–1970, Andersen AFB, Guam
32. 4133d Bombardment Wing, 1966–1970, Andersen AFB, Guam
33. 4252d Strategic Wing, 1965–1970, Kadena AB, Okinawa
34. 4258th Strategic Wing, 1966–1970, U-Tapao AB, Thailand
35. 6234th Tactical Fighter Wing (13th Air Force), 1965–1966, Korat RTAFB, Thailand
36. 6251st Tactical Fighter Wing (7th Air Force), 1965–1966, Bien Hoa AB, RVN
37. 6252d Tactical Fighter Wing, 1965–1966, Da Nang AB, RVN
38. 3d Aero Rescue & Recovery Group (redesignated 563d Rescue Group), 1966–1973, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN
39. 315th Troop Carrier Group (replaced by 315th Tactical Airlift Wing), 1962–1966, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN and Phan Rang AB, RVN
40. 504th Tactical Air Support Group (Redesignated Expeditionary Air Support Operations Group), 1966–1972, Bien Hoa, Cam Ranh Bay AB, and Phan Rang AB, RVN
41. 505th Tactical Control Group, 1965–1973, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN
42. 552d Airborne Early Warning Task Force, 1965–1974, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN
43. 1964th Communcations Group, 1962–1973, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN
44. 1974th Communications Group, 1965–1976, Korat RTAFB, Thailand and Udorn RTAFB, Thailand

* *SAC subordinate units frequently deployed bomber and tanker resources [these deployments were temporary provisional units that ceased to exist upon inactivation]. Provisional units are not authorized emblems, not even the emblems of their permanent counterparts. Therefore, none have been included on this poster.*

** *6234th Tactical Fighter Wing and 6251st Tactical Fighter Wing have no official emblems on file at the AFHRA*

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MAJOR U.S. COAST GUARD ORGANIZATIONS
VIETNAM WAR

Task Force 115 (Market Time)
USNAVFORV, 1965

Coast Guard Activities Vietnam
U.S. Coast Guard, 1968–1970

Coast Guard Loran Station, Con Son
1966–1973, Con Son

Coast Guard Loran Station, Lampang, Thailand
USCGA-V, 1966–1973
Lampang, Thailand

Coast Guard Loran Station, Sattahip, Thailand
USCGA-V, 1966–1973
Sattahip, Thailand

Coast Guard Loran Station, Tan My
USCGA-V, 1966–1973
Tan My

Coast Guard Loran Station, Udorn, Thailand
USCGA-V, 1966–1973
Udorn, Thailand

Coast Guard Squadron One (RONONE) TF-115
USNAVFORV, 1965–1970
An Thoi

Coast Guard Squadron Three (RONTHREE) TF-115
USNAVFORV, 1967–1972
Da Nang, Cat Lo, An Thoi

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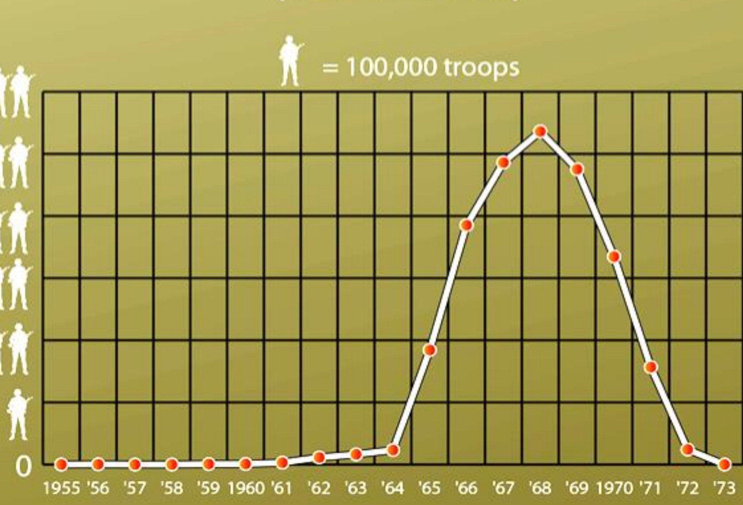
STATISTICS OF THE VIETNAM WAR

The average U.S. infantryman in Vietnam saw about **240 days of combat in one year,** thanks to the mobility of the helicopter. In comparison, the average infantry in the South Pacific during World War II saw only 40 days of combat in four years.

U.S. forces sent to Vietnam were the **highest educated** of all previously deployed armies. **79% had at least a high school degree** prior to entering military service.

U.S. Troop Strength by Year End (1955 - 1973)

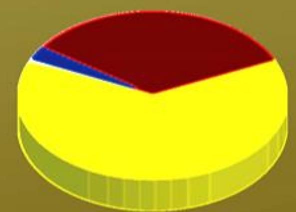


658 U.S. prisoners of war returned home alive from Southeast Asia.

As of 2014, 1,638 are still unaccounted for.

U.S. ARMED FORCES TOLL OF WAR (1955-1975)

KILLED | WOUNDED



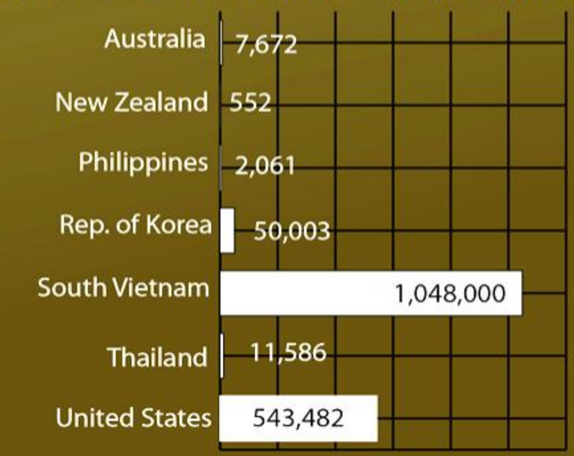
As of 2013, the total number of U.S. armed forces killed in Vietnam in the two decades of involvement was **58,253**.

Of these, there were:
38,224 Army,
14,844 Marines,
2,586 Air Force,
2,566 Navy,
26 Merchant Marines
7 Coast Guard.

The total number of U.S. armed forces non-mortally wounded in Vietnam was **153,363.**

Of these, there were:
96,802 Army,
51,392 Marines,
931 Air Force,
4,178 Navy,
60 Coast Guard.

PEAK STRENGTH OF ALLIED ARMED FORCES DURING VIETNAM WAR68



THE UNITED STATES ROAD TO WAR IN VIETNAM

1945
SEPTEMBER 2

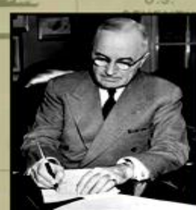
Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese nationalist who admired the works of Marx and wanted to establish a socialist state in his country, issues a "Declaration of Independence," borrowing language from the U.S. Declaration and stating, "…we, members of the Provisional Government, representing the whole Vietnamese people, declare that from now on we break off all relations of a colonial character with France." Although France would initially acknowledge this Declaration of Independence, the stage was set for what would become a decade long conflict between France and Ho Chi Min's communist-backed Viet Minh forces.

1950
JANUARY 14

The People's Republic of China formally recognized Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam and began sending military advisers, modern weapons and equipment to the Viet Minh. Later in January, the Soviet Union extended diplomatic recognition of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

1950
FEBRUARY 27

President Truman signs NSC 64, a memorandum that recommended "that all practicable measures be taken" to check further communist expansion in Southeast Asia.



1950
MAY 8

United States announces that it was "according economic aid and military equipment to the associated states of Indochina and to France in order to assist them in restoring stability and permitting these states to pursue their peaceful and democratic development."

1950
SEPTEMBER 17

United States establishes the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), Indochina, in Saigon. Its primary function was to manage American military aid to and through France to the Associated States of Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) to combat communist forces.

1954
MAY 7

"Earthquake's Final Flight" by Jeffrey W. Bass, CIA Museum

The conflict between French forces and the Viet Minh culminated in the battle at Dien Bien Phu. Between March 13 and May 6, 1954, CIA contracted pilots and crews made 682 airdrops to the beleaguered French forces. On May 7, French forces surrendered to the Viet Minh after a 55 day battle, marking the end to France's attempt to hold on to its colonial possession.

1954
JULY 20

The French defeat at Dien Bien Phu led to the Geneva Accords which established a cease-fire in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam and divided the country into a North and South Vietnam with a demilitarized zone along the 17th Parallel. French forces had to withdraw south of the parallel, the Viet Minh withdrew north of it. Within two years, a general election was to be held in both north and south for a single national government.

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The United States Road to War in Vietnam

1954
September 8

Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) is formed as a military alliance to check communist expansion, and included France, Great Britain, United States, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, and Pakistan.

1955
November 1

By 1955, France had given up its military advisory responsibilities in South Vietnam, and the United States assumed the task. To appropriately focus on its new role, on November 1 the United States redesignated MAAG, Indo-china as MAAG, Vietnam and created a MAAG, Cambodia. MAAG, Vietnam then became the main conduit for American military assistance to South Vietnam and the organization responsible for advising and training the South Vietnamese military.

1961
November 11

In the face of South Vietnam's failure to defeat the communist insurgency and the increasing possibility that the insurgency might succeed, Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara recommend to President John F. Kennedy, "to commit ourselves to the objective of preventing the fall of South Viet-Nam to Communism and that, in so doing so, …recognize that…the United States and other SEATO forces may be necessary to achieve this objective."

1961
November 22

President Kennedy substantially increased the level of U.S. military assistance to Vietnam. National Security Action Memorandum 111, dated November 22, stated that: "The U.S. Government is prepared to join the Viet-Nam Government in a sharply increased joint effort to avoid a further deterioration in the situation in South Viet Nam."

1961
December 11

Kennedy's decision resulted in sending to South Vietnam the USNS Core with men and materiel aboard (32 Vertol H–21C Shawnee helicopters and 400 air and ground crewmen to operate and maintain them). Less than two weeks later, the helicopters, flown by U.S. pilots, would provide combat support in an operation west of Saigon.

1962
February 8

Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) is created and commanded by General Paul D. Harkins. Henceforth, MACV directed the conduct of the war and supervised Military Assistance and Advisory Group-Vietnam.

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The United States Road to War in Vietnam

1963
November 22

President Lyndon B. Johnson is sworn in as President, following the assassination of President Kennedy. U.S. policy vis-a-vis Vietnam would change dramatically under Johnson's Administration.

1964
August 7

On August 2, 1964, North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked the USS Maddox, a Navy destroyer, off the coast of North Vietnam. Two days later, a second attack was reported on another destroyer, although it is now accepted that the second attack did not occur. In the wake of these attacks, President Lyndon Johnson presented a resolution to Congress, which voted overwhelmingly in favor on August 7. The Tonkin Gulf Resolution stated that "Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression."

1965
March 2

U.S. military aircraft begin attacking targets throughout North Vietnam in the strategic bombing campaign—Operation ROLLING THUNDER.

1965
March 8

As the situation deteriorated in South Vietnam and the United States ramped up its air war activities there, the Da Nang air base in northern South Vietnam became both significant to those activities and vulnerable to attack by communist insurgents, the Viet Cong. To defend the air base, but specifically not to carry out offensive operations against the Viet Cong, President Johnson authorized the landing of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, about 5,000 strong, at Da Nang on March 8.

1965
July 28

By May 1965, the situation had so deteriorated in South Vietnam that General William C. Westmoreland concluded that American combat troops had to enter the conflict as combatants, or else South Vietnam would collapse within six months. Johnson announced his decision at a press conference on July 28: "We will not surrender and we will not retreat…we are going to continue to persist, if persist we must, until death and desolation have led to the same [peace] conference table where others could now join us at a much smaller cost." On the same day he ordered the 1st Cavalry Division, Airmobile to Vietnam, with more units to follow. The United States was now fully committed.

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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A GRATEFUL NATION THANKS AND HONORS YOU

COMMEMORATION OBJECTIVES

1. To thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war or listed as missing in action, for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans.
2. To highlight the service of the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of Federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the Armed Forces.
3. To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War.
4. To highlight the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War.
5. To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War.

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National Vietnam War Veterans Day
29 March

Join the Nation…
Thank a Vietnam Veteran
for Service to our Nation

U.S. Armed Forces personnel with active duty service between November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of location of service.

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VIETNAM WAR VETERAN

NATIONAL VIETNAM WAR VETERANS DAY: 29 MARCH

Join the Nation…Thank a Vietnam Veteran for Service to our Nation

U.S. Armed Forces personnel with active duty service between November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of location of service.

vietnamwar50th.com

U.S. SERVICEWOMEN IN THE VIETNAM WAR

PART 1 OF 3

The first five enlisted Women in the Air Force (WAF) and the fourth WAF officer to be assigned to Vietnam arrive at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, South Vietnam. Left to right: two unidentified U.S. Air Force personnel, Lieutenant Colonel June H. Hilton, Airman First Class Carol J. Hornick, Airman First Class Rita M. Pitcock, Staff Sergeant Barbara J. Snavely, Airman First Class Shirley J. Brown, and Airman First Class Eva M. Nordstrom. June 1967, U.S. Air Force photo, National Archives.

Women's Army Corps (WAC) Staff Sergeant Carol A. Ogg, a member of the U.S. Army 509th Radio Research Group, and Specialist Fifth Class Jo Wilson in front of the Medford Bachelor Enlisted Quarters, Saigon, South Vietnam, 1970. Sergeant First Class Carol Ogg photo.

Women in the Air Force (WAF) First Lieutenant Camilla L. Wagner, a member of the 377th Supply Squadron and the only WAF supply officer in Vietnam, operates the UNIVAC 1050-II computer, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, South Vietnam, February 1968. U.S. Air Force photo, National Archives.

Women in the United States military during the Vietnam War held diverse and important roles supporting the war mission. Many servicewomen stationed in the combat zone served with distinction.

Women's Army Corps (WAC) Sergeant Evelyn Ford, an adviser to the South Vietnamese Women Armed Forces Corps, in the aftermath of the TET offensive, Saigon, South Vietnam, 1968. Sergeant First Class Carol Ogg photo.

Women line officers, staff officers, and enlisted personnel performed a range of military occupational specialties in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. All of the women who served in Vietnam volunteered for military service. More volunteered to serve in Vietnam than there were available positions. Military leaders, senior women line officers included, were reluctant to send women to Vietnam.

Military women were not permitted or trained to carry weapons at the time, though they were regularly under threat of enemy attack while carrying out their duties. On bases they endured hardships like their male counterparts, and were often under fire from rockets and mortars. Women served in headquarters, staff assignments, operations groups, and information offices. They performed in a variety of clerical, intelligence, medical specialist, and personnel positions. With their sister servicewomen in the continental United States (CONUS), Hawaii, Japan, Korea, Okinawa, Thailand, and the Philippines, they demonstrated extraordinary professionalism and belief in the importance of service during wartime.

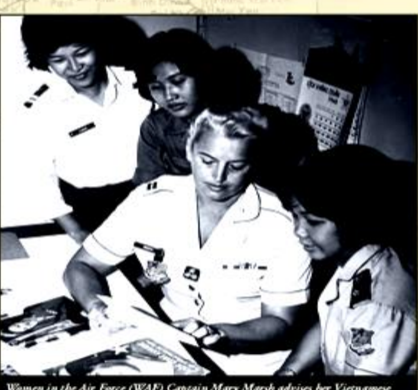
In March 1962, Major Anne Marie Doering, a Women's Army Corps (WAC) plans officer, became the first woman staff officer assigned to Vietnam as a member of the United States Military Assistance Advisory Group in Saigon. Major Doering had been born in Vietnam and spoke Vietnamese and French fluently. In January 1965, Major Kathleen I. Wilkes and Sergeant First Class Betty L. Adams became the first two U.S. WAC advisers to the newly formed Republic of Vietnam Women's Armed Forces Corps (WAFC). With their leadership and command experience they assisted the WAFC Director and staff in developing systems for recruiting, training, and assigning enlisted South Vietnamese WAFC personnel and officer candidates.

From 1965 on, WAC officers, noncommissioned officers, and enlisted women served in a variety of capacities at Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) headquarters, support commands, and United States Army, Vietnam (USARV) headquarters. Their roles included administration, finance, intelligence, logistics, plans and training, and legal and civil affairs occupation specialties. In September 1966, the WAC Detachment, Vietnam, led by Captain Peggy E. Ready and First Sergeant Marion C. Crawford was established at USARV headquarters, Saigon. The unit had an average strength of 90 enlisted women, mostly clerk typists and stenographers. It relocated with the command to Long Binh Post in 1967. Approximately 700 WAC personnel served in Vietnam during the war.

Aerial view of Tan Son Nhut Air Base, South Vietnam. This air base was utilized by Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps units throughout the Vietnam War. October 1972, U.S. Air Force photo, National Archives.

In June 1967, Lieutenant Colonel June H. Hilton and the first contingent of Air Force women arrived in Saigon for duty at MACV headquarters. They were followed shortly by Air Force servicewomen of the 7th Air Force headquarters, assigned to Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa, and Cam Ranh Air Bases and several air bases in Thailand. Examples of Air Force servicewomen assignments in Vietnam, as described by Major General Jeanne M. Holm: "Women officers served primarily in noncombat fields such as supply, aircraft maintenance, public affairs, personnel, intelligence, photo interpretation, meteorology, and administration. Enlisted Air Force women served primarily in administrative, clerical, personnel, data processing, and supply occupations."

Air Force women throughout CONUS and the Far East were essential to air operations in the Vietnam War. Women served in Strategic Air Command supporting bomber units. They served in Military Airlift Command preparing personnel, supplies, ammunition, and equipment for airlift to Vietnam. Others served in the Air Force Communications Service that provided global communication links critical during every phase of the war. An estimated 144 line officers and 95 enlisted women of the U.S. Air Force served in Vietnam.



Women in the Air Force (WAF) Captain Mary Marsh advises her Vietnamese counterparts, Lieutenant Do Thi Dong-Thao (foreground), Staff Sergeant Ly Thi Oanh (top) and Staff Sergeant Luc Thi Huc, June 1968. Captain Marsh is the first WAF assigned to the Air Force Advisory Group and functions in a dual role—personnel adviser to the Vietnamese Air Force and adviser to the Vietnamese Women's Armed Forces Corps. U.S. Air Force photo, National Archives

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U.S. SERVICEWOMEN IN THE VIETNAM WAR

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Captain Nancy J. Jurgevich assumes command of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) Detachment, Vietnam, Long Binh, South Vietnam, October 16, 1968. Left to right: an unidentified WAC servicewoman, First Sergeant Katherine Herney receiving the WAC Detachment guidon, Captain Joanne P. Murphy, Commanding Officer (outgoing) and Captain Jurgevich. Lieutenant Colonel Nancy Jurgevich photo.

Commander Elizabeth Barrett was the highest-ranking woman naval line officer to serve in South Vietnam, and the first woman naval line officer to hold a command in a combat zone, serving as Commanding Officer of the Naval Advisory Group's 450 enlisted men at Saigon from November 1972 to March 1973. U.S. Navy photo.

Woman Marine Staff Sergeant Ermelinda Salazar was nominated for the 1970 Unsung Heroine Award presented annually by the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Staff Sergeant Ermelinda Salazar, determined to help the children of the St. Vincent de Paul Orphanage in Saigon, South Vietnam, in her off-duty hours, holds two of the youngsters, June 1970. U.S. Marine Corps photo, National Archives.

Women line officers, staff officers, and enlisted personnel performed a range of military occupational specialties in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. All of the women who served in Vietnam volunteered for military service.

Lieutenant Elizabeth G. Wylie was the first female line officer in the Navy selected to serve in Vietnam. In June 1967, she arrived in Saigon and was assigned to the Command Information Center, Naval Forces Command. She was responsible for reports, including briefings to visiting elected officials, dignitaries, and journalists. Seven additional Navy women line officers were assigned to Vietnam between 1968 and 1973. Five officers were assigned to the Naval Forces Command staff in Saigon and two served at the Naval Support Activity in Cam Ranh Bay.

Women's Army Corps (WAC) Detachment, Vietnam, cadre at Bien Hoa Airport on the occasion of the first commanding officer's departure from South Vietnam, October 1967. Front row, left to right, Private First Class Patricia C. Pewitt and Specialist Fourth Class Rhynell M. Stoabs. Back row, left to right, Staff Sergeant Edith L. Efferson, Sergeant First Class Betty J. Benson, Captain Joanne P. Murphy, (second Commanding Officer WAC Detachment, Vietnam, 1967-1968), Captain Peggy E. Ready (first Commanding Officer WAC Detachment, Vietnam, 1966-1967), and First Sergeant Marion C. Crawford. Vietnam Women Veterans, Incorporated photo.

Commander Elizabeth Barrett was the highest ranking female naval line officer to serve in Vietnam. Arriving in Saigon in January 1972, she became the Navy's first woman officer to hold a command in a combat zone. She commanded the Naval Advisory Group from November 1972 to March 1973, supervising several hundred personnel.

Master Sergeant Barbara J. Dulinsky, who volunteered for duty in South Vietnam, became the first Woman Marine ordered to a combat zone when she reported to the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) in Saigon on March 18, 1967. Women's Memorial Foundation Collection.

Another important step for women in the U.S. Navy occurred during the Vietnam War era outside the theater of operations. In September 1972, two women line officers and 32 enlisted women were selected for a yearlong pilot program serving aboard the hospital ship USS *Sanctuary* as members of its crew. Lieutenant Junior Grade Ann Kerr served as an administrative assistant, and Ensign Rosemary Nelson was assigned as a supply officer. Their service qualified them to be Officers of the Deck. The enlisted women performed their duties exceptionally in deck, administration, operations, and supply departments. Additional enlisted women were assigned to the ship's hospital staff.

The first Woman Marine assigned to Vietnam was Master Sergeant Barbara J. Dulinsky. She arrived in March 1967 and was stationed at MACV combat operations center in Saigon. Between 1967 and 1973, eight officers and 28 enlisted Women Marines served in Vietnam. They were assigned to administrative billets within MACV headquarters in Saigon. Many worked with the Marine Corps Personnel Section on the staff of the Commander, Naval Forces, Vietnam. The section provided administrative support to Marines stationed throughout the combat zone. Other Women Marines, such as Lieutenant Colonels Ruth J. O'Holleran and Ruth F. Reinholz, and Staff Sergeant Ermelinda Salazar, served with the Military History Branch, Secretary, Joint Staff, MACV.

There are numerous instances of military servicewomen volunteering during their off-duty time to help the local South Vietnamese civilian population. An excellent example is Woman Marine Staff Sergeant Ermelinda Salazar. In 1970 she was recognized for her leadership and tireless work on behalf of Vietnamese orphans at the St. Vincent DePaul orphanage in Saigon. On her days off, she volunteered at the orphanage, facilitated quality care by initiating a donation drive, and motivated other Marines to volunteer at the facility. She was nominated for the 1970 Unsung Heroine Award sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary. In the same year she was awarded the Vietnamese Service Medal by the Republic of Vietnam for her philanthropic work. Staff Sergeant Salazar was also awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal for performance of her duties while serving with the Military History Branch.

Women's Army Corps (WAC) Specialist Fifth Class Marlene A. Bowen, of the U.S. Army 1st Aviation Brigade, comforts a young child at the Tan Mai Orphanage, Long Binh, South Vietnam, November 1971. Master Sergeant Marlene A. Bowen-Grissett photo. Vietnam Women Veterans, Incorporated.

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Women's Army Corps (WAC) Director Colonel Elizabeth P. Hoisington meets cadre members of the WAC Detachment, Long Binh, South Vietnam, October 1967. Left to right, Specialist Fourth Class Rhynell M. Stoabs, Sergeant First Class Betty J. Benson (Acting First Sergeant), Colonel Hoisington, Captain Peggy E. Ready, Staff Sergeant Edith L. Efferson, and Private First Class Patricia C. Pewitt. U.S. Army photo.

First Sergeant Marion C. Crawford, Women's Army Corps (WAC) Detachment, Vietnam, stands retreat with the WAC Drill Team, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Saigon, South Vietnam, January 1967. U.S. Army photo.

Carmen P. Marshall is promoted to Lieutenant, U.S. Navy Medical Service Corps, while serving as a laboratory officer aboard the USS Repose on the South China Sea, off the coast of South Vietnam, January 1968. Left to right, Captain James M. Campbell, U.S. Navy, Commander, USS Repose, Lieutenant Marshall, and Captain Herbert Markowitz, U.S. Navy Medical Corps, Commander, Naval Hospital, USS Repose. Carmen P. (Marshall) Adams photo.

Many servicewomen were given meritorious service awards, wartime citations, and decorations for their work during the Vietnam War.

At least four servicewomen were awarded the Purple Heart for injuries sustained while serving in Vietnam: Air Force Captains Mariana Grant and Camilla Wagner, Army First Lieutenant Sharon Lane, who died from shrapnel wounds, and Army Specialist Fifth Class Sheron Green. In 1970, Army Specialist Fifth Class Karen Offutt rescued Vietnamese adults and children from a fire near her Tan Son Nhut quarters at the risk of her own life. A recommendation for the Soldier's Medal was downgraded to a Certificate of Achievement; reexamination of the circumstances in 2001 resulted in the belated award of the Soldier's Medal. Chief Warrant Officer Three Doris "Lucki" Allen, who served three tours in Vietnam from 1967 to 1970, served first as a Specialist Seventh Class senior intelligence analyst, Army Operations Center, Long Binh, South Vietnam. In a report *50,000 Chinese*, she informed her supervisors about a large number of Chinese troops amassing 30 days before the January 1968 Tet Offensive. "Unfortunately," she stated, "the report fell on deaf ears." In her second tour, she held the position of Supervisor, Security Division, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Security, Plans, and Operations, Headquarters, 1st Logistical Command, South Vietnam. In 1970, Specialist Seventh Class Allen was appointed to Warrant Officer and assigned as the Officer in Charge of the Translation Branch, Combined Document Exploitation Center, Saigon, South Vietnam. Her extraordinary contributions, leadership, and selfless service in each Vietnam assignment earned her the Bronze Star with 2 Oak Leaf clusters. In 2009, Chief Warrant Officer Three Allen was inducted into the Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame.

Women's Army Corps (WAC) Specialist Seventh Class Doris "Lucki" Allen served as a senior intelligence analyst in Long Binh and Saigon, South Vietnam, from 1967 to 1970. Women's Memorial Foundation Collection.

The courage and ability American servicewomen demonstrated before and during the Vietnam War helped convince U.S. leaders to improve women's standing in the military. Prior to the war, women had limited opportunities for advancement to higher ranks. In November 1967, Congress passed Public Law 90-130, which eliminated rank ceilings for women and lifted the two percent restriction on the number of women line officers and enlisted personnel who could serve. Elizabeth P. Hoisington, Women's Army Corps (WAC) Director, was promoted to brigadier general on June 11, 1970.* On July 16, 1971, Jeanne M. Holm was promoted to brigadier general, the first Air Force woman to achieve that rank. She became the first woman in the U.S. Armed Forces to attain the rank of major general on June 1, 1973. After the Vietnam War, Fran McKee became the first Navy woman line officer to be promoted to the rank of rear admiral (lower half) on June 1, 1976. Nearly two years later, on May 11, 1978, the Marine Corps appointed Margaret A. Brewer to brigadier general.

Woman Marine Sergeant Doris L. Denton receives the Joint Service Commendation Medal from Major General Richard F. Shaffer, Assistant Chief of Staff, Strategic Plans and Policy, Saigon, South Vietnam, March 5, 1969. First Sergeant Doris Denton photo.

As a result of personnel shortages, the important contributions of military women during the Vietnam War, and the transition to an all-volunteer force, more career fields and educational and leadership opportunities became available to servicewomen. Women began serving in previously restricted combat-related areas aboard surface warfare ships and in aircraft as pilots and navigators. Military accession and personnel policies regarding women also changed which opened the door for future educational and leadership opportunities. Women obtained the right to join reserve officer training programs and receive appointments to the service academies. They were also allowed to remain in the military after becoming pregnant.

Flowers and momentos left at the Vietnam Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C. on Veterans Day, 2010. Photograph by Fred W. Baker III, Department of Defense.

Dedicated in 1993, the Vietnam Women's Memorial, located on the National Mall, Washington, D.C., serves as a lasting tribute to the servicewomen of the Vietnam War. A short distance across the Potomac River stands the Women In Military Service For America Memorial. Dedicated in 1997 at the gateway to Arlington National Cemetery, this memorial highlights the service, sacrifice, and valor of American military women who served not only during the Vietnam War, but throughout American history.

Retired Air Force Brigadier General Wilma L. Vaught, Vietnam War veteran and president of the Women's Memorial Foundation, presents remarks at the Women In Military Service For America Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery, May 22, 2013. Photograph by Corporal Christofer P. Baines, U.S. Marine Corps.

References can be found on The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration website http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/education/.

*Military nurses were promoted to general/flag rank in the early 1970's.

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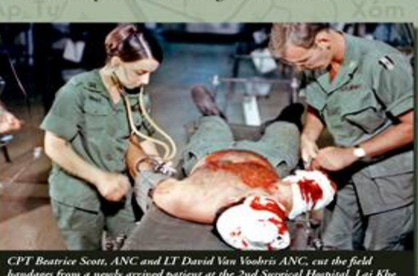
MAJ Patricia McIntyre ANC, Chief Anesthetist, 93rd Evacuation Hospital, gives anesthesia to a patient before an operation, Long Binh, Vietnam, June 28, 1967. Photo by SSG Howard C. Breedlove. U.S. Army photo, National Archives

Members of the 4th Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade, load casualties aboard a UH-1D (Dust Off) helicopter to be extracted from Hill 875, located 15 miles southwest of Dak To, in preparation for the final assault. Republic of Vietnam, November 22, 1967. Photo by SSG Alfred Batungbacal. U.S. Army photo, National Archives

An aerial view of the 93rd Evacuation Hospital. The helipad of the 45th Air Ambulance Medical Company is in the background. Long Binh, Vietnam, November 10, 1969. Photo by LT Berlin. U.S. Army photo, National Archives

Whether stationed with training units, in hospitals, on planes, or aboard ships, in the Pacific Theater, or the United States, military nurses served with distinction throughout the Vietnam War caring for U.S. military personnel, Allied troops, and civilians.

In April of 1956, three Army Nurse Corps officers became the first U.S. servicewomen to serve in Vietnam. Majors Jane Becker, Francis Smith, and her sister, Helen Smith, were placed on a temporary duty assignment with the United States Military Assistance Advisory Group's Medical Training Team in Saigon, Vietnam. Their principal responsibilities were to educate South Vietnamese nurses in modern nursing care practices. One of the tools developed and translated into Vietnamese was a nursing procedure manual. In 1962, as America's commitment expanded in the Republic of Vietnam, Army Nurse Corps officers helped establish the 8th Field Hospital in Nha Trang, South Vietnam.



