



Suncoast Update

DECEMBER 1998

Local Veterans Helping Local Veterans

OUR MISSION:

To foster, provide for, and support improvement in conditions of local area Vietnam vets and their families

To influence and inspire personal growth and development for Vets and their families through education, information, and interaction

To advocate and encourage new positive attitudes toward Vietnam Era veterans, and to preclude future generations from suffering similar psychological trauma

To study on a nonpartisan basis, any governmental legislation which may affect the welfare of Vietnam era veterans

To conduct and publish nonpartisan research on the effects of the Vietnam conflict, and the relationship of the vet and the American public

To assist disabled or needy veterans and their families

To support and actualize the goals and objectives of the Vietnam Veterans Florida State Coalition

President's Report

As we gather for the last time this year, it is important to remember that this meeting, our annual meeting, will turn the reins of leadership over to new elected officers for the 1999 year. Please come out to this meeting and vote for the member you think best represents your views and ideas for Suncoast, and who you think can best execute his office in that capacity.

I have posted to the right of this article the list of candidates by office as the candidates were presented at the last meeting by the nominating committee. Take some time and look at this list, you have the option as a member of nominating someone from the floor at the meeting. I want to thank each member of the nominating committee for their fine work.

Come to the meeting and unlike the last election in November---make a difference!

Mike Gunner Vitel
"Short Time Pres"

Nominations for 1999

For PRESIDENT:

Gerald Pogue

For VICE PRESIDENT:

Dave Valdez

Mike Vitel

Wayne Watson

For QUARTERMASTER:

Jeff Macarages

John Ott

For DIRECTOR:

Jeff Macarages

Steve Shepherd

Dave Valdez

Wayne Watson

Mike Vitel

Frank Rich

Eugene Childress, Jr.

DON'T FORGET:

The December Meeting, to be held on Thursday December 3, 1998, is at VFW Post 6827.

The Board of Directors will meet at 7:00 P.M., followed by the Membership meeting at 7:30 P.M.

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From the National League of Families

Status of the POW/MIA Issue

November 24, 1998



2,076 Americans are still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War, though 468 were at sea/over water losses: Vietnam - 1,551 (North, 563; South, 986); Laos - 444 Cambodia - 75; Peoples Republic of China territorial waters - 8. The League seeks the return of all US prisoners, the fullest possible accounting for those still missing and repatriation of all recoverable remains.

The League's highest priority is resolving the live prisoner question. Official intelligence indicates that Americans known to have been alive in captivity in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were not returned at the end of the war. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it must be assumed that these Americans may still be alive. As a matter of policy, the US Government does not rule out the possibility that American POWs could still be held. Unilateral return of remains by the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) has been proven the most effective means of obtaining accountability. Extensive field activities have brought some progress through joint recovery or turnover in the field of remains fragments. From that process, 139 Americans have thus far accounted for by the Clinton Administration, all as a result of joint field operations. (LA-63; VN-72 CB-4). Archival research in Vietnam has produced thousands of items, documents and photos, but the vast majority pertain to accounted-for Americans. A comprehensive wartime and post-war process existed in Vietnam to collect and retain information and remains. For this reason, unilateral SRV efforts to locate and return remains and provide records offer the most productive short term potential. The Defense Department's case-by-case review and other evidence reveal that unilateral SRV efforts could bring many answers.

Joint field activities in Laos are productive and, increasingly, the Lao Government has permitted greater flexibility while US teams are in-country. Agreements between the US and the Indochina governments now permit Vietnamese witnesses to participate in joint operations in Laos and Cambodia when necessary. POW/MIA research and field activities in Cambodia have received excellent support. Over 80% of US losses in Laos and 90% of those in Cambodia occurred in areas where Vietnamese forces operated during the war; however, Vietnam has not yet responded to numerous US requests for case-specific records on US loss incidents in these countries. Records research and field operations are the most likely means of increasing the accounting for Americans missing in Laos and Cambodia.

Despite US intelligence assessments and other evidence that hundreds of Americans can best be accounted for by unilateral Vietnamese efforts to locate and return remains and provide relevant documents and records, President Clinton lifted the trade embargo, established a US Embassy in Hanoi, normalized relations, posted a US Ambassador to Vietnam and, recently, determined, without supporting evidence, that Vietnam is "fully cooperating in good faith" to resolve this issue. The burden is squarely on the current administration to obtain increased accountability. The League supports steps by the US to respond to concrete results, not advancing political and economic concessions in the hope that Hanoi will respond.