CPT Beatrice Scott, ANC and LT David Van Voohris ANC, cut the field bandages from a newly arrived patient at the 2nd Surgical Hospital. Lai Khe, Vietnam, September 23, 1969. Photo by SSG Ronald DeLaurier. U.S. Army photo, National Archives

In 1963, the first Navy Nurse Corps officers arrived in South Vietnam to help establish the U.S. Naval Station Hospital, Saigon. Within a few years, additional Navy Nurse Corps officers served on board two hospital ships, the USS *Repose* and USS *Sanctuary*, off the coast of South Vietnam. These floating hospitals arrived in 1966 and 1967, respectively. Their primary mission was offshore medical support for American and Allied Forces in the I Corps Tactical Zone from Da Nang to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) at the 17th parallel. In 1966, Navy Nurse Corps officers helped establish the Navy Support Activity (Naval Station Hospital) in Da Nang, which was to become one of the busiest combat casualty treatment facilities in theater.

In February of 1965, as fighting intensified and U.S. combat forces were committed to Vietnam, the Air Force Nurse Corps augmented the 9th Air Evacuation Squadron, Clark Air Base, Philippines with male nurses to help evacuate wounded American servicemen from Vietnam. In February of 1966, the first contingent of female Air Force Nurse Corps officers arrived for duty at the newly established 12th U.S. Air Force Hospital and the casualty staging unit in Cam Ranh Bay. Other Air Force nurses soon followed, serving in aeromedical evacuation squadrons, such as the 903d, and dispensaries throughout the Pacific Theater. The Air Force assigned nurses to two types of air evacuation missions during the war: "intratheater" or in-country flights transporting the sick and wounded to military hospitals within South Vietnam; and "intertheater" flights from Vietnam to U.S. military hospitals in Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines, and the United States. During the Tet Offensive in February of 1968 the Air Force evacuated more than 10,000 patients.

By December of 1968, Army Nurse Corps officers were assigned to seven surgical, five field, eleven evacuation, and one convalescent hospital within the four Corps Tactical Zones of South Vietnam. These hospitals provided regional medical support to U.S. forces as far north as the 18th Surgical Hospital, Camp Evans near Quand Tri (only 21 miles from the DMZ), and south to the 29th Evacuation Hospital, Can Tho, South Vietnam, in the Mekong Delta region. Reserve and National Guard medical units were also deployed.

A U.S. Air Force flight nurse and a Red Cross nurse attend to American wounded aboard an Air Force C-141 prior to an aeromedical evacuation from Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Vietnam directly back to the United States, January 5, 1967. U.S. Air Force photo, National Archives. Courtesy Women's Memorial Foundation Collection

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1Lt Linda J. Bowser, an Air Force nurse with the 8th TFW MEDCAP team, examines a Thai girl. Bung Sen Village, Thailand, January 10, 1974. Photo by CPT George B. Clemmons, U.S. Air Force photo, National Archives

A Navy nurse offers a word of encouragement as a patient about to leave the Navy hospital ship USS Repose for further treatment in the United States, October 1967. The USS Repose was then operating in the South China Sea, a few miles south of the Seventeenth Parallel off the coast of the Republic of Vietnam. Photo by JOC R.D. Moeser. U.S. Navy photo, National Archives. Courtesy Women's Memorial Foundation Collection

Renowned for their ingenuity, compassionate care, and leadership abilities, military nurses in Vietnam treated 153,303 wounded warriors. The expert quality care provided by military nurse corps officers greatly contributed to the fact that 97.4 percent of wounded service members admitted to military hospitals survived.

Army nurse, 93rd Evacuation Hospital, Long Binh, Vietnam, 1968. R.J. (Greenway) Rasmussen Collection, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection

Air mobility of the wounded and increased patient acuity characterized service in Vietnam. Evacuation by helicopter (which began in 1962) brought severely wounded servicemen, who in previous wars would have died from their injuries, to medical facilities within minutes flying time from the battlefield. Artillery, mortars, high velocity bullets, rocket propelled grenades, booby traps, punji sticks, and claymore mines all inflicted vicious multiple wounds. Trauma care specialization as well as shock/trauma units were developed from this experience.

Military nurse corps officers in Vietnam ranged from novice clinicians in their early twenties, who recently graduated from the Officer Basic Course, to seasoned veterans. Possessing a broad range of clinical experience and leadership skills, military nurses quickly learned the technical skills necessary to be proficient war time nurses.

The "guerrilla warfare tactics" employed by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong meant there was no battle front in Vietnam. This constant threat of enemy mortar, small arms, and rocket fire into the bases where the hospitals were located did not stop the nurses from their mission. When the alert sirens sounded, military nurse corps officers and medics quickly protected their patients and themselves, as well as treated fresh casualties.

Renowned for their ingenuity, compassionate care, and leadership abilities, military nurses in Vietnam treated 153,303 wounded warriors as well as those incapacitated by tropical diseases such as malaria. The expert quality care provided by military nurse corps officers greatly contributed to the fact that 97.4 percent of wounded service members admitted to military hospitals survived.

The vast majority of nurses who served in Vietnam were volunteers. A tour of duty was 12 months with the nurses working an average of six days per week, 12-hour shifts, and longer when mass casualties came in from battle. In addition to their primary mission, nurse corps officers often spent off duty time as members of Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP) teams providing out-patient health care services to South Vietnamese in outlying villages, hamlets, and orphanages. Whether stationed with training units, in hospitals, on planes, or aboard ships, in the Pacific Theater, or the United States, military nurses served with distinction throughout the Vietnam War caring for U.S. military personnel, Allied troops, and civilians.

U.S. Navy Hospital Ship USS Sanctuary. In 1967, the USS Sanctuary joined the USS Repose, the Navy's other hospital ship operating in the South China Sea during the Vietnam War. After recording over 10,000 helicopter landings, performing over 4,000 major surgical operations, admitting 15,500 patients, and treating about 35,000 servicemen, the USS Sanctuary departed Vietnam from Da Nang Harbor in April 1971. U.S. Navy photo, Gift of The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection

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Navy Nurse LCDR Dorothy Ryan checks the medical chart of Marine Cpl Roy [illegible] aboard the hospital ship USS Repose off South Vietnam. LCDR Ryan is one of 29 nurses aboard the hospital ship selected from 500 volunteers of the Navy Nurse Corps, April 22, 1966. U.S. Navy photo, National Archives

2LT Kathleen M. Sullivan assists a Vietnamese child during "Operation MEDCAP", a USAF Civic Action Program in which a team of doctors, nurses, and aides visited a Vietnamese village, treats the sick and teach villagers the basics of sanitation and cleanliness, 1967. U.S. Air Force photo, National Archives

Army nurses, assigned at the 85th Evacuation Hospital in Qui Nhon, arrive in Vietnam aboard the transport ship USNS Barrett, September 1, 1965. Front: First Lieutenant Jean [illegible]. Back row, left to right: First Lieutenants Kathleen [illegible], Sharon [illegible] (later [illegible]), and Mary [illegible] (later [illegible]). Sharon ([illegible]) [illegible] Collection, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection

Military nurse corps officers in Vietnam ranged from novice clinicians in their early twenties, who recently graduated from the Officer Basic Course, to seasoned veterans. Possessing a broad range of clinical experience and leadership skills, military nurses quickly learned the technical skills necessary to be proficient war time nurses.

Three illustrations of military nurses' exemplary courage under fire: In 1964, a Viet Cong saboteur bombed the Brink Bachelor Officer's Quarters in Saigon. Four Navy Nurse Corps officers, Lieutenants Ruth A. Mason (Wilson), Frances Crumpton, Barbara J. Wooster, and Lieutenant Junior Grade Ann D. Reynolds, selflessly cared for the multiple victims even though they themselves were wounded. These officers were the first females to be awarded the Purple Heart Medal for action in Vietnam, "an honor bestowed in the name of the President of the United States to service members wounded or killed as a result of combat." First Lieutenant Diane M. Lindsay, an Army Nurse Corps officer stationed at the 95th Evacuation Hospital in Da Nang, was awarded the Soldier's Medal in 1970 for valiantly restraining a distraught soldier who had thrown a live grenade. Many additional casualties were prevented by the quick interventions of 1LT Lindsay and a male officer who, while subduing the soldier, convinced him to turn over a second grenade. 1LT Lindsay was the first African-American woman to be presented the Soldier's Medal, "the highest honor a soldier can receive for an act of valor in a non-combat situation." On April 4, 1975, First Lieutenant Regina C. Aune, an Air Force flight nurse with the 10th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, was severely wounded as the C-5A Galaxy she was aboard crashed near Ton Son Nhut Air Base, South Vietnam. 1Lt Aune and other surviving crew members carried over 140 Vietnamese orphans to safety from the wreckage. The orphans were being transported to the United States from Vietnam as a part of Operation Babylift. 1Lt Aune was the first woman to be awarded the Air Force's Cheney Award for her heroic and selfless act of valor "in a humanitarian interest performed in connection with aircraft."

Key federal legislation impacting women in the military was enacted during the Vietnam War. One outcome was the opening of senior officer ranks to women. Anna Mae V. Hays, Chief, Army Nurse Corps, was the first female general officer in U.S. history. She was promoted to the rank of brigadier general on June 11, 1970. Alene B. Duerk, Chief, Navy Nurse Corps, became the first woman in the Navy to be promoted (on June 1, 1972) to the rank of rear admiral (lower half), the Navy's equivalent to brigadier general. The first Chief, Air Force Nurse Corps to be promoted (on July 1, 1972) to brigadier general was E. Ann Hoefly.* Another noteworthy development created through legislation during the Vietnam War was the opportunity for male nurses to apply for regular commissions in the military nurse corps.

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Ten military nurse corps officers died while serving in Vietnam—nine Army and one Air Force Nurse Corps officers: Second Lieutenants Carol Ann Drazba and Elizabeth Jones of the 3rd Field Hospital died in a helicopter crash on February 18, 1966, near Saigon; Captain Eleanor G. Alexander and First Lieutenant Jerome E. Olmstead of the 85th Evacuation Hospital, and First Lieutenants Hedwig D. Orlowski and Kenneth R. Shoemaker of the 67th Evacuation Hospital perished in a plane crash near Qui Nhon on November 30, 1967; Second Lieutenant Pamela D. Donovan of the 85th Evacuation Hospital, Qui Nhon, died of pneumonia on July 8, 1968, while undergoing treatment at the hospital; Lieutenant Colonel Annie R. Graham, Chief Nurse, 91st Evacuation Hospital, Tuy Hoa and a veteran of WWII and the Korean War, died in Japan on August 14, 1968, a few days after suffering a stroke; First Lieutenant Sharon A. Lane, the only nurse killed by hostile enemy fire, died of shrapnel wounds sustained during an enemy rocket attack on June 8, 1969, while she was on duty at the 312th Evacuation Hospital, Chu Lai; and the last military nurse to die in Vietnam was Air Force Captain Mary T. Klinker of the 10th Air Evacuation Squadron. Captain Klinker perished aboard a C-5A Galaxy that crashed on April 4, 1975, during Operation Babylift. The names of these brave military nurses are included on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

References can be found on The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration website: http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/education/.

* Women other than nurses were promoted to general/flag rank in the early 1970s. See the Service Women in Vietnam poster.

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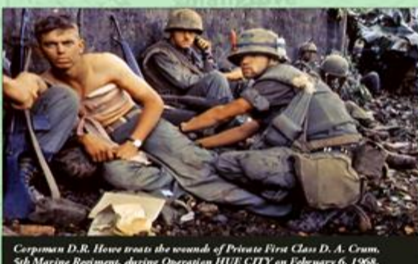
MEDICAL ADVANCEMENTS OF THE VIETNAM WAR

PART 1 OF 3

A UH-1B "Huey" helicopter prepares to land in a rice paddy to pick up a wounded soldier during Operation COOK, Quang Ngai Province, on September 4, 1967. (National Archives)



Corpsman D.R. Howe treats the wounds of Private First Class D. A. Crum, 5th Marine Regiment, during Operation HUE CITY on February 6, 1968. (National Archives)

In 1967, near Cu Chi, South Vietnam, 27th Infantry Regiment medics fight to keep a wounded soldier alive during Operation MANHATTAN. (National Archives)

Throughout our nation's history, armed conflicts have compelled the military and medical profession to introduce innovations for the care and treatment of America's servicemembers. The Vietnam War was no exception.

Whether on patrol in hot, humid jungles, steep mountain ridges, or in remote rice paddies and villages, U.S. servicemembers, allies, and civilians received extraordinary health care during the Vietnam War. According to one source, 97.4 percent of casualties who reached the hospital survived. Rapid and effective air evacuation and advancements in pre-hospital care were partly responsible for the higher number of wounded servicemembers who survived their injuries. Many of the medical advancements first pioneered by military healthcare professionals during the Vietnam War have become common practice in healthcare systems around the globe.

Medical Evacuation and Pre-Hospital Care

Perhaps the most enduring innovation of the Vietnam War was medical air evacuation by helicopter. Prior to the Vietnam War, medical air evacuation had been conducted using fixed-wing aircraft; however, fixed-wing aircraft are limited by the need to use runways for takeoffs and landings. During the Korean War, the U.S. military first experimented with medical air evacuations by helicopter. Able to land without a runway, the Bell H-13 Sioux and Hiller H-23 Raven ferried supplies to troops in the field, undertook reconnaissance missions, and retrieved wounded servicemembers from forward locations. Both of these aircraft could transport two patients via external, skid-mounted litters. The Vietnam War saw air evacuation expand substantially with the introduction of larger, faster helicopters that were specially configured to evacuate up to nine wounded at one time and provide emergency medical care en route to hospitals.

Servicemembers in Vietnam who required hospitalization often sustained multiple injuries or contracted serious diseases, such as malaria, viral hepatitis, and diarrheal disorders. The UH-1 Iroquois helicopter, commonly known as the "Huey," transported the wounded to treatment faster than in any previous war. "Dust Off" was a nickname for Army helicopter ambulance missions. The name originated with the call sign of the 57th Medical Detachment, one of the first aeromedical evacuation units to arrive in Vietnam in 1962, and its commander, Major Charles Kelly, who became one of the earliest Vietnam War "flying medics," before being killed in action in 1964. When ground troops radioed for Dust Offs, helicopter ambulances—often "Hueys"—landed, frequently under fire, to remove, treat, and transport the wounded to medical facilities.

A corpsman administers plasma to a wounded Marine at a field hospital in Tam Ky, South Vietnam, during Operation UNION on May 3, 1967. (National Archives)

The crews of Army, Navy, Marine, and Air Force rotary and fixed-wing aeromedical evacuation crews demonstrated uncompromising dedication, which saved many lives during the conflict. From 1962 to 1973, air ambulances transported and assisted thousands of casualties, often at great peril. Today, civilian helicopter medical evacuation, trauma centers, and helipads are common at hospitals across the United States.

The Vietnam War also accelerated advancements in pre-hospital care. Medics and corpsmen utilized new treatments such as opening surgical airways and conducting thoracic needle decompressions and aggressive shock resuscitation on patients prior to transportation to field hospitals. These techniques are now employed by Emergency Medical Technicians and paramedics throughout the United States. "The golden hour," a term used to describe the concept that a patients' prognosis improves substantially if they receive definitive treatment within the first hour after suffering a traumatic wound, became a reality during the Vietnam War. Innovations in field medicine, such as flight crews stabilizing the wounded during air evacuations and surgical teams treating patients for hemorrhagic and traumatic shock, contributed to reducing the time between injury and treatment. "The golden hour" still serves as a benchmark of civilian emergency care.

Personnel of the 21st Casualty Staging Flight at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, South Vietnam, remove wounded personnel from an ambulance and load them onto a C-130 transport aircraft. These patients are being medically evacuated to Clark Air Base, Philippines, in May 1967. (National Archives)

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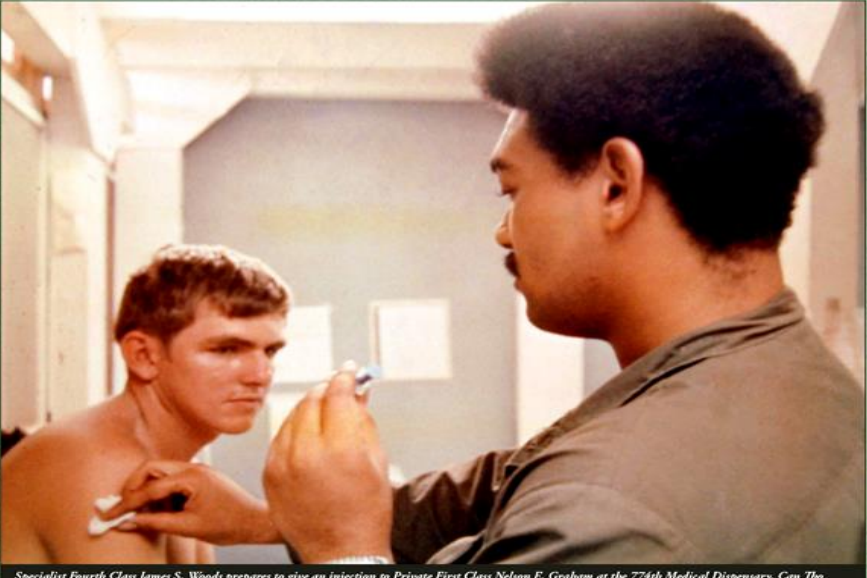

Specialist Fourth Class James S. Woods prepares to give an injection to Private First Class Nelson E. Graham at the 774th Medical Dispensary, Can Tho Army Airfield, South Vietnam, on June 16, 1970. (National Archives)

Aboard the Naval Hospital Ship USS Repose in the South China Sea, November 1967 – November 1968, Lieutenant Carmen Marshall, Medical Service Corps, and Hospital Corpsman Second Class Abe Conrique check the reconstitution process on a unit of frozen blood using the Huggins Cytoglomerator (an apparatus that stores frozen blood). The frozen units were developed for emergency use when the regular blood supply was low or shipments were interrupted. (Courtesy of Carmen Marshall Adams)

From 1965 to 1969, nearly two-thirds of in-country military hospital admissions resulted from malaria, viral hepatitis, diarrheal ailments, skin infections, and fevers of unknown origin. Preventive interventions kept these numbers from climbing even higher.

Contributions to Global Health through Preventive Treatment

The fight against malaria during the Vietnam War serves as a prime example of the struggle to manage tropical disease in its natural environment. Malaria is spread to humans through the bite of female Anopheles mosquitos infected with Plasmodium parasites. The two Plasmodium species that pose the greatest threat to humans are *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax*. In 1965, *P. falciparum* incapacitated infected servicemembers for an average of five weeks, while *P. vivax* caused soldiers to miss an average of 21 days of duty. In 1966, Major Robert J.T. Joy, MC (Medical Corps), chief of the Army Medical Research Team in Vietnam, conducted studies which documented significantly lower rates of malaria in servicemembers who ingested the medication dapsone by mouth daily and took weekly doses of chloroquine-primaquine when they operated in areas with known malaria risk. Field commanders stressed to their troops the importance of personal protective measures, such as wearing long sleeves, applying skin repellents, and using bednets and headnets. Physicians discerned that adherence to a post-exposure antimalarial medication regimen minimized the risk of contracting and spreading malaria. Then in 1967, a team of scientists at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research collaborated in the development of the antimalarial drug mefloquine. By 1969, patients who had been infected with *P. falciparum* returned to duty in 17 to 19 days and patients suffering from *P. vivax* returned in 5 to 8 days. Currently, as U.S. servicemembers deploy to parts of the world where malaria remains endemic, chemoprophylaxis (the use of drugs to prevent disease) and mosquito repellents continue to help minimize the risk of contracting malaria. Military physicians perfected these tactics during the Vietnam War.

Meningococcal meningitis, a serious bacterial infection of the meninges (the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord) can be contracted while living in close quarters such as in military barracks. In March 1963, Navy Commander Jack Millar, MC, and his team demonstrated that, despite treating naval recruits with sulfa antibiotics, a significant number of recruits became carriers of sulfa-resistant group B meningococci. Another team, led by Army Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Cataldo, MC, noticed a similar pattern at a post in 1964. In response to the dangers of antibiotic-resistant meningococci, a research team led by Dr. Malcolm Artenstein at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research documented that vaccinations would need to be developed against each serogroup (distinct variations of a bacteria) of meningococci. By 1968, the team produced and tested a vaccine against serogroup C meningococci, which caused the largest number of cases of meningococcal meningitis at the time. Throughout the 1970s, scientists developed vaccines against three of the other serogroups of meningococcal meningitis. Today, all U.S. military recruits receive a vaccine to prevent the four most common serogroups of meningococcal meningitis before they begin basic training. Meningococcal meningitis vaccines help protect U.S. servicemembers and civilian populations around the world. In 2003, one source estimated 60 to 80 million doses of meningococcal vaccine were required annually for worldwide epidemic control.

In 1962, the Department of Defense established the Armed Services Blood Program (ASBP) to provide blood for the U.S. military. During the Vietnam War, the ASBP created a system to ensure that the blood supply was sufficient to meet demand. The quick administration of fresh whole blood at forward aid stations was one of the most important reasons why severely wounded patients survived their wounds. Some of the ASBP innovations during the war included the development of a styrofoam container, which allowed storage of blood for several days in the field. Fresh frozen plasma (the colorless fluid part of blood in which the red and white cells are suspended) was determined to aid with volume replacement and help control bleeding in patients. By 1969, at the peak of the Vietnam War, the ASBP provided some 36,000 units of blood per month to 100 surgical teams. Today the ASBP has a "worldwide mission to provide quality blood products for servicemembers, veterans, and their families in both war and peace."

First Lieutenant Mary Ann Caldwell takes a blood smear for a malaria test from Specialist Fourth Class Tryg C. Rydberg, 11th Infantry Brigade, Americal Division, at the 3rd Field Hospital Saigon, South Vietnam, on July 12, 1971. (National Archives)

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Dr. Norman Rich performs surgery at the 2nd Surgical Hospital in An Khe, South Vietnam, 1965-66. (Rich Collection, Otis Historical Archives, National Museum of Health and Medicine)

First Lieutenant Naomi Holtzer, and anesthetist Captain Ivan Dunlap prepare a patient for surgery at the 24th Evacuation Hospital in Long Binh, South Vietnam, on November 7, 1969. (National Archives)

Halfway House Drug Program located at the 85th Evacuation Hospital in Phu Bai, South Vietnam, 1970 – 1971. (Courtesy of Gus Kappler, MD)

From front-line trauma care and evacuation of the wounded to treatment protocols for diseases such as malaria and meningitis, military medical advancements during the Vietnam War came about through the efforts of ingenuous and caring healthcare professionals.

Specialty Fields

Anesthesiology – Throughout South Vietnam, anesthesiologists and nurse anesthetists were stationed at military treatment facilities (MTFs), where they helped evaluate patients in the triage area and worked in operating rooms to administer anesthesia. Two anesthetic medications commonly used during the war were halothane and methoxyflurane. Ketamine, an ideal anesthetic for hypovolemic trauma patients (those suffering from a decrease in blood plasma volume), was discovered in the 1960s; in 1970, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved this sedative for medical use. Major Casey Blitt, chief of anesthesia from 1970 to 1971 at the 85th Evacuation Hospital in Phu Bai, stated that he had colleagues from UCLA mail ketamine to him in South Vietnam because his facility was unable to obtain the medication through military channels. "We had good surgeons and we provided good care, and we had an illegal drug that was good for our patients," he recalled. Today ketamine is listed in the World Health Organization's Essential Drugs List for health care systems to use worldwide.

At the beginning of the Vietnam War, MTFs were equipped with the adequate but antiquated World War II-era Heidbrink anesthesia machine. In 1967, the modern Ohio Model 785 Field Anesthesia Machine, which was capable of administering anesthetic agents, such as halothane, methoxyflurane, and ketamine, replaced the Heidbrink. During the Vietnam War, American researchers also developed a standardized field-anesthesia chest, which contained a three-day supply of anesthetic drugs. The standardization of medication, equipment, and supplies ensured that MTF's possessed adequate stores to meet the diverse needs of the wounded during the Vietnam War.

Behavioral Health – As a result of studies of Vietnam veterans, Holocaust survivors, and other trauma victims, the American Psychiatric Association recognized Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a psychological ailment in 1980. Psychiatrists understood PTSD to be a mental malady caused by the stresses of combat or similar traumatic incidents. Research conducted on veterans during and after they returned from Vietnam led to the establishment of this diagnosis. As servicemembers return from the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, mental health professionals continue to study this condition and make innovations in the diagnosis and treatment of PTSD.

During the Vietnam War, the military established the first amnesty and drug treatment programs to address the rise of illicit drug use among uniformed personnel. Servicemembers who voluntarily admitted drug use to their commanding officer, chaplain, or unit surgeon often received treatment and sometimes avoided punishment. In 1970, Major Michael Grossman, chief of medicine and pharmacy at the 85th Evacuation Hospital in Phu Bai, South Vietnam, developed a drug treatment program for opioids, such as heroin and opium, and other widely-abused narcotics like hashish. "I trained in San Francisco, so I had some experience in drug rehabilitation. [At the 85th Evacuation Hospital] We helped people get straightened out, and it was an amazingly rewarding thing for me and everybody around me."

Veteran Navy Corpsmen Victor Germino (center) and Kenneth Ferrell (right) practice intubation drills as Physician Assistant students in 1966. Photo appeared in September 6, 1966 issue of Look Magazine; produced by Roland Berg, photographed by Phillip Harrington. (Courtesy of the Physician Assistant History Society)

Physician Assistants – Medical practice in the United States became increasingly specialized after World War II. By the 1960s, there was a shortage of family practice doctors, especially in rural regions of the country. To help alleviate the rising shortage of primary care physicians in 1965, Duke University Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina, began a two-year Physician Assistant training program. Simultaneously, corpsmen and medics returning from the Vietnam War possessed a plethora of trauma skills, which made them ideal applicants for this novel medical field. In fact, the original Duke University physician assistant's class was comprised of four veteran Navy corpsmen. Now there are thousands of physician assistants who practice medicine in civilian and military health care settings throughout the United States and in at least 12 foreign countries.

Vascular Surgery – Major Norman Rich, MC, chief of surgery from 1966 to 1967 at the 2nd Surgical Hospital in Lai Khe, South Vietnam, pioneered venous repair for military trauma that helped salvage badly wounded limbs. He established the Vietnam Vascular Registry, a database that contains more than 7,500 records of surgical cases, which is still used by battlefield surgeons. Innovative techniques in vascular reconstruction led to an amputation rate in Vietnam that was 25 percent lower than the amputation rate in World War II. Venous repair techniques established in Vietnam became the standard of practice employed by civilian vascular surgeons.

Conclusion

During each war our nation has endured, military medical research has led to advancements in meeting the needs of America's servicepeople. From front-line trauma care and evacuation of the wounded to treatment protocols for diseases such as malaria and meningitis, military medical advancements during the Vietnam War came about through the efforts of ingenious and caring healthcare professionals. These dedicated professionals heralded innovations in health care for our citizens and the world.

References can be found on The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration website
http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/education/

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Sammy Davis, Jr., a United Service Organizations performer and part of President Nixon's anti-drug program, talks with troops at Bien Hoa Air Force Base, Vietnam on February 22, 1972. Davis, a World War II veteran, observed a different military experience in Vietnam: "They're regarding men as individuals. When I was in the Army, I was on a post where a colored guy couldn't get his hair cut." (National Archives)

When I was a kid in the Marines, I remember the first place I saw the WHITE ONLY, COLORED ONLY signs. They were on the wall in this train station in Rocky Mountain, North Carolina. . . . I'll never forget seeing them, never. We all had our green Marine Corps uniforms on, but the colored kids had to go one way while the white kids could go the other way. All of us probably ended up in Vietnam. I know I did. I don't know whose freedom I was fighting for, but I know whose freedom I won, and that was mine.

— Corporal Albert French

African American troops served in the military with distinction during the Vietnam War. In the 1960s and 1970s, the United States' long history of racial inequality and segregation culminated in the civil rights movement. The social and political turmoil crept through American society, including the U.S. military.

At the same time, the military organization struggled with its own forms of institutional discrimination. As the war progressed and the nature of the unrest in U.S. society evolved, the military experienced changes in its mission, organization, and personnel. Within this context, African American Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines faced a unique and difficult challenge. They bravely served their country while simultaneously bearing the burden of second-class citizenship. Their stories help demonstrate the variety of American experiences in the Vietnam-era military.

A LEGACY OF MILITARY SERVICE

Even before the American Revolution, African Americans served in the military. Through World War II, however, they generally served in segregated units. Despite inequality, they served for a variety of reasons—including patriotism, adventure, and a desire to prove their loyalty and claim first-class citizenship. In 1948, President Harry S. Truman issued an executive order mandating the desegregation of the armed forces. The process took time, and the armed forces did not fully desegregate until the end of the Korean War (1950–1953). With this step, the military became one of the first large institutions in the United States to desegregate, gaining a reputation as a relatively progressive organization. Throughout the 1950s, many in the African American community perceived military service as a path to greater social and economic opportunity, and they enlisted and reenlisted in proportionally larger numbers than other segments of the population. Vietnam veteran Brigadier General J. Timothy Boddie entered the Air Force in 1954. He grew up learning about that legacy of military service, and wanted to fly fighter planes like the famed World War II pilots, the Tuskegee Airmen.

By the beginning of the Vietnam War, the racial climate in the military had improved. The Department of Defense not only desegregated the military in the 1950s, but also on-base schools for military dependents and civilian defense facilities as well. Yet despite these efforts, as the United States sent increasing numbers of troops to Southeast Asia in the 1960s, racial inequality in the armed forces persisted. African Americans entered the military in large numbers as volunteers and draftees, and they continued facing discrimination in areas such as training, promotions, assignments, and administration of military justice.

MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT,
Private First Class James Anderson Jr., USMC

2d Platoon, F Company, 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, 3d Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force

On February 28, 1967, Private First Class James Anderson Jr. was killed in action on a patrol northwest of Quang Tri. When a Communist grenade landed in the midst of his platoon, Private First Class Anderson grabbed the grenade and pulled it to his chest, curling around it as it exploded. He absorbed the impact of the explosion, saving his comrades from serious injury or death. Anderson posthumously received the Medal of Honor for his "heroism, extraordinary valor, and inspirational supreme self-sacrifice."

Few African Americans in the twentieth-century U.S. military received the nation's highest military decoration. Anderson was not only the first African American recipient in Vietnam, but also the first African American Marine to ever receive the award. No African Americans received the award in World War II, and only two in the Korean War. For many years, the African American contribution to the U.S. military remained largely unrecognized. In Vietnam, the military's first racially desegregated conflict, 20 African American servicemen received the award.

Lieutenant Colonel Harry Townsend (left) of the 268th Combat Aviation Brigade stands in front of his helicopter with the Sergeant Major, South Vietnam, 1967. (Courtesy of Colonel [Retired] Harry Townsend)

As African American officers faced a Communist enemy in Southeast Asia, they also struggled for equal opportunity rather than tokenism. Racial tensions rose throughout the war and the need for African American leadership became apparent, but the percentages of African American officers did not change significantly. In 1962, African Americans constituted less than 2 percent of the officer corps in all services, and ten years later approximately 2.3 percent.

Lingering institutional discrimination affected their ability to advance. Weak officer evaluations from the 1950s, a remnant of more overt discrimination, could damage overall efficiency ratings, blocking promotions and command experience. In 1968, Frederic E. Davison became the first African American to lead an active combat brigade when he commanded the 199th Light Infantry Brigade in Vietnam. Other African American officers likewise achieved a number of firsts throughout the era. But as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Equal Opportunity, and Vietnam veteran, H. Minton Francis pointed out in 1974, "the very fact that women and minorities still make news when they are placed in [these] positions . . . makes it evident, in their perceptions, that it is a one-of-a-kind advancement."

Air Force F-4 pilot Major J. Timothy Boddie, Jr. receives a patch for his 200th combat mission, including 57 missions over North Vietnam, in summer 1967. The majority of African Americans in the Air Force were concentrated in administration, air police, food service, and supply and transportation. (Courtesy of Brigadier General [Retired] James Timothy Boddie, Jr.)

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Captain Don Phillips (left) of the 173d Airborne Brigade discusses artillery support for upcoming operations with a forward observer, November 10, 1966. Colonel (Retired) Phillips' daughter, historian Kimberley L. Phillips, later recalled the paradox of African Americans defending the freedoms they were often denied at home: "This is forever etched in my brain. When I was not even 6-years old we were traveling [from Fort Benning, GA] across to Los Angeles. . . . we could not stop for food because we were black. . . . My dad was off to Vietnam, but he could not stop along the highway to get something to eat." (National Archives)

Former military heavyweight boxing champion Staff Sergeant Percy J. Price (left) leads Marines on an operation south of Da Nang in 1967. African American officers and non-commissioned officers led squads, platoons, and companies as part of the III Marine Amphibious Force in Vietnam. (National Archives)

Clyde Fields (left) and another American soldier "dap" with a Chu Hoi Vietnamese soldier, a Communist defector, at an American fire support base in South Vietnam, 1970–1971. This formal greeting was a gesture of camaraderie, and the more elaborate "dap" could take a number of minutes to perform, occasionally to the exasperation of fellow white soldiers. (Courtesy of Clyde Fields)

Most of the prejudices, for a while, went away. Even though blacks were into their Black Power salute, and a few whites had their confederate flags and stuff, there was a togetherness that I think you can only get in times of peril.

— Chief Warrant Officer 3 Doris Allen

THE EARLY YEARS, 1961–1967

During the advisory period and as the war escalated, African Americans consistently volunteered and reenlisted, serving in numbers roughly proportionate to their overall population percentage [tables 1–2]. Many volunteered for combat units because, as African American Green Beret Melvin Morris pointed out, "it was the prestigious thing to do, and if you got in, you went." These units also offered faster promotions and additional pay.

By 1966, African Americans represented over 20 percent of the Army's two airborne units in Vietnam. At the same time, African Americans frequently lacked access to the same economic and educational resources as whites. They were less likely to receive occupational or educational deferments, and they scored lower on military entrance examinations, leaving them ineligible for some of the more technical military occupational specialties [table 3].

Members of the 25th Infantry Division load their gear as they prepare to cross a canal in a 3-man assault boat, May 13, 1968. (National Archives)

In addition, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara (1961–1968) introduced "Project 100,000" in 1966, a program in which the military began accepting men who did not meet physical or mental standards in order to satisfy growing personnel requirements. The secretary hoped to provide disadvantaged groups with educational and medical support, and valuable skills for post-military life. The project ran for six years and some 350,000 "New Standards Men" served. These men were disproportionately southerners and African Americans, and frequently landed in combat specializations with little marketability in civilian life.

South Vietnamese soldiers walk past an American Marine's tent with the Confederate flag flying above it, 1968. The display of the Confederate flag generated tensions between black and white American troops in Vietnam. (U.S. Marine Corps History Division)

These high ratios of African Americans in combat produced proportionally larger black casualties through 1968 [table 4]. The Department of Defense recognized this disparity and worked to remedy the imbalance, but the damage had already occurred. Even with the corrections, the perception of inequality in conscription and assignment remained, and many in the African American community began speaking out against the war. Discontent with systemic discrimination against black troops fed into a growing unrest over urban racism and inequality across the United States. It was one of many factors contributing to volatile civil rights protests in several northern U.S. cities in 1967. Leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. condemned the use of black troops to "guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem," and urged young African American men toward conscientious objection. Only weeks after King took a stand on Vietnam, heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali refused to serve and received a conviction for draft evasion, later overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court.

A GROWING RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

You're over here in this heat . . . in this hellhole, and then look, just look at what's back there waiting for me.

— Specialist Fourth Class Russel Campbell, 1968

These divisions on the home front affected African Americans in the military and of military age. The African American veterans who served early in the war finished their tours in Vietnam and in the wake of the 1968 Tet Offensive larger numbers of draftees entered the military. African Americans continued to volunteer, some seeking to escape the urban poverty and unrest that swept the nation. But the growing radicalism of the civil rights movement spread within the military, affecting the wave of new servicemembers in Southeast Asia. By the late 1960s, mounting numbers of American troops of all races reflected these attitudes from the home front and opposed the war. One African American journalist spent a month interviewing African American GI's in Vietnam in April 1968, and found that 80–85 percent of the interviewees expressed negative feelings about the war or the military's treatment of African Americans, frequently both. Many of them joined a rising subculture of increased black nationalism, and some began displaying symbols of racial pride such as black power salutes or "dapping," a gesture of racial solidarity.

African American military personnel after 1968 represented a new mentality. Only a few steps removed from the movements on the home front, black servicemembers around the world (including some career military personnel) became less willing to tolerate systemic discrimination, cultural intolerance, or overt bigotry such as racial epithets, expressions of white supremacy, and Confederate flags. African American and white military personnel grew increasingly distrustful of one another. Racism, misunderstanding, and a Department of Defense largely unprepared to address institutional inequalities left an environment primed for racial conflict.

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A U.S. Navy Mobile Construction Battalion (Seabees) lays explosive lines to clear a route of buried mines to construct roads in South Vietnam, September 1970. By 1972, as news of the riots aboard the Kitty Hawk *and* Constellation *spread throughout the Navy, it awoke underlying racial tensions between Seabees at Naval Station Midway Island leading to violence between black and white Seabees. (Navy History and Heritage)*

Specialist Fourth Class Esther M. Gleaton works as a clerk-typist for the Women's Army Corps detachment at Long Binh in Vietnam, 1968–1969. (Women's Memorial Foundation Collection)

At the 1966 U.S. Coast Guard Academy commencement ceremonies, Colonel Merle J. Smith, Sr. (right) congratulates his son, Ensign Merle J. Smith, Jr., while Commandant Admiral Willard J. Smith observes. Merle Smith, Jr. was the first African American Coast Guard Academy graduate, and in 1969 he commanded a patrol boat in Vietnam, becoming the first sea-service African American to receive a Bronze Star. (U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office)

It is self-deception to think that [American servicemembers] . . . come untainted by the prejudices of the society which produced them. They do not.

— Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt
Chief of Naval Operations, 1972

TURMOIL IN THE MILITARY

As Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt described, a tumultuous home front certainly affected race relations overseas, and the military consistently blamed the problems it faced on the unrest within U.S. society. Yet some historians argue that a home front in turmoil and increasing proportions of draftees were insufficient in explaining the racial discord that emerged within the military. By 1969, poor discipline and low morale plagued the U.S. military in Vietnam. Disillusionment with the war filtered in from society, but the military also increasingly suffered from leadership deficiencies. Scandals and cover-ups such as those surrounding the My Lai massacre hinted at a larger breakdown in the professionalism of the officer corps.

And the non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps faced problems as well. The standard one-year fixed tour in Vietnam meant that many NCOs rotated home just as they accumulated leadership experience, and an NCO shortage as early as 1967 led to accelerated training programs. Tensions between career military personnel and younger troops also produced mistrust. With the emergence of the White House's Vietnamization policy in 1969, American servicemembers of all races increasingly saw little point in fighting and risking death in Vietnam as the United States openly sought to extricate itself from the war.

Beginning in 1968, those tensions erupted into violence on bases in the United States and in Vietnam. By the summer, African Americans made up almost half of the prison population of the major stockades in Vietnam, despite constituting less than 11 percent of the armed forces. Factors such as inconsistent sentencing for minor infractions contributed to these disparities. On August 15, 1968 at the Navy's Da Nang Brig in Vietnam, a group of mainly black prisoners fought with white prisoners and guards. It took commanding officers nearly a day to restore order. Two weeks later, on August 29, a small scuffle between black and white prisoners at the Army's Long Binh Jail escalated into disorder and arson throughout the compound as several hundred black prisoners took control of the facility and held it for a month. Between January and September 1969, more than 20 violent racial altercations occurred between U.S. troops in Vietnam.

The majority of racial violence occurred at large bases or support units "in the rear." In the field, where men depended on their comrades for survival, troops had less opportunity or motivation to engage in racist practices or

Army nurse Captain Joyce Johnson treats a patient at Long Binh in 1967. She recalled of her fellow nurses in Vietnam: "The esprit de corps was automatic. We were all there for the same reasons, no matter where or what part of the country we had come from, we had the same goal. . . . You knew what had to be done. And you could do it." (Courtesy of Lieutenant Colonel [Retired] Dr. Joyce Bowles)

While the records of their service are incomplete, somewhere between 7,000 and 11,000 American women volunteered and served in Vietnam. Statistics on African American women are even less available. On a daily basis, African American women faced a variety of challenges in the military, notably racial discrimination and gender bias. They performed a range of important tasks in Vietnam, however, from nursing to intelligence analysis, and many of these women observed that when it came to racial problems, "we don't have time for that."

While their stories are largely absent from the Vietnam War narrative, their military service and leadership in the officer and nurse corps challenged contemporary ideas about gender. At that time, African American women rarely held leadership positions over groups that included white men. Some activist servicewomen united with other activists in the military. Even as civilian women activists complained of sexism in the civil rights and antiwar movements, military activists at times exhibited greater gender cooperation and equality, challenging prevailing gender stereotypes.

political disputes. Vietnam veteran General Colin Powell, a major in 1968, recalled that, "Our men in the field, trudging through elephant grass under hostile fire, did not have time to be hostile toward each other. But bases . . . were increasingly divided by the same racial polarization that had begun to plague America."

Both the Army and Marine Corps struggled to control the racial unrest through 1970. Initially, the Air Force and Navy avoided the racial violence. With more technical and rear-echelon assignments, those two services could recruit a better-educated and more homogeneous enlisted demographic, often men who sought to avoid being drafted into the ground forces. As one African American lieutenant commander noted, "You could go aboard a carrier with 5,000 people . . . . walk into the areas where I work with all the sophisticated computers, and it would look as if there were no blacks on the entire ship." When President Richard M. Nixon scaled back the draft in the early 1970s and moved toward an all-volunteer force, however, that predominantly white recruitment pool narrowed. In 1972, major riots occurred on the aircraft carriers USS *Kitty Hawk* and USS *Constellation*.

In response to the unrest, the Department of Defense began implementing reform programs in 1969, including a review of the military justice system and founding the Defense Race Relations Institute in 1971 to educate its leadership about diversity and tolerance. The programs alleviated some of African American troops' grievances, but imbalances remained as the military moved toward an all-volunteer force in 1973.

CONCLUSION

African American veterans experienced the war in a variety of ways; there was no standard narrative or story. Lieutenant General Larry Jordan, a second lieutenant in Vietnam, recalled that it made him into a better leader: "I can honestly say I think my Vietnam experience was a good one. I don't regret going. I did what the nation asked me to do." First Lieutenant Joseph Biggers expressed dismay about coming back to the United States and facing criticism from some African American activists who denounced him as part of an unjust system. Each sacrificed for his country despite facing a determined enemy in Vietnam and the added burden of discrimination. The hurdles that African American veterans confronted paved the way for important reforms in the Department of Defense that improved conditions for future generations of servicemembers. Both during and after the war, the Department of Defense began to modernize its equal opportunity system and improve cross-cultural communication. Equal opportunity remains a challenge, and African Americans in the military still face systemic inequalities such as low representation in the officer corps. Yet these veterans left an enduring legacy: thanks in part to their experiences and struggles, the military has undergone racial progress since the 1960s and 1970s.

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An African American radio operator in the 1st Marine Division receives a haircut in the field, June 18, 1969. Barbers remained largely inexperienced in cutting African American hair until the military expanded its diversity program and began providing them with training in 1973. (U.S. Marine Corps History Division)

Lieutenant Colonel Roscoe Robinson (right) shows Major General John J. Tolson his unit's position on a map during Operation PEGASUS to lift the siege of Khe Sanh, April 6–8, 1968. Robinson became the first African American four-star general in the U.S. Army in 1982. (National Archives)

Mineman Second Class Franklin Marshall, part of the Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal team responsible for harbor security, searches for mines, especially those attached to ships' hulls, April 1966. (Naval History and Heritage Command)

Captain Joan Ford, a flight nurse with the 56th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, greets ambulatory patients as they board a C-141 aircraft at Clark Air Base in the Philippines for airlift home, March 1966. The military often evacuated wounded servicemen from Vietnam to the Philippine Islands for immediate medical care. (National Archives)

TABLE 1

African American Percentage of Total Strength

SOURCE: Michael Clodfelter, *Vietnam in Military Statistics: A History of the Indochina Wars, 1772–1991* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1995).

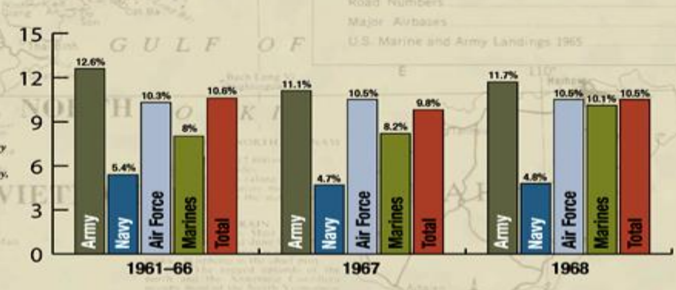


TABLE 2

African American Percentage of Total U.S. Population

SOURCE: Frank Hobbs and Nicole Stoops, *Demographic Trends in the 20th Century*, Census 2000 Special Reports, Series CENSR-4 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, U.S. Census Bureau, 2002).

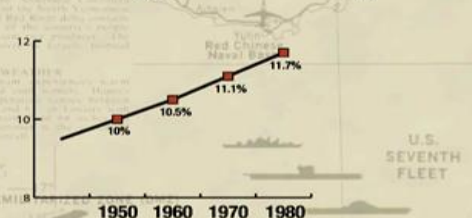


TABLE 3

Occupational Distribution by Race, All DoD, 1962

SOURCE: Morris J. MacGregor, *Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940–1965* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1981).

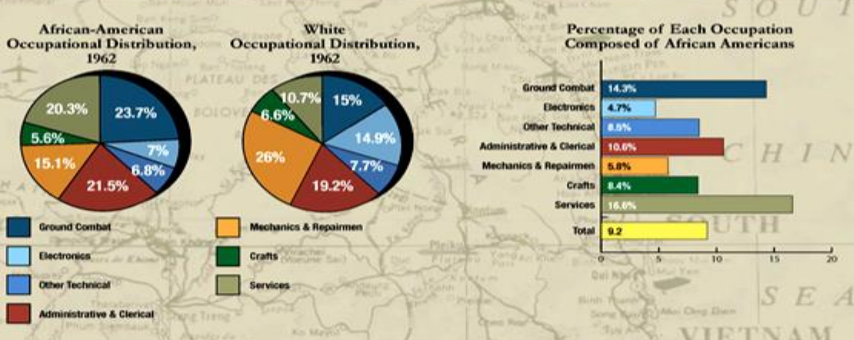
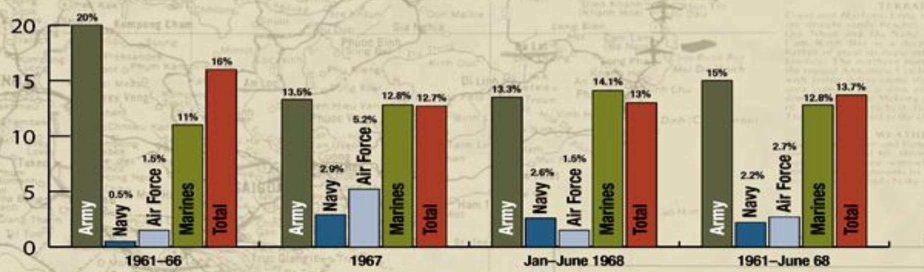


TABLE 4

African-American Percentage of Total Killed in Action

SOURCE: Michael Clodfelter, *Vietnam in Military Statistics: A History of the Indochina Wars, 1772–1991* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1995).



AIR BASE DEFENSE IN THE VIETNAM WAR

PART 1 OF 3

Aerial view of Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Vietnam. The North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong considered U.S. air bases ideal targets to attack using mortars, rockets, and recoilless rifles. (Courtesy of National Archives)

A U.S. Air Force security personnel stands night watch in a sandbag bunker. (Courtesy of National Archives)

A 377th security policeman inspects the handbag of a Vietnamese civilian worker at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. (Courtesy of National Archives)

It is easier and more effective to destroy the enemy's aerial power by destroying his nests and eggs on the ground than to hunt his flying birds in the air.

— General Giulio Douhet, noted air power theorist, 1921

Air bases were critical to the United States' efforts in South Vietnam. The sites were entry points for military and economic aid, as well as stations from which to launch attacks against the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. For their part, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong recognized the air bases' strategic value. Damage caused, including losses in manpower, aircraft, and materiel, impeded allied operations and fundamentally weakened U.S. efforts in Vietnam. To protect air bases and blunt attacks, the U.S. trained dedicated defense personnel whose mission necessitated learning, adaptation, and vigilance to safeguard these strategic locations.

Emergence of the Air Base Defense Mission

The U.S. Air Force was initially unprepared for air base defense in Vietnam. U.S. military doctrine provided little guidance. In World Wars I and II, U.S. air bases were traditionally situated far behind the front lines, generally beyond the reach of enemy forces. During the Korean War, the Air Force expanded its base police forces from 10,000 personnel in July 1950 to 39,000 by December 1951. Perhaps due to their expansion, local enemy insurgents tended to ignore them. By the Korean War's end, the Air Force still lacked sophisticated tactical doctrines and policies to guide defense in Vietnam.

On November 1, 1964, the Viet Cong positioned six 81-millimeter mortars outside Bien Hoa Air Base and fired between 60 and 80 rounds onto parked aircraft and troop billets before withdrawing unmolested. The mortars killed four and wounded 30, destroyed five jet bombers and severely damaged eight others, and slightly damaged seven additional aircraft. The attack made plainly clear: in a conflict with no front lines and an armed local insurgency, base commanders and personnel needed to stiffen defenses and proactively guard air bases.

In response, the Air Force created an air base defense training program. Air base defense personnel "trained in combat tactics" and, according to Security Policeman Robert Roswell, the result produced highly trained "self-sufficient" forces that operated similar to "an Army unit." Lieutenant Colonel Ray Janes remembered, "We had 57-millimeter recoilless cannons, and .50-caliber machine guns and armored cars….We spent 30 days at Beale Air Force Base doing infantry training. That's all we did was infantry….We ran up and down hills…and learned how to skirmish."

Standoff Attacks, Sapper Raids, and Sabotage

U.S. air bases were stationary targets with limited visibility beyond the perimeter, which allowed the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army time to prepare their attacks. In collecting intelligence beforehand, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army were rigorous and methodical. They used a three-tiered information gathering system that employed direct observation, local civilians who held prominent positions and had access to sensitive areas, and local informants who observed the base's rhythms. Captured Communist documents revealed the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army collected intelligence on multiple aspects of base life, including defenders' primary routes of maneuver, armaments, weapon emplacements, and patrol routes, to name a few.

A member of the 481st Tactical Fighter Squadron guards an F-100 Super Saber at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. (Courtesy of National Archives)

Of their chosen methods of attack, the Communists primarily relied on standoff attacks: which were long-range fires from mobile weapon emplacements. Sapper (enemy engineer) attacks were less common. Though the threat of sabotage existed, Communist forces rarely used it.

The North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong overwhelmingly preferred standoff attacks as their primary means of attack. In placing themselves just outside of the installation's visual range, the Communists took advantage of the U.S. Air Force's dependence on large installations and their limited control over the surrounding area. The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army then struck from well-concealed positions. Early in the war, they attacked with mortars and recoilless rifles, but by 1966 Communist troops had introduced rockets obtained from China and the Soviet Union, which drastically increased their firing range. Lawrence Motzer, who served as an Air Force Security Officer at Cam Ranh Bay and Tan Son Nhut, observed, "we were always under rocket attacks."

Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army sappers occasionally launched raids against air bases. Sapper raids were designed around small "cells," which usually consisted of three specialists in base infiltration and explosive charges. Cells were part of specialized 200-man sapper battalions that often acted independently of the North Vietnamese Army's larger military structure. They employed secrecy and sophisticated intelligence to sequentially time their attacks. Elements of the battalion would often launch feints to distract base defenders and lure them from the Communist cell's point of infiltration. Cells avoided contact with base defenders, preferring instead secrecy, stealth, and surprise to inflict maximum damage before they withdrew. Their target time from insertion to extraction was 30 minutes.

Despite the thousands of Vietnamese civilians working on air bases, the Viet Cong rarely resorted to sabotage. It is likely the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army believed the risk of sending a lone saboteur too great, and valued Vietnamese civilians who worked on base for their role in intelligence gathering. The U.S. Air Force documented only two cases from January 1, 1965 to June 8, 1969. The more notable of the two occurred at Bien Hoa Air Base on February 8, 1967, when a secretly-planted, Soviet-made explosive device destroyed about 2,600 napalm bombs.

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AIR BASE DEFENSE IN THE VIETNAM WAR

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A dog handler poses for a picture prior to patrol duty. Despite efforts to reduce noise and mask their scents, North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong troops rarely were able to fool the dogs' keen senses. (Courtesy of National Archives)

American military police stand guard in an M-151 jeep on the flight line at Tan Son Nhut Air Base following a Viet Cong mortar attack. (Courtesy of National Archives)

U.S. Air Force Security Police patrol the perimeter of Tan Son Nhut Air Base in an M706 armored car. The vehicle came in three distinct marks: the V-100, the V-150, and the V-200. (Courtesy of National Archives)

They want to take out the bomb dump. Take out some of the aircraft, and that's what we were out there for, to prevent that from happening.

—Thomas C. Schmitz, Security Police, U.S. Air Force Vietnam
(Quote Courtesy of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum)

Three Layers of Defense

During the war, air base defense personnel established and improved upon three interwoven layered systems of security: intelligence gathering, perimeter defense, and defense in depth. Vietnam was one of the first wars to employ sensors capable of detecting movement for intelligence gathering. Security personnel learned and adapted to the system's quirks, which included sensitivity to high winds, rain, climate, and short battery life. Vietnam-era sensor technology was incapable of scanning great distances at 360 degrees to locate standoff attacks. Therefore, air base personnel positioned sensors along the most likely routes of the attackers' approach. As the defenders became better acquainted with the technology's limitations and capabilities, their counterfire accuracy improved markedly.

U.S. air base perimeter and quick response personnel were armed with the 7.62-millimeter M-60 machine gun, the single-shot M-79 grenade launcher, and, later, the M-203 grenade launcher, which was capable of firing 40 millimeter grenades in rapid succession. Though originally grenade launchers were envisioned for quick reaction forces' use in static defense, base defense personnel soon recognized their value in keeping nearby enemies off balance through harassment and interdiction fire. Because the Communists often operated just beyond the base defenders' reach, security patrols beyond the perimeter were exceptionally dangerous, and defenders quickly educated one another in simple ways to maintain stealth while on patrol. Air Force Security Policeman Thomas Schmitz recalled, "Most of the time you could hear something out there, but you couldn't see them….You made sure your dog tags were taped together so they didn't make any noise…little things like making sure that your canteen wasn't half full because half-full canteens slush and you can hear that stuff at night from way far away….Little things that you'd never think about but they were important."

Sentry dogs arrived in Vietnam by the summer of 1965 and were immediately used to patrol base perimeters. They reached their peak number of 467 by 1967. The "dogs were trained to alert on the smell, the sound, the noise someone would make—the dog's eyes and nose, you just can't hide from them," Air Force Security Policeman Russell Elmore stated. Though trained to attack, most dogs detected intruders and warned their handlers, who promptly alerted base defense. Ultimately, the sentry dog's superior senses proved a reliable and versatile means to protect U.S. air bases. As the U.S. reduced its presence in Vietnam after 1969, the dogs were given a careful medical evaluation and those judged healthy were returned to the continental United States for further military service.

To enhance defense-in-depth capabilities, the Air Force introduced the M-151 jeep to Vietnam in 1965, where it served as the air base's workhorse for the duration of the war. In addition to serving in quick-reaction forces, security personnel used them to address traffic incidents and conduct patrols on base. The jeep enhanced air base defense response speed and range, and the security personnel inside also carried increased firepower. "I had my M-16. I also manned a M-60 machine gun that I carried across my lap as we were on patrol. So that was a lot of firepower," Lawrence Motzer stated. The Air Force further supplemented the jeeps with M-113 armored personnel carriers and M-706 armored cars. The armored vehicles protected transported personnel and supplies from small arms fire and shell fragments.

A U.S. Air Force military policeman peers out over "mortar valley" to the southwest of Nha Trang Air Base, with his M-60 machine gun at the ready. (Courtesy of National Archives)

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AIR BASE DEFENSE IN THE VIETNAM WAR

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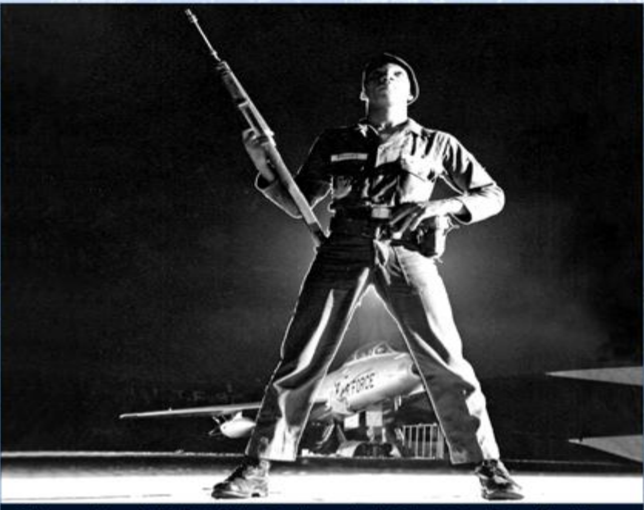

Air Force security from the 481st Tactical Fighter Squadron guards an F-100 Super Saber at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. (Courtesy of National Archives)

Members of the 6250th Air Police Squadron and Vietnamese soldiers guard the perimeter of Tan Son Nhut Air Base from inside a sandbag bunker. (Courtesy of National Archives)

An early morning patrol passes through an abandoned village on Phu Cat Air Base. (Courtesy of National Archives)

This is Blue-3. I think that this rocket attack is cover for a ground attack, so take cover from the rockets but poke your heads out every few seconds. If you see any VC, make'em 10-13 (radio code for dead).

— Lieutenant Colonel Kent Miller, Commander of the 3rd Security Police Squadron at Bien Hoa on January 31, 1968

(Quote Courtesy of Air Force Security Forces Association)

Large-Scale Attacks During Tet, 1968

Though Communist troops typically raided U.S. air bases in small numbers, on January 31, 1968, as part of the larger Tet Offensive, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces launched unprecedented battalion-size attacks against Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa Air Bases, which were located directly north and northeast of Saigon, respectively. It is likely the attackers meant to overwhelm both air bases with sheer numbers and prevent U.S. air support from aiding beleaguered units elsewhere. Following the attacks, captured intelligence revealed units had been directed to hold until reinforced or issued further instructions. Locally, the bases' capture would have aided in toppling Saigon. More broadly, Communist control over two U.S./South Vietnamese air bases would have resulted in a tremendous loss of life, materiel, and a crippling psychological defeat.

Melted jet engines and twisted metal on a U.S. Air Force F-4C aircraft which was hit by a rocket during an attack at Da Nang Air Base. (Courtesy of National Archives)

Between 2,200 and 3,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese infantry and 200 sappers attacked Tan Son Nhut while 1,000 to 1,500 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese infantry attacked Bien Hoa. U.S. and South Vietnamese defense personnel at both bases expertly moved to blunt the attacking forces while quick-reaction forces that included Army helicopter Light Fire Teams, AC-47 "Spooky" Gunships, U.S. Army infantry elements, and South Vietnamese regional and popular forces buttressed defenders and repelled the assault. At both air bases, the defenders' excellent training and firepower forced the Communists from the perimeter within hours.

Small arms and automatic weapons fire and probing continued at Tan Son Nhut through February 9, 1968, and sniper fire continued for several days at Bien Hoa. Communist rocket and recoilless rifle attacks continued to hit Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa throughout the month of February, resulting in considerable loss of life and base damage. From the fighting on January 31, the U.S. reported at least 900 Communist fighters were killed around Tan Son Nhut and more than 400 at Bien Hoa. In the latter case, the North Vietnamese Army made up an estimated 60 to 68 percent of the attacking force.

Conclusion

From 1964 to 1973, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army launched 475 total attacks against air bases at Da Nang, Pleiku, Phu Cat, Tuy Hoa, Nha Trang, Cam Ranh Bay, Phan Rang, Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhut, and Bin Thuy. Of those, 447 were standoff attacks that employed mobile weapons emplacements consisting of recoilless rifles, mortars, and rockets. More than any other form of attack, air base defense personnel feared "getting hit by a rocket or mortar attack," security policeman Robert Roswell recalled. Training and adaptation to the war's realities led personnel to gain familiarity with and practice avoidance against indirect fire. Air Force Security Policeman Donald Lee Schmidt recalled at Tan Son Nhut, "the B-40 rocket leaves a whistle in the air…just before it hits….when you heard that whistle…you dove for cover and layed flat on the ground and jumped in your bunker and really just tried to dig as low as you could into the ground." Over the duration of the war, U.S. air base personnel suffered 155 killed and 1,702 wounded in action from Communist attacks. In addition to its air bases in Vietnam, the U.S. maintained Udorn (also known as Udon), Nakhon Phanom, Takhli, Ubon, Khorat (also known as Korat), Don Muang, and U-Tapao Air Bases in Thailand. North Vietnamese guerillas launched five attacks against these air bases, one at Udorn, three at Ubon, and one at U-Tapao. In Thailand, U.S. Air Force base commanders oversaw allied Thai security personnel, who maintained base defenses.

U.S. air base defense in Vietnam may be best understood as a mission of continual adaptation. Throughout the war, base by base, defense personnel learned and adjusted to North Vietnamese and Viet Cong capabilities and shifting tactics. Their solutions were often compromises between immediate defense needs and resource limitations. The U.S. was never able to interdict standoff attacks, as manpower constraints prevented defenders from extending their patrols far beyond base boundaries. Instead, air bases developed hardened aircraft shelters impregnable to most rocket and mortar attack.

Despite resource limitations, defense personnel were diligent and creative in countering Viet Cong and North Vietnamese attacks. They developed new tactics, operations, organizations, and responses to threats. In adapting, defenders upgraded their weapons, technology, vehicles, tempo of operations, and procedures. They also placed minefields beyond base perimeters, improved fencing, lighting, and weapons emplacements. As a result, though the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army launched 475 attacks against air bases in South Vietnam, their operations suffered no major disruptions.

* *The Department of Defense's Vietnam War Commemoration would like to thank Vietnam Veteran Rick Fulton for his assistance in the creation of the Air Base Defense Poster Series.*

A U.S. Air Force security personnel guards an F-4 Phantom parked under a hardened aircraft shelter at Phu Cat Air Base. (Courtesy of National Archives)

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CASUALTIES BY OTHER MEANS

Disease and Drug Use in the VIETNAM WAR

PART 1 OF 4

These World War Two images show that malaria has historically threatened military operations, and in some cases killed more personnel than combat. The military services have often used morbid humor to shock personnel into taking protective measures. The tactic remains commonplace today—though not with human skulls. (Courtesy of the National Museum of Health and Medicine and the National Library of Medicine)

The battle between man and the pathogenic organisms with which he shares this planet has been a seesaw affair. Finding himself for years essentially defenseless against a disease, man has sometimes, by dint of hard work and a bit of luck, slowly turned the tide. With apparent victory in his grasp, his complacency has more often than not been abruptly interrupted by a vicious counter-thrust from the enemy and he has found himself in battle newly joined.

— Colonel Marshall McCabe, 1966.

The year 2020 brought with it the powerful reminder that pathogens can dictate human life. 2020 demonstrated the ease with which diseases spread, the value of preparation in the face of pandemics, and the importance of applying even the simplest countermeasures. Though not well-remembered, disease presented challenges during the Vietnam War as well. Moreover, the war's afflictions were not limited to South Vietnam. Service members brought afflictions home to the United States. Owing to the war's voracious demands for physicians and new ways of thinking in medicine, the United States' military and civilian healthcare systems were transformed as a result.

MALARIA

Prior to the Vietnam War, scientists believed they had developed adequate control for malaria. They speculated the disease no longer posed a threat to field armies or even world health.

In 1960, U.S. military and civilian personnel stationed in Korea were placed on weekly C-P (chloroquine-primaquine) tablets in a large-scale field trial involving more than 50,000 adults. The results were so successful that C-P tablets became the standard Army regimen by 1962. Scientists believed chloroquine-primaquine was a miracle drug. The malarial parasite ultimately proved resilient.

As the U.S. increased its troop presence in South Vietnam, isolated cases emerged world-wide indicating a certain strain of malaria had grown resistant to drugs. The continued and routine use of drugs like chloroquine-primaquine spurred drug-resistant mutations within the malaria parasite. By December 1965, the overall malaria rate in South Vietnam reached a peak of 98.4 cases per 1,000 individuals per year. Certain units operating in the Ia Drang valley experienced rates up to 600 cases per 1,000 individuals per year. Malaria rendered at least two maneuver battalions ineffective.

Medical science scrambled to catch up. Owing to the eventual development of new compounds such as amine alcohols and quinazolines, U.S. medicine once again effectively combatted the disease.

Malaria's role in the Vietnam War reinforced the importance of establishing permanent federal scientific research programs for diseases where there was no adequate civilian research. Just as in war, so was the case with malaria; there was no room for complacency. Indeed, in its postwar analysis, the U.S. military concluded "the ability of the malarial parasite to repeatedly meet the challenge of manmade chemical assault demands continued skepticism toward any claim to the development of a 'final chapter' in the history of malaria."

RABIES

South Vietnam's domesticated animals were not routinely immunized for rabies. When the United States deployed personnel to South Vietnam in greater numbers, the risks increased exponentially. In 1969 alone U.S. personnel reported 2,967 animal exposures to include licks, scratches, or bites. As a result, 1,628 individuals were vaccinated. 76 were administered an immune serum—a treatment given as a last resort when there is no time for vaccination.

In the United States, pets routinely receive rabies vaccinations. This was not the case in South Vietnam. The United States prepared for the disease and successfully executed a plan of action to minimize its effects. When testing for rabies, scientists remove the brain from the animal's skull. Preserved brains of suspected rabies cases were received for testing in water-tight, metal containers that were refrigerated with ice and insulated with sawdust. (Courtesy of the National Museum of Health and Medicine)

South Vietnam's animal population was beyond the control of the U.S. military, therefore, the United States relied upon information and preparation prior to deployment to prepare and execute a course of action. The U.S. obtained and followed the World Health Organization's recommendations on at-risk animal populations and the use of serum following exposure. In South Vietnam, post-exposure treatments were a large part of the rabies program, and pre-exposure immunizations were administered to veterinary personnel who regularly handled animals. Reporting animal bites was mandatory, and these wounds were then treated with immunizations. As a result, within the entirety of the U.S. Army, only one rabies death occurred by war's end.

SKIN DISEASE

In 1968, the U.S. Army conducted the "Paddy Review," so named because U.S. Army units frequently operated in rice paddies. To the U.S. Army's surprise, the review found that a significant number of U.S. Army units lacked strength sufficient to conduct military operations because many of their personnel were permanently attending sick call from debilitating foot and leg ailments. The culprits were fungus, bacteria, and oversaturated skin. Muddy paddy water had severely weakened the U.S. Army.

Though the U.S. Army recognized that foot disease posed a serious medical threat in wet regions in South Vietnam, the service had underestimated its danger. In 1969, for instance, reports found that skin disease accounted for an average of 47 percent of the total combat man-days lost in certain units.

South Vietnam's tropical climate acted as an incubator for bacteria on the skin. When the skin was punctured, surface bacteria made its way into the blood stream. Skin disease became so detrimental to military operations that many United States Army units added a weekly dermatological sick call to avoid casualties. Often the simplest solutions, such as antibiotic creams and changes of clothes, were the most effective. (Courtesy of the U.S. Army Office of Medical History)

The Army immediately launched a medical investigation in three areas: the nature of the diseases' cause; the actual manpower lost; and effective control measures. The service quickly determined two important facts: First, only infantry soldiers developed incapacitating diseases on their feet and lower legs. Second, skin disease was nearly impossible to avoid when operating in South Vietnam's wet terrain.

The service looked for solutions in medicine, changes to equipment, and, to whatever degree possible, limiting interactions with saturated environments. The Army launched Operation SAFE STEP and, as part of its approach, conducted controlled experiments on the perimeter of Dong Tam Base. Volunteers tested six experimental boot models, four experimental boot socks, and three different types of protective ointments and lotions. As a result of Operation SAFE STEP, the Army developed mitigation strategies to three skin diseases. The Army issued improved socks and footwear and developed regulations to prevent and treat skin disease.

Fungal infections caused red, inflamed, and itchy skin. When personnel scratched it, often their skin cracked and bled. Bacteria spread into the broken skin and caused secondary infection. In answer, the Army prescribed a topical antibiotic. With the other two skin diseases, "Immersion Foot" and "Pyoderma Bacterial Skin Infections," the Army found these resulted from continuous underwater exposure in the former, and bacteria's rapid growth and spread in the tropical climate's heat and moisture in the latter. In these cases medicine was of limited use. The Army recommended limiting combat actions to less than 48 hours—except in cases of extreme emergencies—and 24-hour periods of drying out.

Immersion foot was caused by prolonged exposure to rice paddy water and mud in tropical environments. It caused the feet's soles to become soggy with deep wrinkles. Frequently, the top layer of skin peeled off when rubbed or friction points in the boot, which made it painful to walk. The Army's solution was to limit exposure to reduce risk. In October 1968, the Army issued a directive to limit combat operations to 48 hours, followed by a 24-hour drying out period. (Courtesy of the U.S. Army Office of Medical History)

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CASUALTIES BY OTHER MEANS
Disease and Drug Use in the VIETNAM WAR

PART 2 OF 4

Medical students eat with surgical masks covering their noses. Along with hundreds of other students at the school, they were masks to curtail the spread of Hong Kong Flu. (Courtesy of Getty Images)

Human illness does not respect international boundaries. In this era of rapid transportation it is possible to transmit communicable diseases rapidly over wide areas and into different countries. A person infected with such a disease may leave one country and enter another while his disease is still in the incubation period and consequently unrecognizable only to become infectious to others.

— Industrial College of the Armed Services Committee Report, 1947

The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus of 2020 caused roughly 500,000 deaths worldwide in six months following outbreak. The pandemic made clear that the world's sophisticated transportation systems were the highways upon which disease spread.

In 1968, at the height of the Vietnam War, U.S. troops returning to California unknowingly introduced the Hong Kong Flu to the west coast of the United States. From there the disease spread east to every state in the Nation. Over the course of two years, this new flu strain killed 100,000 Americans, and more than one million worldwide.

HONG KONG FLU

The Hong Kong Flu was named after its origin city. The virus is type A (H3N2), and it is believed to be a "reassortment" of the 1918 (H1N1) and 1957 (H1N2) influenzas. Reassortments occur when similar viruses mix their genetic materials through hosts (like humans) to create new viruses.

Though the sickness was reported among U.S. troops stationed in Southeast Asia, the flu's effects were rarely dire. The duration of illness varied between one and fourteen days. Most were sick three to four days. On average, only 2.6 days were lost to illness. Ultimately, the U.S. military found the disease nonlethal to its personnel. No more than 1.5 percent were sick at any given time.

The Hong Kong Flu was far more dangerous to the homefront. Following its arrival in September 1968, the flu quickly made its way east. Peak infections occurred from December to January 1968-1969, as is often the case with the flu. Hospital admissions began increasing in December 1968, and by early 1969, 74 percent of pneumonia patients showed signs of the virus. A second, less severe wave of illness occurred in the United States late in the following season (1969-1970). Of the two, the first wave was by far the deadliest. Over these two seasons, 70 percent of excess pneumonia and influenza deaths in the United States occurred during the first season. The rapid national deployment of a vaccine greatly reduced the Hong Kong Flu's lethality the following year.

The Hong Kong Flu also presented one of the first opportunities to assess the effect of antiviral drugs during a flu pandemic. In 1966, the Food and Drug Administration approved Amantadine, an antiviral

A firefighter receives a flu shot made available to city workers to avoid contracting the Hong Kong Flu. Medical advancements in the 1960s, to include the advent of antiviral medications and the expansion of influenza vaccines, limited the flu's duration and deadliness. (Courtesy of USA Today)

shown to be effective against the previous flu strain, which caused an epidemic in 1957. Studies showed that Amantadine inhibited infections of type A influenza viruses by slowing or outright blocking the disease's entry into cells. It took health experts time to warm to the drug as initial drug trials were conducted on small test groups. Overall, the results in slowing the Hong Kong Flu were mixed. Nevertheless, antivirals remained promising for future use. However, over time flu strains became resistant to the drug. As a result, Amantadine is no longer used to treat type A viruses.

EHRLICHIOSIS

The Hong Kong Flu was not the only disease outbreak the United States faced in 1968. That year a pathogen emerged among military working dogs in South Vietnam. German Shepherds were particularly vulnerable. The disease was a tickborne bacteria (rickettsiae) called ehrlichiosis—also referred to as tropical canine pancytopenia. This was an epizootic disease—an epidemic limited to animals.

In 1968, there were more than 1,000 scout, sentry, and tracker dogs in South Vietnam. The disease caused nosebleeds in its initial stages and quickly progressed from there. It destroyed the military dogs' red and white blood cells, and platelets. The animals experienced lethargy, anemia, and eventually perished from infection or blood disorders. More than 140 canines died from it in 1969 alone. By war's end, ehrlichiosis had killed 200 to 300 dogs.

Ehrlichiosis killed 200 to 300 military working dogs. The disease also caused a constant drain on veterinary resources from 1968 to 1972. The disease occupied much in the way of veterinary service care. It also demanded valuable time, resources, and personnel in veterinary research at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. (Courtesy of the U.S. Army Office of Medical History)

The slowdown in death rate was primarily due to the reduction of working dogs in South Vietnam and veterinary research. Initial drug trials saw promising results in administering the antibiotic, tetracycline, for a period of two weeks. The drug made such a strong impression that the U.S. Army's Vietnam Staff Veterinarian cited the antibiotic as a potential reason for the decline in ehrlichiosis. Tetracycline came into widespread commercial use in 1978.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic of 2020 and the quickness with which it spread proved just how small and interconnected the world has become. It also illustrated the complications that arise when species from different environments are suddenly thrust together. Such was also the case in the Vietnam War. When the U.S. introduced the German Shepherd and other European dog breeds into Southeast Asia, they inadvertently created an incubator for a disease that not only threatened the dog's mission, but its life. Moreover, the disease initially limited the United States' response. The U.S. military was unable to send sick canines back to the U.S. for fear of spreading the infection to domesticated animals within the Nation.

The U.S. could not, however, contain the Hong Kong Flu under the same measures. Like the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus, the Hong Kong Flu has a lengthy incubation period that when combined with rapid international transport home, made near inevitable the disease's landfall. Once within the States, the virus quickly spread, where it threatened the Nation's vulnerable young and elderly populations, and created one of the worst flu seasons the U.S. experienced in years. H3N2 remains a seasonal flu in the United States to this day.

A response to the 1968 Hong Kong Flu epidemic. (Courtesy of Duke University Library)

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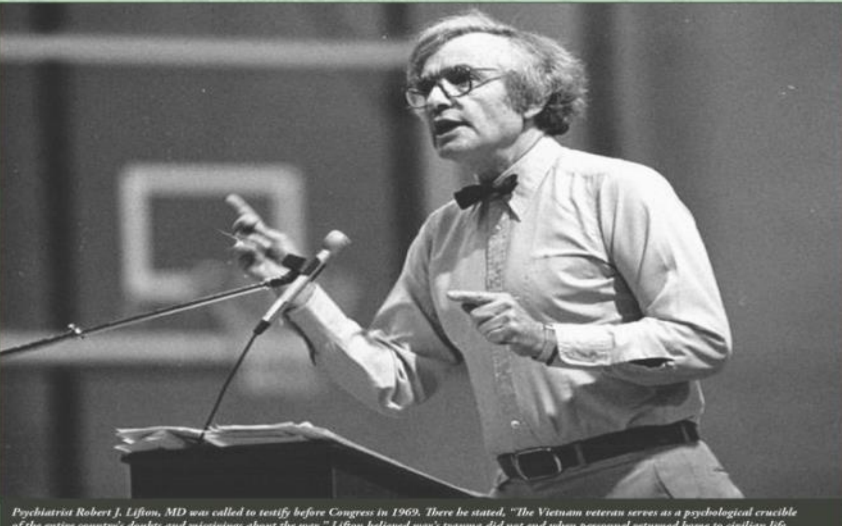

Psychiatrist Robert J. Lifton, MD was called to testify before Congress in 1969. There he stated, "The Vietnam veteran serves as a psychological crucible of the entire country's doubts and misgivings about the war." Lifton believed war's trauma did not end when personnel returned home to civilian life. (Courtesy of the State Library and Archives of Florida)

> ***There is a great difference between incidence of psychiatric disturbance during the war and what happens to young men after the war.***
>
> **— Robert Jay Lifton, MD, 1969**

Though Americans tend to think of their military and civilian worlds as separate, in truth, they are interconnected in subtle and complex ways, to include medicine. The Vietnam War left indelible legacies on U.S. military and civilian medical systems, and exchanges between the two propelled the specialization of medicine forward. This included scientific understanding and treatment of mental health. In the years following the war, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) became one of the war's signature legacies.

More broadly, efforts to address doctor shortages in the U.S. military spurred the creation of medical specialties. Exchanges between military and civilian medicine greatly benefited both. They occurred under what was called "The Berry Plan."

Frank Berry, MD, author of the "Berry Plan." More than 47,000 physicians served in the U.S. military under the Berry plan, and U.S. civilian and military medical specialization flourished as result. (Courtesy of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office)

BERRY PLAN

The Berry Plan was first conceived in the early 1950s by Dr. Frank Berry, then Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health and Medical, to address shortages of physicians in the military services. Rather than draft the physicians needed, Berry proposed a plan to incentivize physicians to volunteer for a reserve commission at a mutually acceptable time for the service and physician.

Under Berry's proposed rubric, young physicians began in civilian wards and then rotated into military service for further education and training. The exchange connected civilian and military medicine in ways mutually beneficial to both because physicians benefited from knowledge and experience gained from civilian and military medicine. The U.S. military services predicted their future personnel requirements, and, through the Berry Plan, took medical school graduates to fulfill their needs. As the Vietnam War escalated in 1965, demand for physicians increased.

For the doctors themselves, Berry's plan offered the following: First, those who desired to join the military were able to join the service of their choosing immediately following internship. Second, those serving in their civilian residencies were allowed to return to them following their military service. Third, doctors could choose full training in a medical specialty of their choice. Many physicians used the Berry Plan to complete their residency and their obligation to the military simultaneously.

The Berry Plan incentivized specialization. Physician specialists were afforded greater military ranks, and with those ranks, higher pay. Berry Plan participants typically chose medical specialties that kept them out of harm's way. By the 1970s, nearly all Berry Plan participants were fully trained specialists. According to the Navy Surgeon General, Vice Admiral D.L. Custis, the 1970s brought in some of "the military services' most talented officers." Many rose to become service or department chiefs in military hospitals, where they trained interns, residents, and fellows.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Vietnam veterans had many stigmas attached to them. Media depictions portrayed them as moody and disaffected outsiders. Even before the war ended, some Americans colloquially used the term "Vietnam Syndrome" to publicly diagnose veterans. For some, the clinical term that replaced Vietnam Syndrome, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), is heavily laden with meaning.

PTSD marked a major shift in mental healthcare. It served as a pivot point from previous clinical understandings and diagnoses of stress, anxiety, and trauma. The term came about following clinical mental health investigations into Vietnam veterans, and first appeared in the third volume of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM III) in 1980.

When the American Psychiatric Association released the first edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1952, the work used the term "gross stress reaction" to encompass all descriptions of psychological stress previously applied to World Wars I and II, such as "shell-shock," "battle fatigue," "combat fatigue," "combat exhaustion," and "combat stress reaction." "Gross stress reaction" was diagnosed "in situations in which the individual has been exposed to severe physical demands or extreme emotional stress, such as in combat or in civilian catastrophe (fire, earthquake, explosion, etc.)." The manual went on to state "in many instances this diagnosis applies to previously more or less 'normal' persons who have experienced intolerable stress." The treatment removed the person from the stressor for a brief time and provided them comfort and support. The presumption was this would return the person to normalcy. This meant removing personnel from the battlefield and providing them bed rest, food, and clean showers for a few days. Presumably, Service members then returned to their units in a fit mental state.

Senator Alan Cranston began his political career as an ardent proponent for veterans' rights. He was instrumental in bringing Robert J. Lifton, MD and his research to the public eye. Cranston served as the Chair of the Veterans Affairs Committee from 1977 to 1981, where he championed federal assistance programs in education, mental healthcare, and housing for veterans. He served in Congress from 1968 to 1992. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress)

In 1968, at the height of the Vietnam War, the American Psychiatric Association released the second volume of the DSM, which removed the term "gross stress reaction" and replaced it with "transient situational disorder." The DSM II's clinical diagnosis stated that "fear associated with military combat and manifested by trembling, running and hiding" was a "transient situational disorder," an acute and treatable maladjustment to adult life. This assumption proved to be incorrect, paving the way for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Robert J. Lifton, MD outlined his own beliefs on the Vietnam War's traumatic influence on the Nation in his book "Home from the War: Vietnam Veterans Neither Victims nor Executioners." Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder's inclusion in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders was the end result of his work with psychiatrists, veterans, and the U.S. Congress. (Courtesy of the University of Hawaii Library System, West Oahu)

As the Vietnam War wound to a close, psychiatrist Robert J. Lifton (himself a veteran of the Korean War) and his team of mental health specialists conducted sessions with Vietnam veterans to talk about their war and postwar experiences. Lifton and his team concluded that veterans' anxiety, stress, and trauma did not disappear following their return to civilian life. Lifton argued that removing the individual from the stressor was not enough and that anxiety, stress, and trauma were not limited to military service. Because the effects of trauma could linger, continued psychological treatment was required. These conclusions led to the introduction of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder into the third volume of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, which dramatically reshaped Service member, veteran, and civilian mental healthcare in the United States.

CONCLUSION

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Berry Plan are evidence that the Vietnam War drove into being new scientific medical understandings. The war brought greater education, knowledge, legitimization, and specialization among physicians to the benefit of military and civilian medicine alike. More than 42,000 physicians participated in the Berry Plan from 1954 to 1974, and they, along with their colleagues who served during the Vietnam War, returned to the U.S. to take up residence in hospitals, medical research centers, and private practices throughout the Nation. These physicians directly contributed to the growth of medical specialties, and, over time, their proliferation has become essential to advancing military and civilian medical science. Today, many of these specialties operate at the forefront of the 2020 pandemic and include virology, epidemiology, pathology, serology, and immunology, among many hundreds of others.

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CASUALTIES BY OTHER MEANS
Disease and Drug Use in the VIETNAM WAR

PART 4 OF 4

37th President of the United States Richard Nixon briefs the press on a bi-partisan Congressional leadership meeting on drug abuse in June 1971. President Nixon is flanked by Jerome H. Jaffe, John Ehrlichman, and Egil Krogh. Jerome Jaffe served as the head of Nixon's drug office. He instituted policies and procedures requiring returning U.S. military personnel to be drug free. (Courtesy of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum)

America's public enemy number one in the United States is drug abuse. In order to fight and defeat this enemy, it is necessary to wage a new, all-out offensive. This will be a worldwide offensive dealing with the problems of sources of supply, as well as Americans who may be stationed abroad, wherever they are in the world.

— President Richard Nixon, 1971

Diseases were not the only afflictions in Vietnam; when U.S. personnel arrived in increasing numbers in 1965, they provided a ready source of income to Southeast Asia drug merchants from Thailand, Burma, Laos, and Vietnam who were accustomed to planting, harvesting, processing, transporting, and marketing drugs—to include heroin, an opioid. By the late 1960s, the United States military feared the casual use of soft and hard drugs within the ranks threatened its mission. In response, the military immediately instituted procedures, regulations, and programs to combat rising drug use. They aimed to find users, eliminate them from the ranks, and, where possible, cure drug addiction to restore combat power.

DRUG USE IN UNITED STATES AND SOUTH VIETNAM

Illicit drug use was a significant cultural phenomenon in 1960s and 1970s America and was indicative of the social and cultural transformation underway in the Nation. Drug use was common among youth, who, as part of the countercultural movement, rejected the social norms of previous generations; yet these values never took hold among the U.S. political elite. In the months leading up to and following his inauguration in 1969, President Richard Nixon harkened to what he referred to as the "silent majority" of Americans that quietly held traditional values—to include the sharp rejection of drug culture. President Nixon and the silent majority believed drug use signaled the erosion of American values. At a press conference on June 17, 1971, Nixon declared drug abuse "public enemy number one."

U.S. military efforts to identify users had already begun prior to Nixon's announcement. In the late 1960s, the military established a drug treatment program at the 98th Medical Detachment in Nha Trang. To identify users, the military established urinalysis clinics and called upon its junior leaders to closely examine their personnel. Though these urinalysis programs heavily taxed medical laboratory personnel and resources, they were exceptionally effective at identifying users.

Initially, the U.S. military took the stance of "zero tolerance" to push users into psychiatric care, its legal system, and out of military service. For instance, the Army deployed Regulation 635-212 to drum users out on the grounds that they were unfit to serve. Yet, as time wore on, the military services increasingly found their legal and mental healthcare systems clogged and overwhelmed. The services began to change course, and increasingly sent abusers for hospital care and treatment (that often also included psychiatric care). The military enacted rehabilitation programs to grant users a second chance. These programs were commonly known as "Amnesty."

As early as 1969, the U.S. military began testing the efficacy of Amnesty programs. Whether the user was found through urinalysis screening or voluntarily admitted, Amnesty provided them the "assistance to overcome [their] need for the drug." The goal was "to have every individual return to [the U.S.] in a drug-free condition." The Amnesty program stated it was "a humane and compassionate approach to the drug user who exhibits sincere desire to stop using drugs." This was "the essence of the exemption program."

The U.S. military wasted little time in establishing urine collection stations throughout South Vietnam. All commands instituted involuntary screening and expanded testing for amphetamine and barbiturates, as well as heroin. Clean urine became a requirement to travel back to the United States. In its efforts to cure users before they came home, the Nixon administration's methods were not unlike the quarantine procedures governments use to slow the spread of disease. (Courtesy of the Defense Health Agency)

By 1971, however, drug use was still prevalent. Though statistics vary on the degree to which U.S. military personnel represented "true addicts,"—a term applied to persons who were physically and psychologically addicted—roughly 20 percent of U.S. Service members in South Vietnam admitted using drugs. Some studies and reports placed the percentage much higher. Drugs were plentiful, cheaper, and purer than their counterparts in the United States. Heroin that went for $100 in the U.S. frequently cost less than $15 in South Vietnam. One observer noted, "Fourteen year-old girls were selling heroin at roadside stands on the main highway from Saigon to the U.S. Army base at Long-Binh; Saigon street peddlers stuffed vials of 95 percent pure heroin into the pockets of [personnel] as they strolled through downtown."

A contemporary take on a "Groovy Bus," a colorfully painted vehicle typically associated with the 1960s and 1970s counterculture. The counterculture was made up of many social, cultural, and political movements that rejected U.S. mores, norms, and laws, to include long-established prejudices against drug use. (Courtesy of James Stave)

The U.S. military had at its disposal three types of urinalysis tests, which were able to identify users for about three days following their last usage. Urine screening tied down significant resources. For their part, U.S. military personnel dubbed the requirement "Operation Golden Flow." (Courtesy of the Defense Health Agency)

ASSESSMENT OF DRUG USE PREVENTION EFFECTIVENESS

The U.S. military conducted an internal assessment of its alcohol and drug education and prevention programs in 1973. The review found that, in the short term, the military failed to discourage alcohol and drug abuse among its youngest personnel, who were lower grade enlisted Service members, where abuse was at its worst. The report argued that programs placed too much importance on "personal feelings, motivations, and behavior by presenting facts alone." The military had failed to recognize that "some young soldiers belong to a youth or drug sub-culture which legitimizes drug use; they use drugs because they enjoy them," while "other young soldiers use drugs out of boredom or to relieve their personal problems." Success, the report argued, depended upon persuasively addressing these two groups. Adjustments needed to be made.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. military was unprepared for drug use in South Vietnam. Though its mitigation efforts saw some successes, ultimately, the end of the war and the creation of the all-volunteer force were the principle reasons drug use in the military sharply declined. By removing the Service member from an environment where drugs were plentiful and cheap, and shifting the U.S. military toward volunteerism—and the benefits afforded to volunteers—the branches of service were able to exert greater control over personnel and the environment in which they operated. With these changes in effect, the U.S. military crafted lessons learned from the Vietnam War that sharply curtailed drug use in its general population, and even insulated the institution from further national and worldwide drug outbreaks, to include, most recently, the opioid epidemic.

LEGACIES

During the Vietnam War, United States military personnel and citizens alike faced afflictions. Many of their remedies would seem familiar to those who experienced the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus of 2020. Military personnel and citizens limited their exposure to pathogens, enacted simple yet effective measures to control the spread of disease, vaccinated to build immunity among the population, and reframed how they defined mental health. The Vietnam War left indelible legacies on the United States. One of the war's most important is a frequently forgotten reminder that, in dictating human events, the affliction gets a vote.

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COMBAT MEDICINE IN THE VIETNAM WAR

PART 1 OF 3

Soldiers carry a wounded comrade through a swampy area in 1969. (National Archives)

U.S. Army medics give first aid to a soldier after his hand was injured by a booby trap in Tan Tru Province in April 1967. (National Archives)

Combat Medicine in Vietnam

It is a tragic consequence of war that advances in combat medicine often come as the result of personal sacrifices made by those who intimately engage in battle. With each new conflict, medical professionals build upon previous knowledge to improve care for the wounded on the battlefield and in the hospital. The American Civil War (1861-1865) saw military physicians establish a triage and evacuation system that made use of horse-drawn "flying ambulances," an innovation first developed by French surgeons during the Napoleonic Wars (1792-1815). During World War I (1914-1918), American physicians imitated British and French militaries by constructing mobile surgical hospitals near the trenches to reduce the time between injury and the reception of care. Toward the end of World War II (1939-1945), the U.S. military developed a comprehensive blood transfusion system that expanded on the experiences of transfusionists during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and British physicians in both world wars.

Richard Anthony, an Army combat medic, sutures the hand of an ARVN soldier at a Battalion Aid Station in Quan Loi, South Vietnam, April 1970. (Photo courtesy of Richard Anthony)

The Vietnam War presented medical units with new obstacles. Unlike previous conflicts, frontlines became blurred in Vietnam: Combat operations were conducted in the country's diverse terrain of jungles, mountains, rice paddies, and coastal waters. The unconventional nature of the fighting left the roads unsecured, making evacuation of the wounded problematic. Inconsistent contact with the enemy meant medical teams had to admit influxes of wounded servicepeople at a moment's notice. The foreign environment forced medical personnel to confront diseases that did not exist in the United States. Despite these challenges, medical teams provided exceptional care during the Vietnam War, and military medical practitioners revolutionized crucial aspects of combat and civilian medicine.

Point of Injury/Illness

And it was just constant: trying to get somebody through that time and making sure that they weren't alone; that they had somebody there; that we were talking with them—each other—and working through the nightmare that they'd just experienced.

— Mike Clark, Army Combat Medic

After sustaining an injury or suffering an illness, a servicemember received initial care from an Army or Air Force medic or a Navy corpsman, who were attached to Marine units. The medics and corpsmen, or "docs" as they were affectionately called, provided the initial evaluation of the patient, often treating victims while under fire. The "docs" administered first aid, such as securing the airway, stopping bleeding, dressing wounds, and splinting fractures. They stabilized servicemembers who suffered serious wounds for evacuation to hospitals in the rear.

Small arms, artillery and mortars, mines, and booby traps (such as punji sticks, or sharpened pieces of wood or bamboo that were capable of penetrating combat boots) inflicted the majority of wounds in the Vietnam War. Early in the conflict, gunshot wounds were extremely common; later in the war, the Communists acquired more sophisticated weaponry, so wounds caused by shrapnel from rockets and artillery became just as common. Wounds were predominantly located in the lower and upper extremities; however, some weapons, such as mines and artillery, caused wounds in multiple locations at the same time. Medics also

A U.S. Navy corpsman administers first aid to a wounded Marine during Operation SALINE II in Quang Tri Province on 12 March 1968. (Department of Defense)

treated maladies produced by the hot and wet environment, such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke, leech and snake bites, and jungle rot. Illness also accounted for a large proportion of hospital admissions. The most common diseases were malaria (*Plasmodium vivax* and *Plasmodium falciparum*), hepatitis, diarrhea, respiratory and skin infections, and fevers of unknown origin.

More than 1,100 medics and 680 corpsmen were killed in action and many more were wounded during the Vietnam War. Fifteen Army medics and four Navy corpsmen received the Congressional Medal of Honor for heroic actions they performed in this conflict. Ten of these citations were awarded posthumously.

A soldier is medically evacuated after being wounded during Operation WAHIAWA in Xa Ba Phuoc Province on 21 May 1966. (National Archives)

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COMBAT MEDICINE IN THE VIETNAM WAR

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A wounded soldier is lifted into a UH-1D helicopter by means of the forest penetration seat attached to the rescue hoist in Long Binh, South Vietnam, in October 1967. (National Archives)

Doctors and nurses transport a patient from a Huey helicopter to the 85th Evacuation Hospital in Phu Bai, South Vietnam, 1970-1971. (Photo courtesy of Mike Clark)

Doctors and nurses working in a busy operating room at the 85th Evacuation Hospital in Phu Bai, South Vietnam, 1970-1971. (Photo courtesy of Gus Kappler)

Medical Evacuation

When servicemembers sustained injuries in the field, the military airlifted patients by helicopter directly from the battlefield to a theater hospital in the rear. Although the concept of air evacuation did not originate during the Vietnam War—the French used the Dorand II biplane to move patients during World War I—the U.S. military standardized helicopter evacuations during this conflict. The military commonly evacuated patients in the H-13 Sioux helicopter during the Korean War; however, this vehicle's effectiveness was limited because it could transport only 1-2 patients per flight and it required that the wounded lay on litters *outside* the aircraft, where they were exposed to enemy fire and extreme weather. In Vietnam, the military operated the iconic UH-1 Iroquois or "Huey," a faster and more maneuverable helicopter that could carry more patients inside the aircraft. As a result of this superior vehicle, the wounded in Vietnam received treatment faster than in any previous conflict. During World War II, patients usually were evacuated and treated within 12-18 hours; during the Korean War, this time compressed to 2-6 hours. During the Vietnam War, evacuation of patients frequently occurred within 30-35 minutes. According to emergency medical guidelines, patient survivability greatly increases when they receive definitive care less than two hours after injury.

Aerial view of 3d Field Hospital, Saigon, South Vietnam. (Darryl Henley Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University)

When a soldier suffered a wound in the field, a medic, corpsman, or officer usually requested air evacuation over the radio. Protocol required the medic on the ground to give the air ambulance unit the number of patients, location of the landing zone, and information about area security. The medevac crew typically consisted of a pilot, copilot, crew chief, and medic on board the helicopter. These crews often flew into dangerous situations; if needed, gunships accompanied the medevac helicopters to clear hostiles from the area. If the terrain was too difficult to land, the helicopter crew would lower a bullet-shaped, metal device, commonly referred to as a forest or jungle penetrator, and troops on the ground would then strap the patient onto the mechanism. Once the patient was strapped to the gurney, an electric motor retracted the patient into the helicopter. Hoist missions were particularly dangerous because they exposed the helicopter and patient to ground fire.

The U.S. Army advanced medical evacuation capabilities. The 57th Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance), which famously adopted the call sign "Dust Off," arrived in Vietnam in April 1962 to support the 8th Field Hospital. This outfit was one of the first medical units to arrive in Vietnam, and it was one of the last to leave in March 1973. The final words uttered by one of its commanders, Major Charles L. Kelley, after being told to leave an area under heavy fire, epitomized the creed of Dust Off pilots and their crews: "When I have your wounded."

The U.S. Air Force also provided invaluable aeromedical support during the war. The Army and the Marines often evacuated casualties directly from the battlefield, while the Air Force transported patients between in-country hospitals, primarily in C-130s, C-123s, and C-118s, and it occasionally evacuated patients from forward operating bases. The 903d Aeromedical Evacuation Flight, which was the first Air Force tactical aeromedical unit used in a combat area, provided support during the battles of Dak To in 1967 and Khe Sanh in 1968.

According to the DUSTOFF Association, more than 200 air ambulance crewmembers were killed during the Vietnam War. Two Dust Off pilots received the Congressional Medal of Honor; as a result of these two individuals' heroism under intense enemy fire, at least 80 servicemembers were rescued.

A U.S. Navy Nurse Corps officer tends a patient following surgery in the intensive care unit of the hospital ship USS Repose, off the coast of Vietnam in the South China Sea. (National Archives)

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COMBAT MEDICINE IN THE VIETNAM WAR

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Patients being loaded onto an Air Force Casualty Bus at the 3d Field Hospital, Saigon, South Vietnam, (Darryl Henley Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University)

Theater Hospitals

Once the flight crew retrieved the patient from the battlefield, they communicated with nearby hospitals to determine which facility was best equipped to treat the patient. The crew provided the hospital with the estimated time of arrival and type of injuries en route, allowing the hospital to prepare for the patients' admissions. Depending upon the severity of the wound or illness and the patient load at in-country hospitals, patients could be transported to a variety of Army, Air Force, and Naval facilities, including two hospital ships, the USS *Repose* and USS *Sanctuary*. While flying to the hospital, the flight medic continued to administer first aid and resuscitative interventions as needed.

A soldier who was wounded in Vietnam receives care in a military hospital in the United States in 1971. (National Archives)

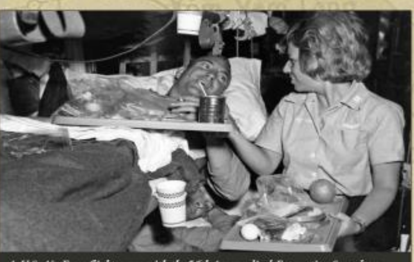
Once the patient arrived at the hospital, medical teams assessed the patient, treated life-threatening injuries, and provided urgent resuscitative measures. Common procedures included artificial respiration, the insertion of an intravenous catheter to administer fluids, and the administration of an electrocardiogram to monitor heart activity. The leading causes of death within the first 24 hours were hemorrhagic shock (or organ failure resulting from extreme blood loss) and sepsis, an infection of the bloodstream caused by an external agent. Sepsis is a serious concern for patients with gunshot or shrapnel wounds; if uncontrolled, it quickly can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and even death. After 24 hours, teams continued to monitor for pulmonary insufficiency and sepsis. The medical teams also performed cutting-edge surgeries, such as repairing major vessels, and developed innovative treatments, such as using topical antimicrobials to prevent infections resulting from burns. Physicians and nurses also treated patients for venereal disease, neuropsychiatric conditions, including anxiety attacks, seizures, and encephalitis (i.e., an inflammation of the brain), and acute respiratory distress syndrome, an inflammation of the lungs commonly referred to as "Da Nang lung" or "shock lung."

During the Vietnam War, accidents, illnesses, and hostile fire claimed the lives of 20 military physicians and 10 military nurses.

Aeromedical Evacuation

If a medical team determined that a patient required hospitalization for more than 30 days, then they transported the patient to bases in Hawaii, Japan, Okinawa, and the Philippines. Prior to 1965, the Air Force flew smaller C-118s, C-130s, and C-124s to move patients to out-of-country hospitals, but, as the number of aeromedical evacuations increased, the Air Force switched transport to the larger C-141 Starlifter. Pacific Air Forces (PACAF, a regional command of the U.S. Air Force) typically coordinated aeromedical evacuation to hospitals in Asia, while Military Airlift Command managed all flights to the United States.

If medical teams in allied countries determined that patients required further care, then preparations were made to transport the patient to



A U.S. Air Force flight nurse with the 56th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron serves lunch to litter patients aboard a C-141 jet transport returning the servicemen to the United States from Vietnam in September 1966. (National Archives)

A U.S. Air Force C-141 Starlifter aeromedical evacuation aircraft waits at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, South Vietnam, as American wounded are placed on board. The patients will be transported to hospitals in the United States. (National Archives)

Wounded servicemen are shown on board a U.S. Air Force C-141 Starlifter en route to the United States in September 1966. (National Archives)

a facility in the United States. After 1966, patients often flew back to the United States in the C-141 Starlifter. The C-141 could transport patients from the Philippines to the West Coast of the United States in 13 hours with only one stop. The C-141 could be configured to carry over 100 ambulatory and supine patients. A paramedical crew traveled with the patients, and, if needed, a physician medical officer to administer care en route. The C-141 became known as the "Hanoi Taxi" after it transported prisoners of war from Gia Lam Airport in Hanoi, North Vietnam, to Clark Air Base, Philippines, on February 12, 1973, as part of Operation HOMECOMING.

Once the C-141 landed at an air base in the United States, patients were divided into groups. Those patients who could be treated and returned to duty were transported to military hospitals on active military bases. Those patients who would never return to active duty because of the severity of their wounds were transported to the Veterans Administration facility closest to their hometown and eventually medically discharged from the armed forces.

Conclusion

The medical professionals who served during the Vietnam War radically improved combat medicine. As a result of these daring accomplishments, servicemembers in Vietnam survived traumatic wounds and debilitating illnesses that would have incapacitated or mortally wounded them in previous conflicts. Advancements in prehospital care, medical evacuation, and surgical techniques and treatments also influenced civilian medicine in the decades following the war. Many military doctors, nurses, and medics transitioned into private practice and published their wartime discoveries in medical journals, both of which expanded the use of new techniques and procedures among civilian practitioners. These advancements in combat medicine, however, came at the expense of the United States servicemembers who lost their lives or suffered irrecoverable injuries during the Vietnam War.

References can be found on
The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration website
http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/education/

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RECLAIMING WHAT WAS LOST
The Legacies of Unaccounted-For Personnel in the VIETNAM WAR

PART 1 OF 3

A soldier from the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (Old Guard) renders honors on October 18, 2018, in Section 55 of Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia for a U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel who died during the Vietnam War. (Courtesy of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency)

I'm mindful that I stand here before the families of many of the missing. I'm mindful that you gave your sons and husbands and fathers into the care of our Government when they left to fight for our Nation. You knew they might die in battle. But you had, and will always have, every right to expect that your Government will not abandon those who failed to return.

— President Ronald Reagan, 1984

Much was lost when the United States departed South Vietnam in 1975. The war, civil strife, social upheaval, and political scandal left its citizens questioning the Nation's institutions and promises. While many wished to put the war behind them, some 2,646 missing and unaccounted-for U.S. personnel had not returned from Southeast Asia.

Finding and returning these personnel required the Nation's strength and commitment. United States officials tasked with recovery had to communicate openly and honestly about a war shrouded in secrecy. On an international level, the Nation required sustained relations with former adversaries. Accounting as fully as possible for missing and unaccounted-for U.S. personnel became a process where civilians and Government officials worked together to restore trust in the nation's institutions to return the missing. Much has been accomplished; more work remains.

THE MISSION AND ITS CHALLENGE

Achieving the fullest possible accounting for personnel not returned from Southeast Asia is a time-sensitive mission. Full skeletons are no longer recovered from Southeast Asia. Many unaccounted-for personnel originally perished in aircraft crashes. The trauma of impact, exploding fuel, and resulting fires all contributed to making recovery extremely difficult. In the years following, animal and humans picked apart the crash locations. Even for those buried intact, the soil's acidity—a quality unique to Southeast Asia—eats away at skeletal remains. Years of monsoons shift and deteriorate sites and remains further still.

The United States military attempted the first recovery missions even as the war was being fought. Yet, owing to combat operations at the time, the odds of success were remote and the missions themselves were dangerous. The agencies charged with accounting for the missing and recovering remains have, over time, evolved and consolidated into the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA).

In locating remains, Jack Kull, the DPAA's former Senior Vietnam War Policy Officer, stated, "You have to build a case file." From this file, detective work begins. The work is historical and archeological in nature. For instance, case-file analysts might ask, "If the missing personnel were in an aircraft, then what type? What was the nature of the crash? Was the person able to get out prior to impact?" An F-4 Phantom impact at high speed may hurl the disintegrating aircraft hundreds of meters, whereas a helicopter may come to rest near the site of impact.

Politics and geography in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia also greatly influence investigations and excavations. Weather is a factor; excavations cannot occur during the heavy rain season. Cooperation with locals is vital. The remains of U.S. personnel now often rest in the land locals use in their everyday lives. Additionally, in many cases, it fell to the Vietnamese to bury their former adversaries. These memories are useful in locating sites that may contain remains.

Excavations are referred to as Joint Field Activities, and they are made up of multiple teams, each of which consist of civilian and military personnel with specialized expertise. Some Joint Field Activities are made up of nearly 100 people divided into three to four recovery teams working separate sites, usually in proximity. These teams are led by civilian forensic anthropologists and archeologists (called SREs, or Senior Recovery Experts/Science Recovery Experts). Their expertise is in excavating sites believed to hold skeletal remains. They work closely with a United States military officer.

The civilian scientist chooses the site while the military officer leads a specialized team of military personnel that includes an explosives ordinance expert, a photographer, a medic, a linguist, and others to ensure the documentation of a safe, accurate, and well-executed excavation. Often the team is further augmented to meet any specific needs. For instance, if remains are believed to be underwater, the team will come equipped with personnel trained in self-contained underwater breathing apparatus, or SCUBA, diving.

A U.S. Army Sergeant 1st Class assigned to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency SCUBA dives in the Gulf of Tonkin off the coast of northern Vietnam in May 2017 in search of two aviators believed to have crashed in the area during the Vietnam War. (Courtesy of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency)

An Armed Forces Medical Examiner System analyst collects a DNA sample during a POW/MIA Accounting Agency Family Member Update in Louisville, Kentucky, May 19, 2018. DNA can be used to support the recovery of skeletal remains or directly aid in remains identification. (Courtesy of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System)

Members of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and local villagers conduct excavation operations in Khammauon province, Lao People's Democratic Republic, on March 28, 2017. (Courtesy of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency)

Once remains are located, they are given a joint forensic review by U.S. and host nation experts to determine whether remains belong to United States personnel, indigenous persons, or even animals. Following review, remains are transported to a forensic laboratory in Hawaii for scientific identification. (The United States also maintains a forensic laboratory at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska which analyzes and identifies remains recovered from Europe and other parts of the world.) These state-of-the-art laboratories are manned by scientists skilled and experienced in identifying human remains.

The DPAA's Deputy Director of Outreach and Communications Johnnie Webb explained that once repatriated remains reach the laboratory, "previous medical records gathered while in the service prove essential to their identification." Forensic anthropologists and odontologists—otherwise known as forensic dentists—use advanced equipment to remove any commingling of animal and human remains. The odontologists use dental records and dental history to identify persons based on teeth and jaws.

To further narrow the results, these laboratories use stable isotope analysis, which has provided one of the most novel means of identifying human remains. Stable isotope ratios examine elements found in human bones to determine what foods make up their structure. This science identifies and distinguishes bones made up of high concentrations of corn (found in U.S. diets) or rice (found in Asian diets). Stable isotype examinations are also able to identify the geographic location where drinking water was found. As it turns out, you are, in fact, what you eat.

With the examination narrowed, remains are then securely sent to the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES) in Delaware for identification. As seen on television, laboratories rely upon Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) testing to identify remains. AFMES uses both nuclear (auSTR or YSTR) and mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) testing during the identification process. Testing is dependent on having an appropriate family reference available. The mtDNA test can use any family member along the maternal line, YSTR testing can use any family member along the paternal line, and auSTR can use mother/father or siblings as references.

RECLAIMING WHAT WAS LOST
The Legacies of Unaccounted-For Personnel in the VIETNAM WAR

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Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States, speaks before delegates on July 20, 1984 at the inauguration of National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Reagan made unaccounted-for personnel a national priority. He proclaimed, "Until the P.O.W./M.I.A. issue is resolved, it will remain a matter of the highest national priority. On July 20, 1984, the POW/MIA Flag will fly over the White House, the Departments of State and Defense, and the Veterans' Administration as a symbol of our unswerving commitment to achieve the fullest possible accounting for the servicemen and civilians." (Courtesy of the National League of POW/MIA Families)

> *The League's single, threefold mission supporting our POW/MIA [s] and KIA/BNR from the Vietnam War is to obtain the release and return of all prisoners, the fullest possible accounting for the missing, and the repatriation of remains of those not yet recovered who died while serving our nation.*
>
> **— The National League of POW/MIA Families**

On January 27, 1973, the United States and South Vietnam signed the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam with representatives of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong. The agreement stipulated the return of 591 U.S. Prisoners of War from South Vietnam and Hanoi, nine from Laos, and three from China. Regarding unreturned missing and unaccounted-for personnel, the Department of Defense, working through the Service Secretaries, convened review boards and issued presumptive findings of death. Following the Nation's complete withdrawal from South Vietnam, these personnel were now listed as Killed-in-Action/Body Not Recovered. To return to Southeast Asia and account as fully as possible for these personnel, the United States required direct cooperation from its former adversaries.

Senior officials initially worked to normalize relations with Vietnam to repatriate unaccounted-for personnel. Vietnam's leadership understood U.S. aims and carefully planned its strategy: Vietnam would grant access to unaccounted-for personnel, and in return, asked the United States to end economic sanctions against the nation and pay reparations. The talks stalled. Meanwhile, in Washington, DC, the National League of POW/MIA Families, a nonprofit organization, advocated to the U.S. Government on behalf of families of missing and unaccounted for personnel. From inception, the organization's goal has been the return of all prisoners, the fullest possible accounting of the missing and repatriation of all recoverable remains of those who died serving our nation during the Vietnam War.

ESTABLISHING RELATIONS AND A RECOVERY PROGRAM

In the years following the war, the National League of POW/MIA Families made inroads within the Federal Government. By the late 1970s, its Executive Director was a founding member of the POW/MIA Interagency Group. This group consisted of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Asian and Pacific Affairs, the National Security Council Deputy Director for Asian Affairs, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency, and other Federal agencies with a stake in normalizing relations with Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

The task before the League and the Nation seemed formidable and recovery statistics immediately following the war offered little hope. By 1979, of the 2,646 originally unaccounted-for personnel, only 78 remains had been repatriated.

While the Nation's efforts to improve relations with Vietnam lagged, the Federal Government began construction of a laboratory in Hawaii to identify recovered remains. In 1978, following the lab's completion, a team of specialists conducted a recovery operation in Papua New Guinea from World War II. The lab was originally staffed by morticians, who typically worked with soft tissue and flesh. However, experts quickly found recovered remains possessed neither. By 1983, the lab hired its first forensic anthropologists and forensic dentists, also called odontologists.

President Reagan's election in 1980 spurred efforts to develop working relationships with Vietnam and Laos. Reagan made the Vietnam War accounting effort a priority. President Reagan's appointment of U.S. Army General John Vessey to the role of special envoy to Vietnam was instrumental to breaking the impasse. Gen. Vessey brought to Vietnam several delegations from the Interagency Working Group to forge a path ahead for both nations. He also recruited military and civilians who specialized in investigation and recovery and made every effort to ensure they or their successors were made a part of the accounting mission in the long term. Gen. Vessey believed familiarity bred understanding and the opportunity for progress. It was important that discussions between Vietnam and United States officials maintain continuity in the accounting effort.

By 1984, the United States and Vietnam had agreed that accounting recovery efforts of unaccounted-for U.S. personnel remains would be pursued as a humanitarian matter separate from other considerations between the two nations. In 1985, ten years after departing from South Vietnam, American specialists returned to Vietnam to conduct the first joint recovery. Diplomacy proved the essential step to repatriating remains of unaccounted-for personnel. It remains an integral part of the process to this day.

BUILDING UPON PROGRESS

The National League of POW/MIA Families acted as an intermediary and honest broker between the Federal Government and its constituent families. As efforts to build the Nation's account mission evolved, a significant number of League members remained skeptical of Government claims concerning their loved ones. During the war, the United States had conducted secret operations in Laos and Cambodia and several personnel were killed and went missing during those missions. Yet, due to their secrecy, family members with loved ones unaccounted-for in Laos and Cambodia were misinformed about the country of loss.

The League provided a single source for its constituents to exercise their voice to an ever-expanding Federal bureaucracy tasked with locating and

An Armed Forces Medical Examiner System analyst sands a vertebra in February 2019. Sanding the bones helps to remove any external contaminants such as dirt or oil that could contaminate DNA samples. (Courtesy of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System)

Ann Mills-Griffiths, then Executive Director of the National League of POW/MIA Families, with Colonel Khamla Keopithoune, head of the Lao Ministry of National Defense Team at a U.S. crash site as part of the first League Delegation to Laos and Vietnam in 1982. (Courtesy of the National League of POW/MIA Families)

repatriating remains of unaccounted-for personnel. As the painful events of the Vietnam War receded from public memory and focus, the League fought to keep accounting and repatriation in the national spotlight.

Evolving science changed the nature of the mission as well. By the 1990s, advancing DNA identification technology made an impact. In 1992, for the first time, DNA was used to identify recovered remains; however, the process was far from perfect. When a DNA test result failed to persuade a skeptical family, they turned to the University of California, Berkeley, for a second opinion. The University's results contradicted the Federal Government's results. The Government placed a temporary moratorium on DNA's use while having an independent laboratory perform testing. The independent laboratory validated the Government's results.

THE MISSION EXPANDS

Following on the National League of POW/MIA Families' successes, similar organizations lobbied the Federal Government to repatriate remains from other global conflicts. For its part, the U.S. Government has gradually allocated greater resources to the mission and centralized its efforts into a single agency, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. Despite substantial increases in the DPAA's resources, its mission is monumental. More than 72,000 remain unaccounted for from World War II alone, and 7,567 from the Korean War. Of the original 2,646 from the Vietnam War, as of October 2020, 1,585 personnel were still unaccounted-for.

A 2009 League Delegation to Laos. This photo includes League Chairman Ann Mills-Griffiths and a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) Det. 3 Recovery Team. JPAC would later be folded into the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. (Courtesy of the National League of POW/MIA Families)

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The POW/MIA flag visible atop the White House in December 2019. The flag flew over the White House from July 20, 1984 to Flag Day, June 14, 2020, when it was moved to the South Lawn. Beginning on April 9, 2021, the flag once again flew over the White House. (Courtesy of Patrick J. Hughes)

U.S. Air Force Colonel Mellor survived his ejection and attempted to evade the enemy. Initial radio contact with friendly forces was established; however, contact was lost, and, despite a two-day search, neither Colonel Mellor nor his aircraft were found. (Courtesy of the Mellor Family)

A photographed copy of the Western Union Telegram sent to U.S. Army Sergeant First Class William Boyle's mother after his helicopter was shot down. SFC Boyle's Missing in Action board proceedings and notices of his death may be viewed at LOC.gov. (Photo Courtesy of the Library of Congress)

Positive identification was made of Fredric Mellor's remains by the Armed Force Medical Examiner System on July 13, 2018.

— Obituary for Colonel Fredric Mellor

The remains could not be located and it is the finding of the investigation that [Sergeant First Class William Boyle] could not have survived the crash. Please accept my deepest sympathy.

— Telegram to Mrs. Mary J. Rippe

COLONEL FREDRIC MELLOR, ACCOUNTED FOR

U.S. Air Force Colonel Fredric Mellor's remains returned home on September 28, 2018. On the nature of his mission and death, the DPAA wrote:

> *On August 13, 1965, Colonel Fredric Mellor was the pilot of an RF-101 Voodoo (tail number 56-0186, call sign "Wolf 41") that was one of two aircraft on a photo reconnaissance mission over North Vietnam. His aircraft was shot down during the mission, but Colonel Mellor survived and made initial radio and beeper contact with friendly rescue aircraft. However, helicopter crews sent to rescue him could not locate him, and Colonel Mellor was killed by enemy militia members a short time later. He was initially buried near Pu Khou Stream and Nang Stream in Vietnam.*

From the moment his remains touched down at T.F. Green Airport, Mellor's home state of Rhode Island honored him. The funeral home placed U.S. Air Force emblems on his hearse. The processional was provided a full escort from Patriot Guard Riders, as well as local and state police. Police officers saluted at every intersection. Local motorists pulled to the side of the road, and many stepped out of their cars to pay their respects as the processional passed. Children and teenagers from local middle and high schools lined the roadways to solemnly watch. Mellor had died before many of their parents were born.

Members of the Patriot Honor Guard from Hanscom Air Force Base, Massachusetts, carry the remains of U.S. Air Force Colonel Fredric Mellor as he is laid to rest at Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery on September 28, 2018. (Courtesy of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency)

Finally, the procession arrived at Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Exeter, Rhode Island. Veterans stood in the rain and saluted. They included young members of Mellor's Air Force unit who had traveled from Nebraska to pay their respects. The family were overwhelmed by the outpouring of support. One cousin recalled, "Freddie would have liked this."

More than 53 years following his death, Fredric Mellor's journey home was complete. He was laid to rest with full military honors.

On October 11, 2018, the city of Cranston dedicated a plaque to Fredric Mellor on its MIA Vietnam War Memorial. His status on the memorial was changed from "missing" to "killed in action."

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS WILLIAM BOYLE, UNACCOUNTED-FOR

On or about March 3, 1970, Mrs. Mary J. Rippe received a telegram from Western Union. It stated:

> *The Secretary of the Army has asked me to inform you that your son, Sergeant First Class William Boyle has been reported missing in action in South East Asia since 28 February 1970. He was last seen as a passenger on a military aircraft on a military mission when the aircraft was fired upon by a hostile ground force, crashed and burned. Search is in progress. You will be promptly advised when further information is received. In order to protect any information that might be used to your son's detriment, your cooperation is requested in making public only information concerning his name, rank, service number, and date of birth. Please accept my deepest sympathy during this most trying period.*

Boyle was aboard a CH-34 Choctaw helicopter that took off to conduct a resupply/medical evacuation in Attopeu Province, Laos. Boyle had just finished loading the injured onto the aircraft when it was hit by an enemy rocket. The explosion cut the helicopter in two, separating the pilots from the crew. The pilot and copilot successfully escaped the aircraft. The rear half absorbed the bulk of the explosion and caught fire. Boyle and the wounded were in this portion when the rocket struck.

On or about April 22, 1970, Mary Rippe received a second telegram from Western Union. This telegram informed her that a "board of officers convened in Vietnam which carefully investigated the circumstances surrounding [her son's] missing status. The crash was witnessed by those who knew your son and they immediately conducted a search of the area as soon as the wreckage had cooled enough." The soldiers who bore witness to the explosion knew Boyle. They diligently searched for him. Yet they also knew he could not have survived the explosion and subsequent flames. Boyle's remains could not be found.

In October 1995, a recovery team was dispatched to Laos to search the crash site but was unable to find his remains. His mother died two years later.

Service Member SFC WILLIAM BOYLE

Conflict VIETNAM WAR
Service UNITED STATES ARMY
Status Unaccounted For

The DPAA's page for U.S. Army Sergeant First Class William Boyle. Note his status notated above. (Courtesy of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency)

William Boyle has a memorial marker in his memory at Knowlton Cemetery, Tioga County, Pennsylvania. A bridge over Pine Creek in Watrous, Pennsylvania is named for him. He is listed as unaccounted-for.

CONCLUSION

The legacies of the mission to account as fully as possible for unreturned Vietnam War personnel lost in Southeast Asia may best be understood by examining what the Nation lost and what it has reclaimed. In working together, civilians and the U.S. Government have accomplished a great deal. They made the effort to account as fully as possible for those captured, missing, and unaccounted-for a matter of highest national priority within Federal policy; they established and maintained formal diplomatic relations with former adversaries; they built Federal agencies, programs, and advanced the science of recovering and identifying remains of those lost serving our country; they institutionalized the accounting mission, thus signaling all who serve today and will serve in the future that the Nation and its people will not abandon them if captured, missing, killed, and not recovered at the time of loss.

These accomplishments are significant; yet there is much still to be done and time is of the essence. Soil and weather conditions in Southeast Asia are causing rapid deterioration of the remains of more than 1,500 unaccounted-for personnel. Dr. Timothy McMahon, director of DoD DNA Operations at the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System, concluded, "The acidic nature of the soil in Vietnam has damaged the DNA within the remaining long bones and teeth, making it necessary for AFMES to develop new forensic testing methods as traditional testing methods will not work."

The Nation must continue to put forth this effort. Without it, the United States may never find those lost in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War.

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RIVERINE OPERATIONS IN THE VIETNAM WAR

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A river patrol boat crew searches a sampan for enemy materiel on the Perfume River on August 20, 1968. Viet Cong insurgents often used small rivercraft to covertly transport weapons, supplies, and intelligence throughout South Vietnam's complex network of waterways, requiring U.S. patrol crews to stop and inspect many of the boats they encountered (USN photo)

The Mekong Delta, where the Mekong River fans out and empties into the South China Sea, was one of the most economically and strategically important areas of Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Six million people, nearly 40 percent of South Vietnam's population, lived in this humid wetland region south of Saigon.

With its rich, fertile soil and plentiful water, the Delta produced most of the country's rice crop, and its 3,000-mile network of waterways afforded farmers with an efficient means to transport their produce to market. But in 1965, a group of Communist insurgents, known to U.S. troops as the Viet Cong, dominated the Mekong Delta and the adjacent Rung Sat mangrove swamp. From their concealed bases in the Delta, Viet Cong troops launched attacks against nearby allied forces and harassed water traffic moving in and out of the port at Saigon. The Delta became a stronghold for the Viet Cong, and they exploited the area as a source of food and supplies, collecting taxes from the local populace. In order to secure the Delta and restore it to Saigon's control, the United States determined to clear out the insurgents with a series of riverine campaigns.

PBRs berthed alongside the tank landing ship USS Harnett County *(LST 821). LSTs anchored in rivers served as floating bases for PBRs and helicopters attached to Task Force 116, providing food, berthing, maintenance, and supplies, among other services (USN photo)*

TASK FORCE 116 AND OPERATION GAME WARDEN

To loosen the Viet Cong's grip on the Delta, the U.S. Navy established Task Force 116 in late 1965. Comprised of armed patrol boats, landing craft, helicopters, and other vessels, Task Force 116 initiated Operation GAME WARDEN: the campaign to interdict Communist military activity along the waterways of the Mekong Delta and Rung Sat.

The first crews of Task Force 116 arrived in Vietnam in early 1966. They manned river patrol boats (PBRs), which were organized into divisions and based around tank landing ships (LSTs) and dock landing ships (LSDs) anchored in rivers. The task force also incorporated a squadron of UH-1 "Huey" helicopters, nicknamed the "Seawolves," for air support. Typical GAME WARDEN missions included patrolling rivers and canals searching boats, junks, and sampans for enemy contraband, enforcing curfews, supporting allied ground troops, and clearing mines and enemies from shipping channels, especially between Saigon and the South China Sea.

By the end of 1967, Task Force 116 had secured substantial portions of the Mekong Delta and the Rung Sat. During that year alone, task force personnel inspected tens of thousands of vessels and destroyed, damaged, or captured about 2,000 Viet Cong watercraft along with large amounts of enemy supplies and equipment. These efforts made it difficult for the Viet Cong to continue using the Delta and the Rung Sat as refuges and bases of operations.

RIVER PATROL BOATS

The Navy introduced the 31-foot long river patrol boat (officially: Patrol Boat, River; or PBR) in early 1966. It became an iconic riverine operations vessel in Vietnam, and it was the workhorse boat of Task Force 116 and Operation GAME WARDEN. PBRs typically were manned by a crew of four and equipped with surface radar and VHF radios. They were armed with twin .50-caliber machine guns mounted forward, an M-60 machine gun and a grenade launcher port and starboard, and a single .50-caliber machine gun aft. PBRs traditionally operated in pairs, with a "lead" and "cover" boat. They were fast and maneuverable, using water-jet engines to reach speeds of 30 knots and operate in as little as two feet of water.

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Troops of the Mobile Riverine Force (47th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division) aboard ATCs move to dock with a barracks vessel, April 24, 1968. Floating bases allowed MRF Sailors and Soldiers to be stationed closer to their areas of operations and were more defensible against guerrilla attacks than shore facilities (USN photo).

A Soldier with the 9th Infantry Division carries an M-79 grenade launcher and wades through knee-deep mud to board an ATC, June 1968. The Delta environment presented unique challenges, and amphibious combat troops endured hot, dirty, and soggy conditions while pursuing insurgents (USN photo).

At the end of 1966, U.S. officials estimated that there were as many as 50,000 Viet Cong combatants in the Mekong Delta and the Rung Sat mangrove swamp, representing perhaps 45 percent of the total strength of the insurgency. GAME WARDEN operations prevented insurgents from openly using most waterways, but to pursue and engage the Viet Cong in the fields, paddies, and lowlands of the Delta, the United States established the joint Army-Navy Mobile Riverine Force (MRF).

MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE

The Mobile Riverine Force became operational in early 1967. Navy transport and assault vessels assigned to the MRF carried troops of the Army 9th Infantry Division, which engaged enemy forces in amphibious search-and-destroy operations near waterways. MRF vessels then remained on station to provide gunfire support and to pick up the infantrymen once the battle ended. MRF actions could last from hours to days, after which personnel returned to their bases, either on shore or aboard floating barracks and maintenance ships. The force's main shore base was at Dong Tam, northwest of My Tho between the Delta and the Rung Sat, but the MRF's floating mobile bases moved where they were needed.

The MRF consisted of a host of patrol boats and armored troop carriers (ATCs), while heavily armored and armed mechanized landing craft, nicknamed "monitors" for their likeness to nineteenth-century warships, served as the "battleships" of the force. Additional watercraft functioned as helicopter landing pads, medical boats, and refueling and resupply vessels. The MRF's greatest strengths were its mobility and flexibility. It could transport over 500 Soldiers nearly anywhere in the Mekong Delta within 24 hours and then provide them with logistics and fire support. The force conducted operations in nine provinces during its first year of existence, fighting to reduce the Viet Cong's strength in the Delta.

"The Mobile Riverine Force saved the Delta [during Tet]."
— GEN William C. Westmoreland,
former commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam

THE TET OFFENSIVE

In January 1968, Communist forces launched the Tet Offensive. Over 84,000 troops, mostly Viet Cong, simultaneously attacked hundreds of bases, cities, and towns across South Vietnam. In the Delta, the scale of the offensive caught Task Force 116 and the Mobile Riverine Force off guard. However, they recovered quickly and proved crucial in repelling attacks on numerous regional towns.

Mobile Riverine Force troops disembark from an ATC for a search-and-destroy mission along a river bank. The MRF's ability to quickly move to remote locations in South Vietnam's vast network of waterways proved crucial during the initial turmoil of the Tet Offensive in early 1968 (Department of Defense photo)

Within weeks, Task Force 116 and the MRF reestablished control over the major river towns and were able to provide critical fire support for besieged allied troops. U.S. riverine units were instrumental in defending My Tho, Ben Tre, Vinh Long, and Can Tho, among other towns. The MRF's efforts were especially significant during Tet. The force's ability to quickly bring firepower and ground forces into action throughout the sprawling Delta made it difficult for the Viet Cong to exploit or consolidate any initial gains. The MRF conducted operations in eight provinces during February alone. Task Force 116, and additional riverine units further north near the Demilitarized Zone, also played vital roles in defeating the Tet Offensive, particularly by providing combat support for the defenders of Khe Sanh and the city of Hue.

MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT
SPECIALIST FOURTH CLASS THOMAS KINSMAN
U.S. ARMY

On February 6, 1968, near Vinh Long in the Mekong Delta, Specialist Fourth Class Thomas Kinsman (then Private First Class), a rifleman in 3d Battalion, 60th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division, was along on a reconnaissance-in-force mission. As his company moved up a narrow canal aboard ATCs, it came under sudden, intense rocket and automatic fire from a well-entrenched Viet Cong force. The company immediately beached their vessels and attacked the enemy position, which was hidden in dense vegetation. With limited visibility, a group of eight men, including Kinsman, were cut off from the main company. While the men attempted to linkup with their comrades, a Viet Cong soldier hurled a grenade into their midst. Kinsman quickly alerted the group and threw himself on the grenade, blocking the explosion with his body. As a result of his courageous action, he received severe head and chest wounds. Kinsman's bravery, complete disregard for his own safety, and concern for his fellow Soldiers averted loss of life and injury to the other seven men around him.

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A UH-1 "Huey" helicopter attached to the Navy's Helicopter Attack (Light) Squadron Three, nicknamed the Seawolves, lands on the tank landing ship USS Harnett County (LST-821), on the Co Chien River in the Mekong Delta, October 1967. As riverine forces pursued enemy troops into more remote parts of the Delta after the Tet Offensive, helicopter air support grew increasingly important (Department of Defense photo).

A Navy UH-1 "Huey" provides air cover for a patrol vessel attached to Task Force 194, conducting a SEALORDS mission, February 1969. Watercraft and helicopters often worked in concert during riverine operations (USN photo).

South Vietnamese sailors aboard river patrol craft during the Vietnamization period of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. As U.S. forces gradually withdrew from Southeast Asia after 1968, the South Vietnamese navy took on greater responsibility for riverine operations (Department of Defense photo)

The Tet Offensive was a tactical victory for American and allied forces, but 1968 and 1969 were the deadliest years of the war for American troops, and the United States appeared no closer to winning. Task Force 116 and the Mobile Riverine Force secured most of the key waterways in the Rung Sat and the lower two-thirds of the Mekong Delta by late 1968. But the North Vietnamese remained committed to the war, the Viet Cong insurgency regrouped in the more remote waterways of the upper Delta and Cambodia, and enemy troops and weapons continued to flow into South Vietnam.

SEALORDS

Tet decimated the ranks of the Viet Cong, but the insurgents found sanctuaries along the more remote streams and canals of the upper Delta, near the Cambodian border. From there, they continued guerrilla activities and facilitated the ongoing movement of enemy troops, ammunition, arms, and supplies into South Vietnam from Cambodia, partially frustrating overall allied progress.

Members of the 4th Battalion, 47th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division climb aboard an air cushion patrol vehicle from the MRF's Air Cushion Vehicle Unit, 9th Infantry Division, to be transported to their area of operations, October 10–15, 1968 (photograph by Dennis D. Connell).

MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT, PETTY OFFICER FIRST CLASS JAMES WILLIAMS, U.S. NAVY

On October 31, 1966, two PBRs under the command of Petty Officer First Class James Williams encountered multiple Viet Cong troops aboard two sampans. The enemy boats attacked, and the PBRs returned fire, sinking one sampan while the other fled up a small stream. Williams's two PBRs followed the fleeing sampan, but quickly came under heavy fire from additional Viet Cong forces along the shore. Pressing ahead, the U.S. boats encountered a large number of enemy vessels. After calling for helicopter gunship support, Williams ordered his PBRs to attack, and they pressed their assault for three hours. Only after the PBRs' ammunition was exhausted did Williams order a withdrawal. American forces destroyed a total of 70 enemy watercraft in the engagement.

In order to secure the remaining waters of the Delta and interdict infiltration across the Cambodian border, U.S. leaders formed a new task force, which launched the Southeast Asia Lake, Ocean, River, and Delta Strategy (SEALORDS). Known as Task Force 194, it combined elements from Task Force 116, the Mobile Riverine Force, and coastal surveillance units to patrol the upper regions of the Delta, from Tay Ninh to the Gulf of Thailand. There it harassed enemy forces and formed barriers and blockades near the border where Communist troops regularly infiltrated South Vietnam by water.

SEALORDS operations officially began in October 1968. Within a year, Communist forces began to lose their grip on the upper Delta. Task Force 194 helped to disrupt the flow of troops and supplies entering from Cambodia, and eventually it made forays across the border, participating in the short-lived Cambodian incursion in mid-1970. The task force extended its reach to Viet Cong strongholds along Cambodia's waterways and captured a vital ferry crossing at Neak Luong, while South Vietnamese riverine units moved all the way to Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital.

VIETNAMIZATION

Even with these accomplishments in the Mekong Delta, the war dragged on, and President Richard M. Nixon was elected in 1968 promising to extricate the United States from Southeast Asia. His administration committed to "Vietnamization": gradually handing responsibility for the war over to the South Vietnamese while incrementally withdrawing American troops. By the middle of 1969, the United States disestablished the MRF, turning over its vessels, equipment, and patrol duties to the South Vietnamese military. Other American riverine and maritime forces soon followed, and coastal surveillance personnel and Task Force 116 transferred most of their vessels and aircraft to South Vietnam's navy by 1971. Those turnovers largely ended major U.S. riverine operations in Vietnam. The United States reached a peace agreement with North Vietnam in early 1973, but the war continued and South Vietnam ultimately fell to Communist forces in 1975.

Captain Emera S. Bailey, Assistant Chief of Staff for Technical Matters, Naval Support Activity, Saigon (left), accompanies Captain Nguyen Van Lich, commanding officer of the South Vietnamese navy's Logistics Support Command (right) during a turnover ceremony at the naval support base at Long Xuyen, September 23, 1971. Long Xuyen was one of many naval facilities handed over to the South Vietnamese navy late in the war.

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U.S. ARMY AIRMOBILITY IN THE VIETNAM WAR

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UH-1 Hueys flying in close formation in preparation for an air assault. Door gunners maintain watch as the helicopters fly over Vietnam's terrain. (Courtesy of the Army Aviation Museum)

Pictured here as a Major General, Lieutenant General James Gavin was instrumental in shifting Army thinking toward the use of helicopters. He famously wrote "Cavalry, and I don't mean horses" in the April 1954 issue of Harper's Magazine. (Courtesy of the Pennsylvania State Archives)

The armies of the world no longer need be tied to the ground.
— Lieutenant Colonel Robert R. Williams, Army Aviator, 1952

The United States Army is an organization of movement. Mobility grants the Army capability, adaptability, and lethality within its area of operations. Whether rapidly transporting infantry to the battlefield, providing supporting fires, supplying servicemembers with vital provisions, or evacuating the wounded, mobility is vital to the Army's success. On 20 September 1954, Secretary of the Army Robert Stevens spoke before the National Defense Transportation Association, where he stated the Army was "on the threshold of a degree of strategic and battlefield mobility unparalleled in military history." Stevens was talking about the helicopter. The Army first employed rotary aircraft in mass during the Korean War. In the years that followed, the Army invested heavily in manpower and research to advance and incorporate helicopter technology into its concept of operations. By the onset of the Vietnam War, the Army's in theater concept of operations centered on the helicopter.

Contested Roles and Missions

The Army's adoption of the helicopter was far from guaranteed. Following the U.S. Air Force's establishment in 1947 as an outgrowth of the U.S. Army Air Corps, the Army and Air Force engaged in extended and contentious discussions. Seeking to define, advance, and defend its organizational culture and mission, the Air Force sought to limit Army Aviation and act as the principle means by which the U.S. achieved air dominance throughout the Cold War. For the Army's part, the service increasingly saw the developments of organic aviation assets as vital to its success.

Prior to the Korean War, the two services clarified aviation roles over a series of meetings and memorandums. Most notable were the Key West Agreement in 1948, and two memorandums of understanding in October 1951 and November 1952. These organizational understandings led to an expansion of Army mission roles and aircraft capabilities, yet Army and Air Force joint regulation agreements continued to limit Army aviation. For instance, Army helicopter weight was not to exceed 4000 pounds, which limited the helicopter's overall size, engine power, range, and capabilities.

The Army primarily relied upon the H-13 Sioux in Korea, a helicopter that served in a number of roles including aerial observation and reconnaissance, laying wire, transporting supplies and equipment, and emergency aeromedical evacuation. For its work saving lives of the wounded, the H-13 earned the moniker "Angel of Mercy." Known for its distinctive soap bubble canopy; in addition to serving in Korea and Vietnam, U.S. audiences became familiar with the "Angel of Mercy" during the opening credits of the television sitcom "M.A.S.H."

The Nuclear Battlefield, Dispersion, and Airmobility

The threat of nuclear weapons on the battlefield hastened the Army's search for greater mobility. Army thinkers such as Lieutenant General James Gavin believed that if the Army came under attack from nuclear weapons in the form of bombs, guided missiles, or artillery projectiles, against such destructive power, the general surmised, "the only counter-measure possible is to reduce drastically the numbers of soldiers per square mile in the battle area." The helicopter provided the Army with an answer to the nuclear threat, it enabled the Army to rapidly disperse and reconstitute. As military planners devised new ways to employ helicopters, the Army rapidly expanded its aviation school and incorporated helicopters with greater size, capacity, and range into its force structure. To screen and protect its aviation and ground forces, the Army developed armed escort helicopters. The Army's development of airmobility anticipated a nuclear war with conventional forces fought in Europe against the Soviet Union. As it turned out, airmobility arrived for an unconventional, low-technology war in Southeast Asia.

An external litter pod on an H-13 Sioux helicopter. The helicopter was able to carry two litter pods, and these were often fitted with acrylic glass to insulate the medical evacuee from the cold environment. (Courtesy of U.S. Army Medical Department)

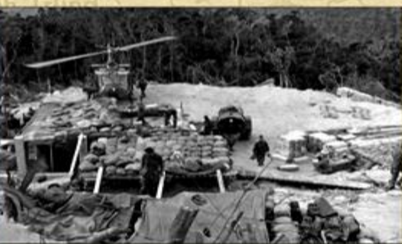
To be successful, the U.S. Army required dispersion on the nuclear battlefield. Here the U.S. Army's 280mm artillery fires a 15 kiloton nuclear armament XX-69 GRABLE on 25 May 1953 at the Nevada Test Site. (Courtesy of National Nuclear Security Administration)

H-21 helicopters contour-flying to the landing zone, where Army Republic of Vietnam troops off-load near Ap Loi An, 20 miles south of the staging area, 17 April 1963. (Courtesy of the National Archives)

U.S. ARMY AIRMOBILITY IN THE VIETNAM WAR

PART 2 OF 3

An infantryman and radio operator look above to UH-1 "Hueys" flying in formation. (Courtesy of the Army Aviation Museum)



Helicopters enabled the U.S. Army to establish and supply fire bases on high ground entirely from the air. These bases became instrumental in providing artillery support to infantrymen in the field, and, owing to their destructive capability, were high value targets for the North Vietnamese and Vietcong. (Courtesy of the Army Aviation Museum)

A CH-54A "Skycrane" (also known as "Flying Crane") lowers its hook to recover a U.S. Air Force plane in Vietnam, circa 1966. (Courtesy of U.S. Army)

> ***The Board has only a single, general conclusion. Adoption by the Army of the airmobility concept...is necessary and desirable. In some respects the transition is inevitable, just as was that from animal mobility to motor.***
>
> —Howze Board 1962

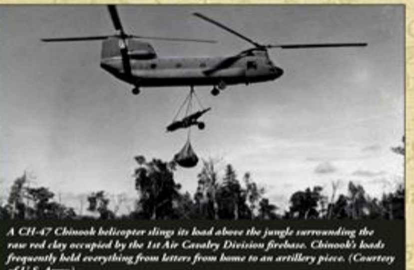
The Howze Board

In April 1962, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara issued a memorandum to the Secretary of the Army directing the service to thoroughly examine the potential for airmobility. Known for his devotion to efficiency, McNamara believed the Army needed to reexamine its aviation requirements and conduct analytical studies, exercises, and field tests to obtain maximum mobility in the combat area. To initiate these studies, McNamara established the Army Tactical Mobility Requirements Board, or the "Howze Board."

The Howze Board (named for its chair, Lieutenant General Hamilton Howze) quickly got to work. The board submitted its final report on 20 August 1962. This dense and meticulous work endorsed the creation of the airmobile division as the next logical step to the Army concept of operations. In the airmobile division, all equipment was light enough to be carried by helicopter. In Vietnam, airmobility received its first test, and though the Army employed many helicopters in theater, the most famous was the UH-1 Iroquois, known far more commonly as the "Huey" due to the pronunciation of its original designation: "HU-1." Although the Army's 1st Cavalry and 101st Airborne Divisions were designated airmobile divisions, most Army units employed some degree of airmobility.

Logistics and Transportation

The Army's Logistics Branch and Transportation Corps were among the earliest to grasp the helicopter's potential. Overseas Cold War deployments sent the Army into remote locations which possessed limited infrastructure. These locales threatened to bog down a roadbound military and compromise its fighting strength by forcing it to develop and defend road networks. The helicopter permitted the Army to transcend the landscape and expand its area of operations. In Vietnam, the Army created an aerial supply network. The CH-47 Chinook and CH-54 Tarhe (more commonly known as the "Skycrane") provided medium and heavy lift capabilities. With the capacity to haul tons of weight, these helicopters became the Army's workhorses. In addition to delivering vital provisions, the helicopters lifted 105



A CH-47 Chinook helicopter slings its load above the jungle surrounding the raw red clay occupied by the 1st Air Cavalry Division firebase. Chinook's loads frequently held everything from letters from home to an artillery piece. (Courtesy of U.S. Army)

millimeter and 155 millimeter artillery to establish fire support bases, often on Vietnam's high ground. Fire support bases provided accurate and devastating artillery fires in the support of infantry operations.

In Vietnam, the U.S. Army created a vast aerial supply network that served as a benchmark for future Army operations. In contemporary operations, the Army employs Forward Operating Bases and Combat Outposts, which it supplies through a variety of aerial means, including the Chinook, which is one of the few aircraft developed in the 1960s that is still on duty to this day.

Armed Reconnaissance

Before joining as a single team, observation helicopters flew together in what were called "white" teams while gunships flew in "red" teams. In 1967, when the OH-6 Cayuse observation helicopter and the AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter arrived in Vietnam, the two helicopters joined to perform armed reconnaissance as "pink" teams. The agile Cobra supplemented Huey gunships, whose weapon systems made them unwieldy. For its part, the OH-6 replaced the OH-13 Sioux and was commonly referred to as the "Loach,"—the helicopter's nickname derived from having won the 1962 U.S. Army Light Observation Helicopter Competition.

During the Vietnam War, most combat aircraft attempted to fly at altitudes and speeds great enough to avoid ground fire, but the "Loach" flew low to draw out enemy fire and locate them. Once the enemy engaged, the "Loach" pulled away and marked the target by dropping smoke grenades. Then the lethal Cobra swooped down and attacked using rockets and, where necessary, a rapid firing minigun. Often the "pink" team flew ahead of "Hueys" carrying troops to observe, engage, and clear a path. The "Hueys" also conducted evacuation missions, if a "Loach" or Cobra was downed by enemy fire.

The OH-6 "Loach" and the AH-1 Cobra were among the Army's most maneuverable helicopters in Vietnam. However, due to the nature of their mission, they were also among the most vulnerable. "Loaches" were particularly exposed due to their low flight paths to spot the enemy and draw fire. (Courtesy of the Army Aviation Museum)

Armed helicopter reconnaissance proved its worth in Vietnam, and continues to find use in contemporary operations. The OH-58 Kiowa saw service in Vietnam as the "Loach's" replacement; its D variant, the Kiowa Warrior, acted as an assault reconnaissance helicopter in support of ground servicemembers in Iraq and Afghanistan until retirement in 2017. Like its predecessor's pairing with the Cobra, the Kiowa frequently joined with the Army's current attack helicopter, the AH-64 Apache.

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U.S. ARMY AIRMOBILITY IN THE VIETNAM WAR

PART 3 OF 3

Open terrain exposed helicopters, their crew, and dismounting infantry to enemy fire. Air assaults required close coordination for helicopters to land, dismount troops, and depart expeditiously. (Courtesy of the Army Aviation Museum)

The Huey, the Cobra, the light observation helicopter, and the Chinook were the essential vehicles of airmobility combat and combat support.

— Lieutenant General John J. Tolson, 1973

Aeromedical Evacuation

The U.S. Army's medical practices evolved out of the "Letterman System," named after Major Jonathan Letterman, Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac, who recommended sweeping reforms to the ambulance system during the Civil War to create an orderly group of medical clearing stations to the immediate rear of the Army's frontline units. Ambulances were to bring all casualties to the clearing stations as safely and quickly as possible, and the clearing stations in turn would determine the casualty's needs. This process was called triage. From the Civil War through the World Wars, U.S. Army ambulances transported casualties by land. The Army's successful employment of H-13 Siouxs' in Korea led the service to build a helicopter ambulance capable of transporting the injured and medical personnel. Vietnam's lack of secure roads and the remote locations of much of the fighting ensured its use.

Prior to Vietnam, casualties would be removed from the battlefield and taken to a nearby aid station before extraction. In Vietnam, aeromedical evacuation often came to the wounded near the point of injury. (Courtesy of the Army Aviation Museum)

Originally, incoming aeromedical units identified themselves by the signal "Army" followed by the last digits on the aircraft (i.e., Army 789). In late 1963, Major Lloyd Spencer, then the 57th medical Detachment's Commander, decided to standardize the 57th's call sign. Since the 57th Medical Detachment operated in dusty locations in Vietnam, Major Spencer designated the call sign "Dust Off," a nickname that soon became part of military parlance.

Major Charles Kelly and his successors, including Medal of Honor recipients Major Patrick Brady and chief Warrant Officer Michael Novosel, popularized the term "Dust Off." Previously, during the Korean War, the Army landed aircraft in secure locations to retrieve stable patients and fly them to hospitals in rear areas. In Vietnam, daring pilots snatched the wounded from the point of injury, often at "hot" landing zones under enemy fire. In some cases, "Dust Off" pilots made multiple stops on a single mission to evacuate as many patients as possible. In total, the 57th Medical Detachment evacuated more than 100,000 patients during its 11 years spent in Vietnam.

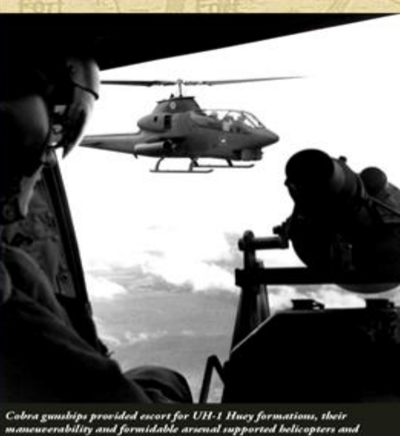
Although the 57th Medical Detachment could not have fathomed it at the time, "Dust Off" became the term that remains the Army's call sign for aeromedical evacuation to this day. In the Army's current lexicon, "Dust Off" is synonymous with hope, the idea that "help is on the way."

Air Assault

The Army conducted air assaults to rapidly close with and destroy the enemy. Air assault missions required unified logistical, transport, reconnaissance, and aeromedical helicopter support. The Chinook supplied fire support bases, and the infantry in turn called upon artillery support frequently; the "Loach" and Cobra conducted reconnaissance and, if necessary, engaged the enemy from above; and the "Huey" inserted soldiers on the battlefield and retrieved the wounded.

Vietnam ground conditions, to include mountainous terrain or waterlogged paddies, frequently forced UH-1 "Hueys" to hover off the ground as infantrymen dismounted. (Courtesy of the Army Aviation Museum)

A CH-47 Chinook helicopter lifting off with a 105mm howitzer, Vietnam, 1967–1968. (Courtesy of U.S. Army)



Cobra gunships provided escort for UH-1 Huey formations, their maneuverability and formidable arsenal supported helicopters and ground troops alike. (Courtesy of the Army Aviation Museum)

Reconnaissance attempted to mask the air assault's movement to retain the element of surprise. Reconnaissance also determined separate points of entry if the enemy defended the chosen landing zone. To avoid revealing their location for fear of Cobra attack, the enemy often sought to ambush United States forces at the point of landing. Sometimes the enemy mined landing zones or drove stakes into the ground to render them inoperable.

"Hueys" frequently flew in a "V" formation because it improved versatility and observation. Army helicopter pilots trained to synchronize their landings; to land one at a time singled out the helicopters for enemy to target. Synchronized landing was difficult due to varying helicopter altitudes, rotor wash during descent, landing zone size, and, most importantly, enemy resistance. On landings, Lieutenant General John Tolson wrote, "two minutes were considered average unloading time for a twelve-ship formation. This two minutes seems an eternity when one is expecting enemy fire any second."

Army pilots flew thousands of missions in Vietnam, it is safe to say there were thousands of eternities. Their courage, professionalism, and dedication to the mission forged Army Aviation's legacy. Air assaults are a staple of the Army's operations to this day.

Conclusion

Vietnam is justifiably known as the "helicopter war." In addition to the U.S. Army, the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps also employed helicopters in medical, logistical, and combat operations, though the Army possessed the most helicopters by far. True to its namesake, airmobility came to embody the Army's concept of operations in Vietnam. To find, close with, and destroy the enemy, the Army employed helicopters to carry soldiers to battle, supply its units, establish and sustain fire support bases, observe and provide gunship support, and conduct aeromedical evacuation. In performing all of these functions, the helicopter earned its place in the U.S. Army's organizational structure and achieved its greatest legacy: the helicopter is a fixture in all contemporary military operations.

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THE POW EXPERIENCE IN THE VIETNAM WAR

(PART 1 OF 4)

Prisoners of war were paraded before North Vietnamese citizens. In this photo, U.S. Air Force Captain Murphy Neal Jones stands in the bed of a truck as he is paraded around Hanoi. He said "There was a bamboo pole about three feet back from the cab. I had to stand up holding on to that, and…And we took about an hour tour through the city." (Courtesy of National Archives)

And then a Viet [Cong] started beating my side of the bushes. And when he got in front of me he yelled. And I knew—the jig was up.

— Michael Brazelton

Introduction

While examining twentieth century U.S. Prisoners of War, Colonel R. J. Ursano, M.D., sagely remarked "There is no one POW experience." Vietnam War POWs made up a miniscule fraction of total war casualties. Of the roughly 2.59 million veterans who served in Southeast Asia, the U.S. Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency estimates 684 Prisoners of War returned alive and 37 more escaped captivity. Vietnam produced far fewer POWs than the Korean War or World War II, yet, for their part, Vietnam POWs experienced longer lengths of imprisonment. It was common for POWs to spend well over one or even two thousand days in confinement, equaling five or more years; several prisoners endured more than eight years in captivity. The majority were officers and downed pilots. U.S. POW returnees included 332 Air Force, 149 Navy, 121 Army, and 28 Marine Corps servicemen, in addition to 54 civilians. The following narrative is drawn from the recollections of POWs and their loved ones.

Capture

Capture marked the transition from freedom to imprisonment, and occurred violently over the span of a few brief and terrifying minutes. Tension, fear, uncertainty, and the pervasive knowledge that execution may be imminent defined this moment.

On August 5, 1964, Everett Alvarez thought to himself, "Good God. We're going to war. This is war. I mean, we're gonna go in and hit a base." Suddenly, his aircraft was hit. He thought, "Oh God. My poor wife. My mom. What are they gonna do?" He ejected and hit the water. Not long after, North Vietnamese soldiers pulled up in fishing boats. They all had rifles.

Parachuting to the earth, Joe Crecca saw an amorphous mass below him, a "black thing as a changing shape." As he drew closer he realized, "it's a horde of people…. and…actually they're moving towards where I'm gonna land." He thought, "I want my mommy."

Jose Anzaldua ran out of ammunition. "[My] M16 was gone, M79 rounds were gone, the grenades were gone, .45 rounds were gone." There he lay, his South Vietnamese Kit Carson Scout with him. Anzaldua had told him to flee, but the man refused. "And they just overran us," Anzaldua said. "They picked me up," he said, and his captors made both men lie in camouflaged fox holes, which completely concealed them underground.

Murphy Neal Jones staggered to his feet following his parachute landing. He had two pistols on him. As he looked up, he said it appeared as if 100 North Vietnamese soldiers were running toward him. "I cocked the pistol and levelled down." Then, the futility of the situation overwhelmed him. As one of the NVA soldiers came toward him, Jones accepted his fate and said, "I decided I wasn't John Wayne, and uncocked it, stuck the pistol butt toward him." He then attempted to raise his arms over his head. That's when he realized his left arm was broken. Jones was made doubly aware of the injury when another soldier came up and "put it in a hammer lock."

They stuck a knife up to Joe Crecca's throat. He felt the blade saw across his neck and a blanket of calm overtook him. "I thought, very matter-of-factly, they're going to cut my head off." Years after his release, physicians told Crecca, "You were going into shock." As it turned out, the blade was pointing away from his neck. "They were cutting my chin strap off."

The North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong frequently cut the POWs from their clothing using knives or machetes. They were unfamiliar with pilot's zippers and straps. Rather than unzip them, they cut them off. They also took the prisoners' boots; it was difficult to flee while barefoot.

Michael Brazelton felt the nylon tape stretch around his neck, and looked up at the giant oak tree above him. In another circumstance, the oak tree's sturdy branches might have provided comfort. Now, however, they loomed ominously. "They're gonna hang me," he thought. Next he felt a jerk on the rope. Curiously, "It wasn't a jerk up; it was a jerk forward." This was not a noose, but a leash. "They were leading me."

On the surface above the camouflaged foxhole he had been placed in Anzualda saw U.S. Marines who, unaware, "walked right over top of us." From inside the hole, soldiers armed with AK-47s flanked him on both sides. Once the Marines departed, Jose Anzaldua's guards chambered a round and put the AK-47 to his head. They demanded he walk or they would kill him. As evidence of their intent, they executed the Kit Carson Scout. Anzaldua was not sure he could

U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander Richard Stratton in his prison cell in North Vietnam. Stratton was shot down on January 5, 1967 and released on March 4, 1973. (Courtesy of National Archives)

stand. He had been wounded in several places during the firefight. He quietly sang the Marine Corps hymn. He got up and, step by step, Anzaldua walked to a prisoner of war camp deep in the jungle near the South Vietnam-Laos border. As weak and bad as his condition had left him, when Anzaldua saw the other POWs he gasped. "They looked absolutely emaciated. I mean—I knew they were Americans…. They were grinning at me." Anzaldua grinned back.

The Viet Cong often constructed their ad hoc prisons in South Vietnam under the jungle canopy to prevent U.S. pilots locating them from the air. Smoke generated from the camps ran through a lengthy underground pipe that slowly dissipated the vapors, fizzling them out before they rose high enough to be seen from the sky.

Many captured pilots downed inside North Vietnam were paraded in front of civilians before their incarceration. The prisoners were blindfolded and thrown into the back of a vehicle, and the North Vietnamese stopped "in every village and hamlet." Then, according to Richard Stratton the call went out: "They'd say, 'Hey, we got one. Come on out and have free whacks.'" Michael Brazelton had a similar experience, "They led me on a trail for 20 minutes or so until I came to a dirt road…. And a bunch of people were gathered around there. And they stood me in front of one of the jeeps. And the man in charge of the crowd started giving a speech…. They were brandishing some farm implements in the background, a machete occasionally. They were throwing mud at me." Civilians jeered, spit upon, and threw or swung objects at the prisoners. Here, before Vietnamese civilians, was proof of North Vietnamese strength and U.S. vulnerability.

Depending on where they were captured, prisoners were taken to jungle camps in South Vietnam or prisons in North Vietnam. The prisoners in North Vietnam named their detention facilities: "the Plantation," "the Zoo," "the Dog Patch," "Alcatraz," "Little Vegas." However, none were more famous than Hỏa Lò Prison, the "Hanoi Hilton."

U.S. Navy Seaman Douglas Hegdahl standing in the courtyard of a North Vietnamese prison holding a broom. Hegdahl fooled his captors into believing he was a person with an intellectual disability. He was released in 1969, and promptly informed U.S. military officials of the whereabouts and circumstances of more than 250 POWs in captivity (Courtesy of the National Archives)

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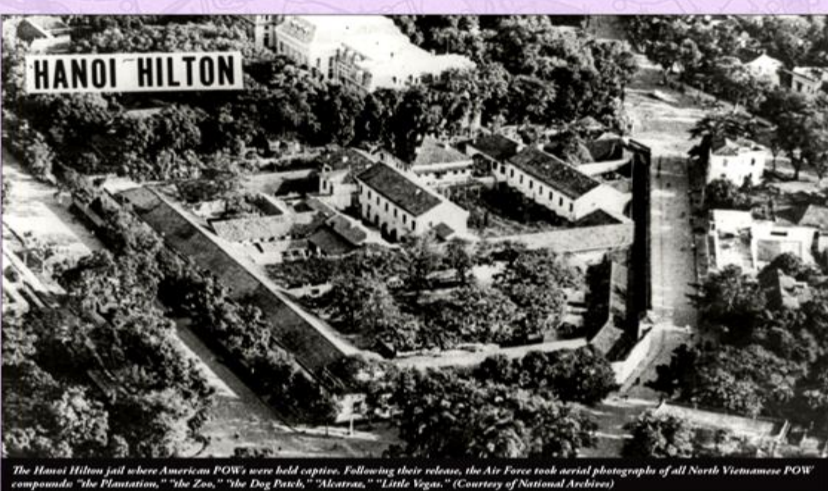
THE POW EXPERIENCE IN THE VIETNAM WAR

(PART 2 OF 4)



The Hanoi Hilton jail where American POWs were held captive. Following their release, the Air Force took aerial photographs of all North Vietnamese POW compounds: "the Plantation," "the Zoo," "the Dog Patch," "Alcatraz," "Little Vegas." (Courtesy of National Archives)

Torture was not our major enemy. Our major enemy was whiling away the minutes, the hours, the days, the weeks, the years.

— Eugene "Red" McDaniel

Imprisonment

To many who served in Vietnam, the war was a measure of time. Hours, days, and months became markers to track the deployment to its end. To the POW, the "end" existed both as an abstract and concrete goal. With their life's rhythms dictated by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese, hunger, sickness, despair, resilience, inner strength, and their fellow prisoners accompanied them through the listless monotony of day-to-day imprisonment.

Conditions in South Vietnam jungle camps were worse than in the North's prisons. Prisoners were deprived of medicine and given little food, which usually consisted of rice and manioc (a starchy root similar to a yam). Faced with starvation, Jose Anzaldua decided, "Anything that I could find to eat I would eat, be it rats, bats, anything…to include maggots that were in ground toilet (sic)." Though their captors sometimes executed POWs, malnutrition and disease were the primary causes of death. David Harker recalled that he buried six POWs within a three-to-four-month period: "Cannon died…And then we buried Top next. And then we buried Bob Sherman. Then we buried William David Port. And then in November of '68 we…buried Edwin Russell Grissett, 1st Force Recon Marine. And then January 4th Fred Burns died. He was a Marine PFC, youngest guy—he was 18 when he was captured, he was 19 when we buried him."

Following his transfer from the South Vietnamese jungle camps to the North Vietnamese prison, Hal Kushner said, "I gained weight. . . .when I got to Plantation I weighed 44 kilos, which is like 90-some pounds. At the Plantation we got two meals a day: Hot water, a little piece of French bread, and this soup we called pumpkin soup….I mean, it was really a lot easier than the jungle. It was a jail….In the summertime it was 120 degrees and….In the wintertime is was cold and dank. But it was nothing like the jungle." The North Vietnamese rotated between pumpkin and cabbage soup every six months, and David Harker recalled occasionally the POWs received "canned meat from downtown. It was the People's Republic, so we had a little protein in our diet." Since North Vietnam needed the POWs as bargaining chips in peace negotiations, the prisoners sardonically referred to their dietary improvements as "gastropolitics."

In North Vietnam prison camps, a loud gong signaled wakeup and bed time. In the morning before breakfast, the POWs emptied their bucket and took a brief wash in filthy water. From there, Kenneth Cordier stated the prison's rhythms revolved around the "five Bs." Boards, a bare lightbulb, brick, a bucket and a box loudspeaker were all that made up their cells. The prisoners slept on crude boards without cushion. A perpetually lit lightbulb hung from the ceiling. The need for continual light owed to the brick from which the cells were made, which blocked out the outside world and with it, any natural light. The bucket served as the POW's toilet. The box loudspeaker piped in propaganda in the morning, afternoon, and evening. The recordings were written by the North Vietnamese Army and read by Trịnh Thị Ngọ, known colloquially as Hanoi Hannah. Her programs usually consisted of naming newly killed or imprisoned U.S. service members and playing popular anti-war songs in an attempt to persuade the imprisoned of the war's immorality.

With little to do in the hot summer months, most of the camp took naps in the middle of the day—including the guards. Prisoners were left to fill the long hours in their cells. Red McDaniel pondered in retrospect, "Can you imagine living in a vacuum for six years? The only thing we had was what we brought in in our hearts and our minds. And for the first time in my life, in captivity I got serious about academics….I learned some French, Spanish, German, some Russian; committed to memory some 65 different poems."

Kenneth Cordier made peace over a year into his ordeal."I was sitting on my board one day," he said, "And it just came to me like a revelation, the words 'This is your life. Make big things out of little things; do things in as much detail as you can; learn to communicate'….And above all, 'Be optimistic.'"

Torture

"We were war criminals. They told me that early on, and to forget about the Geneva Convention and stuff; that we were criminals and we would be treated as criminals," Hal Kushner stated. The term "criminal" filled the POW's throat with bile. The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese referred to them as Criminals of War, or "COW."

U.S. POWs were tortured. Those tortured recalled similar techniques and experiences. The earliest and most readily available evidence occurred in 1966 when POW Jeremiah Denton blinked out the letters T-O-R-T-U-R-E in Morse code while being interviewed for a propaganda film. Many POWs asserted that torture suddenly ceased in 1969 following Ho Chi Minh's death, though speculation still remains as to why the practice ended.

"You hear the guards coming. And you hear the jangle of the keys . . . . when it was your door, your throat just dropped. I mean, it just dropped to the pit of your stomach," Everett Alvarez stated. The POWs agreed to a code of conduct, Michael Brazelton recalled, "You just stand it as long as you can. And when you finally give up, you really give up. Your will is broken." Torture's purpose is to break the human spirit and gain intelligence; it is more efficient at the former than the latter. POWs frequently lied to their interrogators. "I made up the next targets," Richard Stratton stated. "I gave 'em the three targets that we were told that we would never be able to hit because there were Russians or Chinese there." Douglas Hedgahl

Illustrations of the rope torture technique, as drawn by Navy Captain Mike McGrath. (Courtesy of the United States Naval Institute)

convinced his torturers that he was unable to read or write. His captors renamed him "the Incredibly Stupid One" and he was given nearly free rein of the camp thereafter.

Though there were several methods practiced, POWs strongly recalled "the rope" technique. Ropes pulled the prisoner's arms behind him to squeeze his elbows together in an unnatural position. The torturer then placed their foot between the prisoner's shoulder blades, and used leverage to draw their arms back. This placed intense pressure on the prisoner's lungs and shoulder joints, depriving them of breath and occasionally dislocating their shoulders. According to Kenneth Cordier, once you had screamed "loud enough and long enough..They'd loosen the ropes and resume the interrogation." Unfortunately, once the ropes were released, the pressure eased and blood rushed back into the prisoner's distended limbs and joints, which awakened the nerves and caused the intense pain to begin anew.

Prisoners broke. On his ninth day of torture, Murphy Neal Jones stated he "signed a written confession….And it said: I condemn the United States government for its aggressive war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Two: I have encroached upon the airspace of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Three: I am a war criminal. And four: I have received humane and lenient treatment from the Vietnamese people and government."

Tap Code

Isolated from one another in individual cells, the POWs invented the "Tap Code" to communicate, stay resilient, and maintain morale. In sharp defiance of torture and interrogation, they brazenly transmitted the code to each other by carving it on the underside of the prisoner's side of the interrogation table. Everett Alvarez stated "Our interdependence on each other; tapping, using that tap code where you tap on the wall, keeping each other's spirits going; keeping each other aware of what's happening" defined their reliance on one another. Human connection, resilience, and dignity were maintained through taps and scratches against walls that separated and isolated them.

POWs were generally malnourished and denied access to medicine. Subsequently, illnesses became common throughout the camps. One such malady was known as "prickly heat." This condition was caused by blocked sweat glands, and owed its existence to the grime covering the prisoners' skin and Vietnam's stifling heat and humidity. In one instance, the POWs tapped out requests to communally join blankets and form a mat so the afflicted might sleep on a more comfortable surface. The prisoners passed the blankets during their brief periods together. When it became his turn, Kenneth Cordier tapped out: "When does this stop?" The response epitomized their morbid humor: "When it covers from your head to your toes."

Imprisonment became a test of wills between the powerful and the powerless. As David Harker noted, "It takes a lot of courage; but sometimes without the rifle it takes even more courage. And we found that out living in that POW camp. To be able to fight them without any weapons, just our mind and our words."

TAP CODE	1	2	3	4	5
1	A	B	C/K	D	E
2	F	G	H	I	J
3	L	M	N	O	P
4	Q	R	S	T	U
5	V	W	X	Y	Z

Following a prescribed introduction, POWs tapped out the row and column. Tap three times, pause, then two times for "M." Tap twice, pause, then four times for "I." Tap one time, pause, then three times for "C/K." Tap one time, pause, then five times for "E" to spell out "Mike." Just as with modern texting, tappers used shorthand for common expressions. The term GBU meant "God Bless You." (Courtesy of National Archives)

THE POW EXPERIENCE IN THE VIETNAM WAR

(PART 3 OF 4)

Wives place American flags on the beds of returning prisoners of war. Divorce rates were significantly higher for POWs than other veterans. Most divorces occurred within the first year of return. (Courtesy of National Archives)

U.S. Navy Captain Robert Byron Fuller shares a moment with his wife, Mary Anne Fuller from his hospital suite. Mary Anne Fuller said, "For two years I lived in that limbo of saying 'if' instead of 'when.' When the next war starts, I hope that from the first day a man is shot down and captured, a picture of him runs in the newspaper once a week. So that prisoners don't come as a big surprise to the whole country five years after they have been shot down." (Courtesy of National Archives)

I feel like I'm in a vacuum, a spectator on life.

— Mary Anne Fuller

The Home Front

Following the moment their loved one was reported "Missing in Action," POW families entered a state of uncertainty. Many existed in suspended disbelief, forced to put logic and reason aside and face the unknown armed only with hope, faith, and what little information they gleaned from the U.S. government, the media, and the distant possibility of hearing from their loved one through letter writing. Lynda Gray, whose husband was imprisoned for more than six years, referred to this time as "The fear of hope." Eileen Cormier, whose husband was held for more than seven years, stated, "We're not divorced, not widowed, and we're not really married either." The war made prisoners out of loved ones as well.

"There is nothing to face," June Nelson stated. "You can't say he is dead and you can't say he is alive." The families had little to go on beyond that their loved ones were unaccounted for. "There often were simply too few facts to know whether the man was dead or alive," Alice Stratton stated. Stratton learned her husband had been shot down on January 5, 1967. Four months later she gained confirmation that he was a prisoner of war from an unlikely source, she spotted his picture in an April 7, 1967 issue of Life magazine. He appeared "drugged or brainwashed." The image devastated her. Subsequently, Stratton avoided the news.

Just as there was no single POW experience, the same applied to those at home. For her part, Virginia Nasmyth ceased waiting. After the U.S. Air Force listed her brother, John Nasmyth, missing on September 4, 1966, Virginia waited three years and heard little during that time. She wrote letters to an address she had been given but received no response. In the latter half of 1969, Nasmyth traveled to Paris to speak with the North Vietnamese and see if John was alive. The official she spoke with proved evasive. When she told him her letters went unanswered, he gave her a new address. Even if her brother was alive, he told her it would not be fair to give the prisoners back, because North Vietnamese people were losing their lives in the war. Apart from an address of dubious worth, the official was no help. It appeared she had made her trip to Paris in vain. By chance, she received a phone call a few hours later from her parents. Recently released prisoner Douglas Hegdahl, who had memorized the names, capture dates, method of capture, and personal information of roughly 256 prisoners to the tune of the nursery rhyme "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," had revealed her brother was a prisoner. After three years of uncertainty, Virginia learned John was alive.

Virginia Nasmyth's fierce desire to know the truth kept hope alive. In other cases, hope led to denial. Alice Stratton recalled, "I saw a man putting on his hat across the parking lot of the commissary store. That one characteristic gesture brought back all the intense longing and hurt with a painful rush of emotion, and I found myself running for a few seconds to get a better look." When she realized the man was not her husband, "[a]ll the tears of disappointment and sadness flowed again, as though I had only then heard the dreadful news of my husband's capture."

Wives were sent their husband's possessions. Some placed the items in their husband's spaces believing they might return home at any moment. Others found the artifacts too painful, and discarded them. Following her husband's capture, Andrea Rander stopped listening "to the tapes he made before he was captured. The other night my younger daughter wanted to listen to them. I suddenly realized she couldn't remember her daddy's voice." Lynda Gray reported she completed her grief a year following her husband's capture, and reconciled that he had been killed. When she discovered her husband was alive and returning home soon, she said "I've ordered all of his things out of storage. I don't know what he'd feel if he walked in here now. His clothes, his personal things aren't here. I want him to feel he belongs here, to see his old football helmet, his toy soldiers." Even personal letters took their toll. Eileen Cormier stated, "I'm lucky enough to get letters, and the military has furnished me with a complete analysis of my husband's mental health.... Three years ago they told me that he was deteriorating and wasn't going to survive—which I thought was really groovy," she sarcastically concluded.

After the first year, the "tears dried up," Stratton said, but "depression was always there, buried, perhaps, but there until the final resolution." As with the prisoners, loneliness became a companion while normalcy seemed a foreigner. "I had the worst times...when I was out with other couples. That was when I really felt alone," Nona Clarke reported. Like their imprisoned loved ones, "[w]e learned to cope with each day (or moment) at a time, became involved with helping each other and in our community" to get out of what Stratton called their "ghetto of unhappiness."

"People think the fact that your husband is missing is your only problem. They forget you are still living in a very real world and you have to put up with other very real problems," Irene Davis stated. Time marched forward and the mundane affairs of everyday life required tending, while even monumental achievements brought heavy emotion. "I think when we landed on the moon is when I went under," Eileen Cormier recalled, "because we can land on the moon, but we can't reach this man on the face of this earth." Nevertheless, she fashioned a new life out of the experience. "All right, my husband has been gone five years," she thought, "but have they been total wastes? Finally I was able to get my master's [degree], which I couldn't do [before] because we were always moving. Finally we have been able to save some money. Finally we have been able to get a home. You have to look for salvation in this." For her part, Mary Ann Fuller found salvation in her children: "I have them every night to fix dinner for, I have them to love. It must be so hard for my husband because he doesn't have them to touch," she said.

Certain aspects of the home front's experience mirrored that of the POWs'. Like the POW, families and loved ones found themselves suspended in time and, in particular ways, isolated from others. Hope, faith, resilience, community, and survival were their watchwords. As Lynda Gray poignantly noted, "Returned prisoners have told us that when you're captured, you decide whether you'll make it or not. Then everything goes toward that. The same thing is true for the families. I must survive."

A shot of the crowd at Clark Air Force Base, Philippines, as they wait for former prisoners of war to debark the C-141 Starlifter. (Courtesy of National Archives)

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Captain Allen Colby Brady holds "Today is the first day of the rest of your life," a gift presented to him by the Enlisted Wives Club members. (Courtesy of National Archives)

Hal Kushner shaking hands with Brigadier General Russell Ogan. Kushner later recalled that Ogan was "a big, burly Air Force brigadier general….the guy had breadth. He had meat on him. I mean, he had thickness that we didn't have….and he had plump grey hair that had tonic on it. And we were like all straw, our hair was straw." (Courtesy of Hal Kushner)

American service members cheer as the C-141 Starlifter takes off from an airfield near Hanoi. (Courtesy of National Archives)

Getting on that C-141 and having that feeling that you had descended into the dungeons…you've met the dragon, and you've won. You come home.

–Everett Alvarez

Reconciliation

On January 27, 1973, the United States and South Vietnam signed the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam with representatives of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong. The ceasefire agreement stipulated the return of 591 POWs from South Vietnam and Hanoi, nine from Laos, and three from China. The Secretary of Defense named it Operation HOMECOMING. To retrieve the POWs, the U.S. sent C-141 transport planes to Hanoi, North Vietnam and a C-9A aircraft to Saigon, where POWs in South Vietnam were being ferried following their exchanges. The first flight of 40 U.S. prisoners of war left Hanoi in a C-141 later known as the "Hanoi Taxi." In total, 54 C-141 missions flew out of Hanoi from February 12, 1973, to April 4, 1973.

As the final days of their imprisonment drew near, food improved dramatically. The POWs reasoned their captors were fattening them up for public release. The prison guards came to them, gave them clothes, and told the POWs to "'put it on.'" Jose Anzaldua stated he was given a bag and told "'You're going home.'" He thought, "'Well, I ain't believing this.'" The clothes included "cotton slacks, a cotton shirt, a belt, and shoes," Kenneth Cordier said. "They looked like real shoes, but they were mostly cardboard….But they looked good." The bag was a "black AWOL bag," Hal Kushner recalled, "and it had things like Vietnamese cigarettes in it, Vietnamese toothpaste…little souvenirs."

"When we saw the hangars," David Harker remembered, "and saw that C-141 with the wings down on the ground…your heart jumps up in your throat." "One by one our names were called," Kenneth Cordier stated, and the men "stepped forward, and saluted the U.S. Air Force brigadier general." They were saluting Brigadier General Russell Ogan, who Hal Kushner described as a burly man with real meat on him, a stark contrast to the emaciated POWs. Ogan's officer assistants, according to Jose Anzaldua, told the newly freed men to "'walk very briskly to that airplane.'" Anzaldua added, "They didn't have to tell me twice." As Michael Brazelton walked to the C-141, an airman took him by the arm, and Brazelton joked in recollection, "like I was gonna go somewhere else!"

Each aircraft carried soda, cigarettes, cigars, candy, and other enticements. "They had these real cute flight nurses," Hal Kushner wistfully remembered, "I know they picked 'em. They were tall, all these tall girls… blonde, French twist haircuts." One of the flight attendants approached Kushner in his seat and told him, "'We have anything you want on this airplane. We have a soda fountain, we have cigarettes, we have cigars….What do you want?'" He asked for a Coke with crushed ice. Finally, the gears came up, and Kenneth Cordier described the moment as "Pandemonium….Boy, we were cheering and hugging each other and carrying on. It was really something." As the aircraft traveled skyward, Jose Anzaldua peered out the window at North Vietnam below. He said this was "the last time I ever saw North Vietnam. And I was glad. Very glad."

The aircraft flew to Clark Air Base in the Philippines, where a special wing on the top floor of the base's hospital was set aside for them. Over the next few days, they were provided medical treatment, reintroduced to regular food, briefed on their military benefits, and given a financial allowance to purchase any goods they needed at the Base Exchange, a retail store commonly found on United States military installations. From the hospital, the former POWs began reconnecting with the world as free men. Many POWs were unaware of the July 20, 1969 moon landing, or were unfamiliar with the concept of a "Super Bowl," as the first game had been played in 1967. Michael Brazelton approached a large bank of telephones. He was told he could call anywhere he wanted. As it turned out, he had been released within a day of his mother's birthday. When they spoke over the phone, he explained that he was sorry he "hadn't written her in a while…I've been tied up." They laughed.

More bittersweet and painful were the individualized files created for each POW. The records, according to Hal Kushner, "told you what happened to your family…guys lost their parents, and…their wives left 'em….in my case, I was very fortunate. My parents were still alive. I was still married. I had had a son. My wife had had a baby in April of 1968. And I knew that she was pregnant, but I didn't know if he was a boy or a girl; if he had been born; if he was healthy….the first time I met my son was the week before his fifth birthday." For others, the news served as a painful reminder that time refused to stand still during their incarceration. Everett Alverez stated, "When I finally got back eight-and-a-half years later, I had found out already that I was no longer married. She had remarried and had a family." U.S. military officers broke the news to Joe Crecca personally. "Your wife divorced you," they said. He was in complete shock. He asked when it happened, and they replied, "January, 1972." She had remarried. Crecca thanked the officers for their time when they stated, "that's not all of it…. Your father died."

Reflecting on the experience, Michael Brazelton stated, "Six years, seven months…. like the best years of your life. What years do you not want to be locked up? 24 to 31." Hal Kushner tried not to dwell on the lost years. He said, "I don't like to, you know, talk about the past. I want to look forward." True to Kushner's words, the former POWs set about shaping their lives and their nation's future as free men. Such was the greatest expression of their newfound freedom.

Conclusion

For all involved, the POW experience felt like a contradiction of time: while life marched forward for the rest of the world, the lives of POWs and their families were interrupted and paused. For prisoners, this suspension of time began with their capture. For those on the home front, it began with the arrival of a "Missing in Action" report. While Operation HOMECOMING brought resolution to the POWs and their loved ones, nothing could give back the days, months, and years lost. In the period of time between capture and reconciliation, loved ones anxiously hoped for catharsis. Some waited to see their loved ones again. Some did not. Still others wait to this day.

*As of this writing, the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency estimates a total of 1,588 Missing in Action from Vietnam. Of those, 34 are presumed to have died in captivity.

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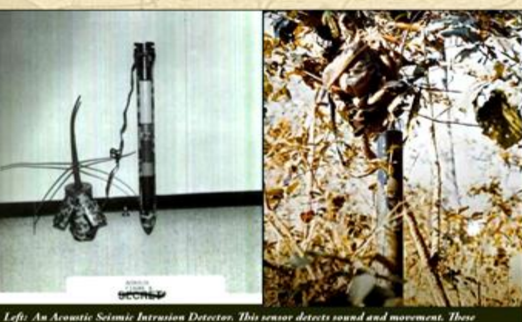
The Ho Chi Minh Trail originated in North Vietnam and wound through Laos and Cambodia into South Vietnam. (Office of the Secretary of Defense Graphics)

An Air Force report circa 1968, depicts IGLOO WHITE sensors in Laos and South Vietnam. Note: the Strong Point Obstacle Sector appearing below the DMZ is never constructed as planned. Sensor technologies slated for the "McNamara Line" are utilized for perimeter and patrol defense instead. (Defense Technical Information Center)



Left: An Acoustic Seismic Intrusion Detector. This sensor detects sound and movement. These capabilities enable sensor technicians to listen to voices and the movement of vehicles, or use vibrations from passing footsteps and wheels to pinpoint the enemy's location and monitor activity on the ground. (Defense Technical Information Center)

Right: An Acoustic Seismic Intrusion Detector remains suspended high above the jungle floor by its camouflaged parachute. (National Archives)

In 1966, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara tasked a group of prominent American scientists to study options for interdicting the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Of the solutions proposed, McNamara settled on sensor technology.

U.S. Sensor Technology in the Vietnam War

The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) constructed a substantial logistics network known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail (the Trail) to infiltrate manpower, weapons, ammunition, and materiel into South Vietnam along an approximately nine thousand mile network of ancient footpaths and dirt roads. The Ho Chi Minh Trail served as the NVA's supply route through Laos and Cambodia and, in response, the U.S. launched air interdiction campaigns. In 1964 and 1965, the U.S. Air Force conducted Operations BARREL ROLL and ROLLING THUNDER, respectively, to disrupt NVA operations at junctures along the Trail. The NVA proved difficult to target, with much of the Ho Chi Minh Trail running through dense rainforests that concealed the NVA from airborne assets under a natural jungle canopy.

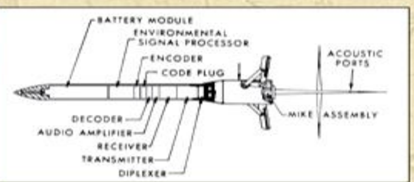
In 1966, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara tasked a group of prominent American scientists to study options for interdicting the Trail in hopes of offering alternative solutions vis-a-vis strategic bombing. Of the solutions proposed, McNamara settled on sensor technology. He established the Defense Communications Planning Group (DCPG), which was a Department of Defense (DOD) joint task force whose mission was to develop sensor technology capable of operating in the unrelenting heat, monsoons, and dense jungles of Southeast Asia.

Under the command of Lieutenant General Alfred Starbird, U.S. Army, the DCPG brought together technical experts from across several agencies within the U.S. government, DOD, governmental laboratories, and commercial manufacturers to fast-track the research, development, and deployment of acoustic, seismic, electromagnetic, and infrared sensors to Southeast Asia. The result produced two methods of sensor use, static and fluid. Static sensors were embedded in the ground or hung in jungle canopies to relay information about enemy locations and movement along the Ho Chi Minh Trail; sensors were also used in support of a fluid combat environment as seen in the Battle of Khe Sanh.

Static Sensors

In 1967, the United States began building a static sensor trip wire across the panhandle of Laos and the northwestern border of South Vietnam. Nicknamed IGLOO WHITE, this clandestine sensor project was designed to detect enemy movement anywhere in two large sections of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. An antivehicle sector covered the road network in a 100 kilometer x 40 kilometer region of central Laos, and an antipersonnel sector blanketed the trail network in a 100 kilometer x 20 kilometer area extending from eastern Laos into the western portion of South Vietnam, just below the demilitarized zone (DMZ).

The functional components of IGLOO WHITE were several thousand sensors dropped by aircraft throughout the anti-infiltration



Cutaway drawing of an Acoustic Seismic Intrusion Detector III. (National Museum of the U.S. Air Force)

zones to detect enemy foot or vehicular movement. Some sensors detected seismic disturbances created by passing trucks, others used microphones to pick up nearby voices, and still others detected both seismic disturbances and voices. F-4 Phantoms, CH-3 helicopters, and other aircraft dropped sensors (designed to look like plants) that struck the ground like lawn darts, burying themselves up to their antenna. Acoustic sensors delivered by camouflaged parachute would catch in trees and hang high out of sight in the foliage. All sensors were autonomous. They were equipped with battery packs and transmitters in addition to their sensors.

Orbiting aircraft, such as an EC-121R "Batcat" or the Beech QU-22B worked with signal relay platforms and navigation systems to continuously monitor the sensor fields and transmit their signals to the Infiltration Surveillance Center (ISC) in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. The ISC processed and interpreted the data signals through two IBM 360-65 mainframe computers—the most powerful computers available at the time—to produce reliable intelligence data for planning interdiction operations. An analyst stationed at the ISC compared the flow of data from the sensors through the ISC's computers to an arcade akin to a modern day video game system.

An EC-121R "Batcat" orbiting above the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The aircraft receives sensor signals and transmits the signals to Task Force Alpha's Information Surveillance Center, Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. (National Museum of the U.S. Air Force)

> *We wired the Ho Chi Minh Trail like a drugstore pinball machine, and we plugged it in every night.*
>
> — Air Force analyst, *Armed Forces Journal*, 1971

ISC operations personnel verified each enemy target and notified combat commanders who then sent the closest attack aircraft to neutralize the target. An Air Force pilot who flew interdiction missions over Laos described the ISC operations center this way, "The main control room looks like the one we saw on TV during the Apollo moon shots, or maybe something out of a James Bond movie. There's computer terminals *everywhere*…a [technician] can point a handheld red-light gun and activate one of the sensors and listen in. Sometimes you can hear the drivers' voices...or an airstrike."

The sensors on the Trail aided in the interdiction of enemy supplies and reinforcements. For example, in December 1970, a group of American forward air controller (FAC) pilots flying observation aircraft were searching for NVA trucks and supply dumps hidden in the jungles of Laos. They received word that acoustic and seismic sensors had detected heavy vehicle traffic in their area of operations. This intelligence lead to the discovery of a large NVA storage complex near the deserted Laotian village of Ban Bak. Over the next ten days U.S. airstrikes destroyed approximately 46 enemy trucks, 10,000 rounds of ammunition, 1,000 tons of supplies, and countless drums of fuel. While "static" sensors quickly garnered success in interdiction operations, they also found use in more fluid combat environments where they provided direct support to U.S. Soldiers and Marines.

The Patrol Seismic Intrusion Detector uses a spike (seismic sensor) inserted into the ground by hand to guard a patrol's camp perimeter. The small box contains a battery, transmitter, and antenna. The transmitter indicates near-by vibrations picked up by the sensor. The vibrations are transmitted over a long wire (over 200 yards). Each spike [sensor] transmits a different beep providing the operator with a clear indication of the enemy's location and movement. (Secretary of Defense Graphics)

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An Airman deploys an Air Delivered Seismic Intrusion Detector from the side door of a CH-3E helicopter. The device senses ground movement and determines whether the source is a person or a vehicle. January 1969. (National Archives)

U.S. Air Force personnel load acoustic sensors into a rearward firing dispenser, July 1968 (National Archives)

An Air Force F-4D pilot of the 25th Tactical Fighter Squadron prepares to airdrop sensors above the Ho Chi Minh Trail. January 30, 1969. (National Archives)

> *Khe Sanh was a turning point for the sensors — for their acceptance into America's technological arsenal.*
>
> — Rebecca Ullrich, *Building On and Spinning Off: Sandia National Labs' Creation of Sensors for Vietnam*, 1996

Sensors in the Fluid Combat Environment

In January 1968, as a part of the Tet Offensive, NVA forces massed in the northwestern corner of South Vietnam near a U.S. Marine base in the town of Khe Sanh. On January 18, 1968, while the Battle of Khe Sanh was underway a team from the DCPG demonstrated the capabilities of sensors at the Marine base. Within 48 hours the 7th Air Force dropped seismic and acoustic sensors around the perimeter. Almost immediately the sensors picked up NVA activity.

The sensors reported the movement of soldiers and equipment, and the data generated over the next few months of the battle gave the Marines such accurate information that, according to Colonel David Lownds, commander of the 26th Marine Regiment at Khe Sanh, the Marines were able to "inflict devastating firepower to break up the attack." The successful deployment of sensor technology used in concert with artillery and air power strikes around Khe Sanh demonstrated a highly effective "reconnaissance-strike system" in perimeter and patrol defenses and saved American lives. During a Senate hearing following the Battle of Khe Sanh Colonel Lownds testified that without the use of the sensors "his casualties would have almost doubled." The siege of Khe Sanh ended in April 1968. This marked a sound defeat for the NVA.

Two Air Delivered Seismic Intrusion Detectors on the pylon of a Navy OP-2E air craft prior to their being deployed in Laotian airspace over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. (National Archives)

Air Force personnel prepare to load sensor canisters from a bomb trailer to an A-1E Aircraft. Nakhon Phanom Air Base, Thailand. June 10, 1968. (National Archives)

Later in 1968, the reconnaissance-strike system was successfully deployed again in the U.S. Army's 25th Infantry Division area of operations to the north, east, and west of Saigon. According to Major General Ellis Williamson, the division commander at the time, "the division utilized sensors along with other detection methods to intercept movement of enemy forces, disrupt mine-laying and booby-trapping activity by the enemy, and to respond very rapidly to enemy attempts" to attack from Cambodia."

The U.S. Navy also tested the effectiveness of the reconnaissance-strike system in the Mekong Delta waterways of South Vietnam. In the experiment, a suite of sensors was distributed along infiltration routes to a major river that was used by the Viet Cong to move people and supplies, and the sensor fields were covered by artillery fire. The sensors promptly detected Viet Cong movement, and the U.S. launched barrages of artillery in response. Subsequently, the Viet Cong halted infiltration into the area.

The efficacy of sensor technology soon lead to its use in other regions. For example, at the same time the Vietnam War was underway subversives from North Korea conducted small-scale attacks across the Korean DMZ. Members of the DCPG and their sensor technology were tasked by the U.S. military to create an electronic fence adept at detecting enemy movement in the Korean DMZ. To this day sensors are used in the Korean DMZ and many aspects of the program remain classified.

Left: The Helicopter Emplaced Seismic Intrusion Detector. A seismic sensor detects vibrations and movement from passing footsteps or vehicles. It is designed to be launched from a pod attached to a CH-3 helicopter or tossed from its side door while the aircraft is hovering. (Defense Technical Information Center)

Right: An Air Delivered Seismic Intrusion Detector. With its nose buried deep into the ground the sensor's tail remains above the surface. The sensor blends in with the jungle foliage due to the green antenna that camouflaged it to look like a plant. (National Archives)

On the American home front, sensor technology developed for the military in the Vietnam War was shared with the U.S. Border Patrol. Sensors deployed along the Texas-Mexico border demonstrated that they could detect illegal crossings into the United States. More advanced sensors than those developed by the DCPG continue to be used on U.S. borders today.

An Air Force sergeant decodes sensor signals aboard a C-121 aircraft in support of Operation IGLOO WHITE, April 10, 1968. (National Archives)

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Task Force Alpha's Infiltration Surveillance Center, Nakhon Phanom Air Base, Thailand, 1971. (Air Force Historical Research Agency)

On the battlefield of the future, enemy forces will be located, tracked, and targeted almost instantaneously through the use of data links, computer assisted intelligence evaluation, and automated fire control.

— General William J. Westmorland, 1969 speech

Sensor Technology in the 21st Century

Sensor technology grew exponentially in the years following the Vietnam War and has become a key part of the U.S. military's arsenal. Modern "network-centric warfare" is the direct outgrowth of successful sensor use in Vietnam. During combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, sensors are networked into area surveillance and communication systems that not only locate the enemy and materiel but are capable of calling in artillery fire and close air support to neutralize threats.

A soldier sets up a tactical unattended ground sensor to monitor an area his unit just cleared. Through seismic, acoustic, radiological, and electro-optic modes, enemy personnel and vehicles are detected, tracked, and identified. (U.S. Army)

Sensor improvements and microchips now enable faster processing of signals so that the source (people, trucks, tanks, helicopters, etc.) can be instantly recognized. GPS technology provides accurate position location. Communication systems link the sensors to fire control computers in the air (for example, drones and aircraft such as the AH-64D Apache helicopter) or on the ground (such as tanks, and even infantry based weapons). Communication systems and precision weapon guidance enable accurate attacks against targets.

The AH-64 employs a combination of sensors and armament systems to gain a position of advantage for the ground commander. (U.S. Army)

Unattended Ground Sensors (UGS) are devices that automatically gather sensor data on a remote target, interpret the data, and communicate information back to a receiver without the need for a human operator. UGS "sense" targets by monitoring their emissions. Types of emissions include acoustic, seismic, electro-magnetic waves, optical, infrared, ultraviolet, electro-magnetic fields, chemical, and nuclear radiation.

Sensor technology is now common in the private sector as well. For example, motion detection sensors attached to lights found in homes and offices activate lights by sensing movement. Sensors in a "fluid environment," such as an automobile, aid in parking, avoiding front end collisions, and detecting objects in blind spots. Wristband sensors, for instance a Fitbit, contain an accelerometer, ambient light sensor, and optical heartbeat sensor. Finally, many smartphones contain light, proximity, magnetometer, and thermometer sensors.

An enemy target (detected by sensor activation) is confirmed through the Ground Surveillance Computer System. (Air Force Historical Research Agency)

An information technology specialist inputs sensor data in to an IBM System 360/65 [super] computer. The computer digests and analyzed the data. Only then is the information presented to a targeting board to direct air strikes against the enemy.(Air Force Historical Research Agency)

Operations and intelligence personnel planning an air strike. The operation is seen on the Infiltration Surveillance Center Targeting Board. (Air Force Historical Research Agency)

Conclusion

Since the Vietnam War, sensors have grown exponentially in their use and roles. In 1970, Air Force pilot Lieutenant Colonel John Halliday, who flew numerous interdiction missions over the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos, intimated sensor technology was ahead of its time: "Step out of the jungle and inside the [ISC] building, you step into America — but an America 15 years from now." Halliday and the others who served in support of Operation IGLOO WHITE were on the cutting edge of sensor technology, the legacy of which can be seen on the modern battlefield and in the homes, cars, and in the hands of Americans to this day. From Operation IGLOO WHITE to the battlefields of the 21st century, sensors have consistently earned their place in the arsenals of contemporary militaries, in the defense of the nation, and in everyday features of civilian life.

PFC Ariel A. Tolentino, a radio operator with the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit ground sensor platoon prepares "unattended static" ground sensors used to detect movement, sounds, and vibrations in the field. (U.S. Marine Corps)

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Signals Intelligence Collection. An E-1 Tracer, which is a flying radar platform, lands aboard the USS Enterprise (CVN-65). United States Navy personnel flew many intelligence collection missions over Southeast Asia. All five Services contributed to the intelligence effort throughout the Vietnam War. (Courtesy of the National Archives)

POW Collection Points. The process of receiving, fingerprinting, interrogating, and classifying prisoners of war and other detained personnel was initially carried out at POW Collection Points, before detainees were forwarded to the Combined Military Interrogation Center. This photo shows the Chu Lai POW Collection Point in 1968. (Courtesy of the National Archives)

INTRODUCTION

Sound military and political decisions depend upon timely, accurate, adequate and useable intelligence. The intelligence process is a continuous cycle, of planning, collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data. Intelligence must be timely and accurate. It includes, but is not limited to, knowledge of the enemy's history, people, customs, languages, weapons, equipment, tactics, and the strategy of their leaders.

Intelligence agencies in Vietnam strove to provide accurate and timely intelligence to military commanders and civilian decision makers. These organizations, agencies, units, and teams pioneered new methods of operation, refined the intelligence cycle, and left an indelible legacy on the future of the U.S. civilian and military intelligence community for years to come.

Though intelligence goals remained consistent throughout the war, these organizations and their operations changed significantly as U.S. involvement in Vietnam wore on. This poster series focuses on intelligence organizations at their peak operation during the war. American intelligence operations were vital to the success of combat operations; and civilian and military intelligence personnel efforts were pivotal to the development of modern intelligence operations, policy, and doctrine.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATIONS

Military Assistance Command, Vietnam

Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) conducted and coordinated U.S. intelligence operations using organic intelligence assets. As the war progressed, MACV consolidated outside efforts to eliminate redundancies and further streamline intelligence operations. Working with South Vietnam, MACV created the Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam, the Combined Materiel Exploitation Center, and the Combined Military Interrogation Center to supplement its own efforts. These organizations fell under U.S. and the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff.

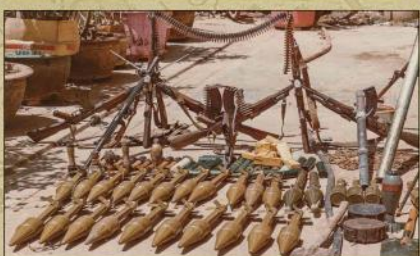
Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam

MACV created the Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam (CICV), an intelligence conglomerate to compile and disseminate military intelligence. CICV possessed decentralized operating sections to streamline the intelligence process through a hierarchy. Stove piping the missions of the operating sections maximized resources while minimizing redundancies, although some overlap did occur. CICV consolidated intelligence for MACV, taking it from the other combined centers, as well as subordinate combat units, and processing it for MACV and the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff.

CICV had two Order of Battle (OB) offices to document the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong: a Ground OB section, with five teams assigned to geographic areas; and a Political OB section, with seven teams assigned by military regions. The Ground and Political OBs gathered intelligence on individual unit composition, disposition, strength, combat effectiveness, tactics, training, logistics and other important military information. CICV's Technical Intelligence section analyzed captured weapon systems to instruct U.S. forces on Vietnamese communist capabilities.

Enemy Weapons and Equipment

North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong forces mostly relied upon the Chinese and Soviets for their weapons and equipment. Some communist fighters used American and French-made holdovers from World War II, or the colonial wars against the French. The Viet Cong constructed improvised booby-traps and homemade mines out of discarded junk as well.



Display of Captured Weapons. These rocket rounds, mortar rounds, ammo, grenades, and rocket launchers were captured by South Vietnamese Army troops. Friendly forces then examined the captured enemy weapons in detail. (Courtesy of the National Archives)

Combined Materiel Exploitation Center

MACV created the Combined Materiel Exploitation Center (CMEC) in 1965 to analyze the Communist's use of increasingly sophisticated arms and equipment. The CMEC conducted the initial analysis of everything "materiel," from missiles, to tanks, to handguns. CMEC's analysis of intelligence operations included performance limitations, from which military countermeasures were developed. CMEC then passed the necessary information to CICV to develop publications for U.S. forces prior to their arrival in Vietnam.

Armed with this intelligence, the CICV Technical Intelligence branch created courses on enemy techniques that included topics such as the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong's construction and use of booby-traps, and the types and capabilities of their military equipment. These courses prepared soldiers for the dangers they were likely to face in Vietnam.

Combined Military Interrogation Center

The Combined Military Interrogation Center (CMIC) acquired human intelligence from prisoners of war, and from those who defected to the government of South Vietnam; defectors (or Hoi Chanhs) were individuals who defected. Captured prisoners of war normally flowed from the capturing unit to the brigade or division detention areas for interrogation. Hoi Chanhs were usually transferred to the nearest Chieu Hoi center as captives, but were given special treatment. Hoi Chanhs were housed in separate dormitories, and endured few restrictions. The level of interrogation was determined by the prisoner's knowledge and the importance of their information. Most expected torture, and were surprised when CMIC's interrogators treated the prisoners well, to earn their trust.

CMIC was designated the location for interrogation of individuals likely to possess intelligence of the greatest value. As the war progressed, U.S. intelligence created numerous interrogation centers throughout Vietnam to address the increasingly large volume of enemy prisoners.

POWs provided human intelligence. Tagged Viet Cong prisoners await transportation and interrogation. Tactical units usually forwarded prisoners to a central location for interrogation. (Courtesy of the National Archives)

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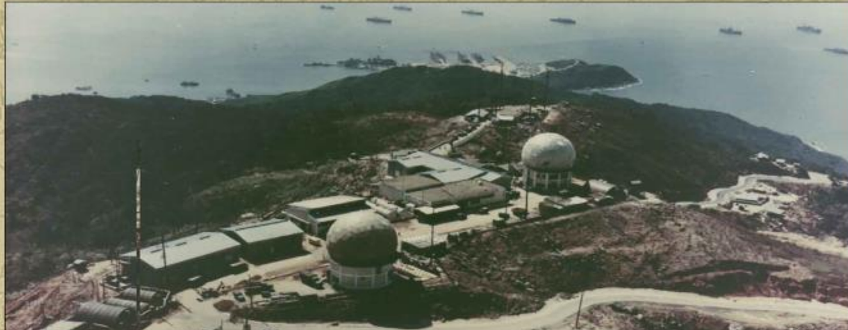
Civilian Irregular Defense Group. CIDG forces, seen here conducting a search and clear operation, regularly contributed to intelligence by capturing equipment and documents in the field. (Courtesy of the National Archives)



Signals Intelligence Collection. The Monkey Mountain Facility, a SIGINT site. (Courtesy of Earl Morgan)

CIVILIAN AGENCIES

Civilian intelligence agencies from the United States in Southeast Asia, including the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the National Security Agency (NSA), worked alongside their military counterparts to deepen military and political decision makers' knowledge of the local and strategic situation in South Vietnam.

The CIA and NSA played a vital role in the Vietnam War. Government civilians were often co-located with military personnel, and shared danger with their military counterparts. Many lived among the native population with little protection. Since government civilians tended to stay in Vietnam longer than their military counterparts did, they tended to form stronger relationships with the South Vietnamese.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

MACV and CIA intelligence priorities differed across Southeast Asia. Though unity was never fully achieved, and competition between the two threaded the war, some cooperation and coordination evolved over time.

The CIA worked closely with militant civilian organizations such as Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDGs), Combat Youth, and Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRUs) to collect intelligence. CIDGs were typically made up of recruits from various ethnic groups, especially the indigenous Montagnard peoples of the mountain regions. The Combat Youth consisted of Vietnamese Catholics, mostly across southern South Vietnam. PRUs were primarily made up of local South Vietnamese villagers. Collectively, these organizations gathered intelligence and trained South Vietnam's population in local defense.

Birth of the CIDG. Gate to Buon Enao in 1962, the first CIDG village. The success of Buon Enao lead to the continuation of the Civilian Irregular Defense Group program. (Courtesy of the Central Intelligence Agency)

CIDGs, Combat Youth, and PRUs collected intelligence on enemy activity near their villages. Because they operated in the countryside where the Viet Cong were strongest, their intelligence primarily centered on these communist insurgents.

U.S. Special Forces personnel paired with and trained South Vietnamese forces in reconnaissance and patrolling. Aggressive patrolling often gleaned the size of Viet Cong units operating in the area, and the likelihood of attack. Gathered intelligence was sent to local Special Forces personnel, CIA officers, and Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). CIDGs, Combat Youth, and PRUs rooted out Viet Cong political and military organizers throughout South Vietnam, and their teams built relationships that facilitated the collection of intelligence from villagers not involved in the programs. Human intelligence was vital to defeating the Viet Cong in the villages where they operated. A CIA officer remarked, "We worked with members of our unit who lived in these villages. These organizations overcame language barriers between U.S. personnel and natives to complete their objectives. As one U.S. service member and Phoenix Program advisor to a PRU put it, "the language barrier was difficult and frustrating…so I had to learn Vietnamese…you learn to survive in it and learning to communicate is one of the first things you have to do." Owing to the success of local and indigenous intelligence gathering programs, MACV incorporated a number of CIA programs under its control.

Provincial Reconnaissance Units. A PRU team, based out of Duc Pho, and their American Advisors pose for a group photograph in 1970. (Courtesy of Roger Jordheim)

Phoenix Program

One intelligence collection program was the Phoenix Program. Supported by both MACV and the CIA; its name stemmed from the mythological birds found in East Asian folklore known as Phuong Hoang. The South Vietnamese Provincial Reconnaissance Units played a significant role in the Phoenix Program. They were specifically tasked with finding and neutralizing the Viet Cong cadre and their sympathizers. The PRU's preferred method was to capture and interrogate Viet Cong insurgents. Still highly controversial today because of its association with assassinations, a CIA participant in the Phoenix Program noted, "It's not in your interest to kill anybody, because dead people don't talk. So, our primary objective was to capture, and interrogate, and exploit for information." At the height of Phoenix Program, 1968 to 1972, PRUs exploited information from more than 67,000 Viet Cong personnel to neutralize the effectiveness of the Viet Cong in the South.

NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY

The National Security Agency (NSA) deployed electronic intelligence and communications intelligence in signals intelligence (SIGINT) operations. The Army's Security Agency (ASA), which also focused on signals intelligence, fell under the director of the NSA. NSA civilians accompanied army personnel at ASA facilities throughout the Vietnam War, and accompanied army personnel, and both military and civilian personnel faced great danger as the enemy regularly targeted the sites.

Intelligence Advisors. A member of the 3rd Radio Research Unit looks over the shoulder of a Vietnamese Army direction-finding specialist, symbolic of ASA's advisory role in the war prior to 1965. (U.S. Army photo)

Signals Intelligence

Gen. Arthur S. Collins, commander of the U.S. 4th Infantry Division operating near the Cambodian border in 1966, said, "in our area, we couldn't possibly find the enemy physically if he didn't want to be found. Special Intelligence, the cover name for SIGINT was the best indication of his location. There is absolutely no question as to its great value."

ASA and NSA personnel, with assistance from U.S. airpower, intercepted Viet Cong and North Vietnamese communications regularly. The National Security Agency provided career cryptologists to analyze these intercepted communications. In 1970, there were 8,500 American cryptologists in Vietnam, and they played a significant role in assisting interdiction efforts on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

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Electronic Intelligence Collection. An aircrewman plots radar sightings by radar technicians aboard an Air Force EC-121 Warning Star aircraft. (Courtesy of the National Archives)

Processed Imagery. Politicians and military commanders both relied on aerial reconnaissance imagery throughout the war. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara presented this aerial reconnaissance image to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to show a convoy staging area in Laos in early 1964. (Courtesy of the National Archives)

ELECTRONIC INTELLIGENCE

Electronic intelligence (ELINT) intercepted radar and navigation signals to determine the Communists' location and capabilities. Most ELINT came from U.S. airpower conducting operations over North Vietnamese airspace. The U.S. Navy also collected electronic intelligence from the coast of North Vietnam. ELINT operations conducted near North Vietnam were closer to the signals' points of origin; this aided interception and exploitation.

Electronic intelligence proved valuable against North Vietnamese air defense systems relying on radar to target United States and allied aircraft. U.S. pilots used ELINT to determine the capabilities of enemy defenses and their location.

COMMUNICATIONS INTELLIGENCE

Communication intelligence (COMINT) derived from interception and analysis of phone calls and radio transmissions. U.S. forces wiretapped enemy landlines, an act akin to adding listening devices to a phone line. Wiretaps were convenient due to their simplicity but the effort required continuous attention and concentration of U.S. personnel. U.S. personnel became so proficient at intercepting and processing enemy communications that parts of the process had to be automated in order to keep up with the volume of intelligence collection.

Recognizing the opportunity the language barrier afforded them; Communists often used unsecure methods to communicate. One American soldier recounted, "I sat there for two weeks with earphones on and a notebook transcribing clear text French." Since much of Indochina was a former French colony, the language was common.

Communications intelligence collection became more difficult when Communists encrypted their messages with codes and cyphers. They further added complexity to their codes and cyphers by assigning them to specific Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army units. Moreover, cyphers and codes were regularly replaced or changed. Each time a change took place, U.S. personnel began the decrypting process anew. Intelligence is perishable, and codebreaking is time consuming, which caused delays in processing intercepted communications, thus limiting the value of the intelligence.

Communications Intelligence. A U.S. Army Special Forces officer used this notebook to draft reports of his observations and intercepted radio transmissions broadcast unencrypted in French by communists along the Ho Chi Minh trail on the South Vietnamese-Cambodian border in 1970. (Courtesy of retired U.S. Army Colonel Denny Lane)

Chieu Hoi

The Chieu Hoi Program encouraged defections among Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army troops. The psychological operation used leaflets and radio broadcasts. Roughly translated to Open Arms in English, Hoi Chanhs, or ralliers to the Chieu Hoi Program received education, financial compensation, and reunification with their family as incentives. For their part, the U.S. and South Vietnamese benefited from intelligence provided. Many enemy troops "rallied" during the war; over 47,000 Hoi Chanhs in 1969 alone, and an estimated 200,000 from 1963 to 1972.

AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE

All services flew aerial reconnaissance missions. These missions identified the location and intent of communist forces. Aircraft equipped with side-looking airborne radar were effective at detecting nighttime enemy movement on roads and rivers. Side-looking airborne radar allowed U.S. aircraft fly alongside roads and rivers, instead of directly above them, to observe movement. Aircraft also dropped seismic and auditory sensors into the jungle to detect enemy movement. From the aircraft, personnel also directly photographed enemy positions, movements, and other activity.

Cameras were mounted to reconnaisance-specific platforms, such as the OV-1 Mohawk, the SR-71 Blackbird, and the U-2 Dragon Lady aircraft, or hand-carried by airborne forward air controllers. U.S. policy makers and senior military commanders relied heavily upon intelligence captured through these means in their decision-making throughout the war.

Cartographers also used aerial photographs to revise and replace the obsolete French topographic maps of Vietnam used during America's early involvement in the region. Though aerial reconnaissance was a source of vital intelligence, it required constant updating as enemy forces relocated or reinforced their positions.

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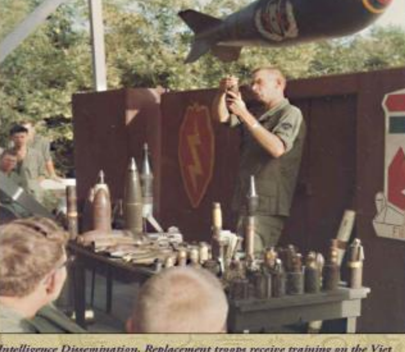
Interrogation. A detainee listens to Biem Vu Thu interpreting for Nathan Hale in the interrogation room of the Americal Division prisoner of war collection point. (Courtesy of the National Archives)



Intelligence Dissemination. Replacement troops receive training on the Viet Cong's use of mines and booby-traps. Following nine hours of instruction, troops were required to navigate a booby-trapped course. (Courtesy of the National Archives)

INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION

Intelligence collection during the Vietnam War was vital to the war effort and faced numerous challenges owing to language barriers and its time sensitive nature. The U.S. primarily relied on South Vietnamese translators. Collected intelligence was not processed at the source of collection, and required transmission for further processing, which was time consuming. Supplying intelligence analysts with information sometimes meant rushing the collection process. In order to satisfy information requests in a timely manner while maintaining the integrity of the information, intelligence personnel corroborated information from as many sources as possible.

Experimental technology was sometimes used to automate, expedite, or simplify the collection process, but reconnaissance operations collecting information behind enemy lines were crucial. During one ground combat mission, a soldier recalled "What they found was – a map that showed every logistics support base on the Ho Chi Minh Trail…about one hundred miles of the trail." Instances like these provided significant intelligence, but only after hard work in determining the value and meaning of collected intelligence.

The Americans occasionally mitigated the language barrier with technological advancements. One airman described a device called an "elephant counter" used by indigenous reconnaissance personnel transmitting troop and vehicle movements on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, "The teams had little black boxes that were about the size of an Army Walkie-Talkie, but it didn't have numbers on it, it had trucks and little stick figures for people."

INTELLIGENCE PROCESSING

Once intelligence was collected, it was then processed and analyzed to determine its significance. Once analyzed, intelligence was then developed into products for dissemination.

Verified intelligence was then assessed for its potential value based on the priority of the Intelligence Requirements Listing. Analysts would cross-reference intelligence reports against those previously received to develop products.

The process of confirming intelligence reports was time consuming and required attention to detail. To be effective, intelligence analysts pulled data from multiple sources. As one analyst put it, "A little bit here doesn't mean very much by itself, but if you put that little bit with this little bit with the other little bit; it really starts building a picture for you." In some instances, intelligence might not be of immediate use but prove valuable later.

Regardless of its need to be translated, all intelligence posed challenges. Photos and imagery had to be developed before they could be analyzed to determine their value. Electronic intelligence needed to be interpreted and then plotted on situation maps prior to distribution to those who needed it. Situation maps were covered in acetate, and grease pencils were used to mark unit locations. Situation maps enabled local commanders to concentrate combat patrols near suspected enemy units.

Intelligence analysts worked around the clock to process thousands of documents and reports to piece together actionable information for a positive effect on the battlefield.

Language Barrier Mitigation. A Hark Box, affectionately called an Elephant Counter, "…the size of an Army walkie-talkie…" transmitted data to overhead aircraft. (Courtesy of CIA)

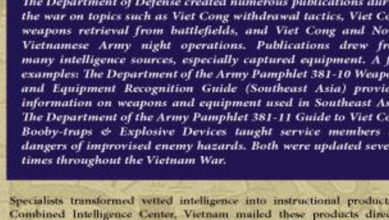
Language Barrier

The complexity of languages created difficulties for intelligence personnel. Chinese was frequently used across Southeast Asia due to the region's proximity to China, and the region's long history of resisting Chinese incursion. The use of French owed to Indochina's once colonial position. In addition to Chinese, Vietnamese, French, and English, there were also approximately two dozen ethnic groups that each spoke their own language.

Combined Document Exploitation Center. In the CDEC, Vietnamese civilians and U.S. military evaluate captured enemy field documents. (Courtesy of the National Archives)

DISSEMINATION OF INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence dissemination was a crucial step in the intelligence cycle; until it was disseminated to decision makers and units in combat, collected intelligence had zero effect on friendly forces. Only once it was disseminated could it be used to the benefit of U.S. and allied forces.

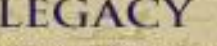


Publications

The Department of Defense created numerous publications during the war on topics such as Viet Cong withdrawal tactics, Viet Cong weapons retrieval from battlefields, and Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army night operations. Publications drew from many intelligence sources, especially captured equipment. A few examples: The Department of the Army Pamphlet 381-10 Weapons and Equipment Recognition Guide (Southeast Asia) provided information on weapons and equipment used in Southeast Asia. The Department of the Army Pamphlet 381-11 Guide to Viet Cong Booby-traps & Explosive Devices taught service members the dangers of improvised enemy hazards. Both were updated several times throughout the Vietnam War.

Specialists transformed vetted intelligence into instructional products. The Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam mailed these products directly to commanders, service schools, and intelligence organizations. In some cases, it was simple for analysts to deliver what individual units required. In instances were information would benefit a broader military audience, such as descriptions of enemy weapons and equipment, publications were produced. Specialists deemed some publications important enough to be mailed to commanders in the field automatically.

Intelligence disseminated to combat units allowed them to take action with fire missions, close air support missions in support of ground combat units, or even the insertion of special operations forces or quick reaction forces to engage or further observe enemy units.



LEGACY

Vietnam's decentralized intelligence efforts gave the modern American military "lessons learned" that, in the years following, saw streamlining, centralizing, and cross talk among various intelligence agencies. These lessons from the Vietnam War continue to drive developments in intelligence techniques and procedures today. Our engagements with the Viet Cong also provided a template to understand modern violent extremist organizations. In countering the Viet Cong, a CIA officer reminisced, "We took actionable intelligence and linked it to the strike force, which is now the centerpiece of counterterrorism operations in the U.S., everywhere."

The legacy of American intelligence operations can be seen across today's integrated intelligence community. Department of Defense agencies participate in this multidiscipline effort to facilitate information sharing among Combatant Commanders, interagency partners, and law enforcement organizations, while continuing to shape the future of intelligence operations. The Defense Intelligence Agency coordinates and integrates the efforts of intelligence organizations, ensuring that the organizations pool intelligence for their mutual benefit to mitigate or eliminate the challenges with intelligence coordination that occurred during the Vietnam War. That integration and coordination has had significant positive effects within the intelligence community.

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March 26, 2022

To Chapter 106:

I address this book of the Vietnam Veterans of the 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War which lasted from 1955 to 1975.

I would like to fully commemorate and honor President Melvin “Butch” Morgan, Vietnam Veterans of America – Arizona Chapter 106 located in Tucson, Arizona.

He is a man among men and one that I look up to in all respects. I have a huge amount of respect for this man for all that he has done for not only his own chapter, but has also contributed much to the other chapters within the state of Arizona not to mention the Arizona State Council of Phoenix, Arizona.

His personality and pleasantness is a real joy for all of us to be around and I am more than pleased to know him and I have always had a full amount of respect for him over all of these years.

I am more than honored to be your guest speaker today and am proud to be a part of this Chapter, which is one of the longest running ones in the state.

Thank you so much for your long running interest in keeping “**The Vietnam Spirit Alive**” within Chapter 106 and Vietnam Veterans of America.

To you Butch: “*Keep it going, stay well, and may God’s blessings be upon you and yours*”.

Walt M. Schumacher Jr.

Walt M. Schumacher, Jr.
Chairman, VVA-Arizona
50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War