Statistics are provided by the Defense POW/MIA Office Live Sightings: As of November 24, 1998, 1,896 firsthand live sighting reports in Indochina have been received since 1975; 1,832 (97%) have been resolved. 1,283 (68%) were equated to Americans now accounted for (i.e. returned POWs, missionaries or civilians detained for violating Vietnamese codes); 45 (3%) correlated to wartime sightings of military personnel or pre-1975 sightings of civilians still unaccounted for; 504 (26%) were determined to be fabrications. The 64 (3%) unresolved firsthand reports are the focus of current analytical and collection efforts: 56 (2.5%) are reports of Americans sighted in a prisoner situation; 8 (.5%) are non-POW sightings. The years in which these 64 firsthand sightings occurred is listed as follows: Year Pre-76: 41, 76-80: 1, 81-85: 1, 86-90: 4, 91-92: 1, 93-94: 1, 95-96: 1, 97-98: 6, Total: 64.

Accountability: At the end of the Vietnam War, there were 2,583 unaccounted for American prisoners, missing in action or killed in action/body not recovered. As of November 24, 1998, 2,076 Americans are still missing and unaccounted for, over 90% of whom were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia where Vietnamese forces operated during the war. A breakdown of the years during which the 507 Americans were accounted for follows: 1974-1975 Post war years: 28; 1976-1978 US/SRV normalization negotiations: 47; 1979-1980 US/SRV talks break down: 1; 1981-1984 1st Reagan Administration: 23; 1985-1988 2nd Reagan Administration: 155; 1989-1992 Bush Administration: 113; 1993-1996 1st Clinton Administration: 133; 1997- 2nd Clinton Administration: 6.

Unilateral Vietnamese government repatriations of remains with scientific evidence of storage have accounted for 164 of the 375 from Vietnam; all but 3 of the 125 Americans accounted for in Laos have been the result of joint excavations. The breakdown by country of the 507 Americans accounted for from the Vietnam War: Vietnam: 375*, Laos: 125*, China: 2, Cambodia: 5 (*4 remains were recovered from indigenous personnel; 1 from North Vietnam and 3 from Laos; in addition, one recently identified was actually recovered in Vietnam before the end of the war).

Here and There



DECEMBER MEETING

The December meeting of Suncoast Vietnam Veterans Association will be held December 3, 1998 at 7:30 P.M. at **VFW Post 6827** located at 4145 34th Street North, St. Petersburg. The Board of Directors will meet at 7:00 P.M., followed by the membership meeting at 7:30 P.M. If you have something you need to discuss with the Directors please come at 7:00 P.M.

PARADE AND SOCIAL

Suncoast Vietnam Veterans will participate in this year's **Christmas Parade** in Pinellas Park on December 12th. Call Bill Estell (546-9510) for details. After the parade, we will have our December social at the **Just Dirt Saloon** located at 6401 Haines Road North in St. Petersburg. Come to the December meeting for the details.

NEW MEMBERS NEEDED

If you know of anyone who wishes to join Suncoast, please give him/her a copy of our membership application (one is on page 4 of this newsletter). Only from the increase in membership can we put out support to our veterans and their families in the community.

SVVA Officers for 1998

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| PRESIDENT | Mike Vitel |
| VICE PRESIDENT | Bill Estell |
| QUARTERMASTER | John Ott |
| DIRECTORS: | Ed Harris |
| | Gerald Pogue |
| | Steve Shepherd |
| | Russ Swift |
| | Wayne Watson |

DO YOU NEED OUR HELP?

If your organization needs the services of the Last Patrol, call Diane Ott at (813) 595-5450 or Email at dianeott@juno.com. This person is the only person authorized to act as the contact person for Suncoast Vietnam Veterans Association. Also, if your are planning an event and want our services, please give us as much advance notice as possible--it helps us.

News & Views



Vets Honored With Plate - (Harrisburg) -- While many other proposed new license plate designs have been scuttled... Pennsylvania veterans who fought in Vietnam will soon have their own special vehicle markers. In the final minutes of pre-Thanksgiving voting... lawmakers approved the creation of a custom plate that will be available to anyone who served in Vietnam. Currently, there are two special Vietnam license plates that appear on some Pennsylvania vehicles... but those plates are only available to members of a pair of private groups. (*Friday November 27 4:06 AM ET —Yahoo News Online*)

America's young men will soon be able to skip that obligatory visit to the post office after their 18th birthday to register with Selective Service. Registration is still required, but starting Dec. 2, men will be able to use the Internet to sign up for a potential draft. Under federal law all men must register with the Selective Service within 30 days of their 18th birthday. (*Wednesday, November 25 12:38 PM EST---ABCNews.com*)

In the largest batch of recordings it has released, the John F. Kennedy Library on Tuesday made public 37 hours of tapes in which President Kennedy conceded his administration must bear some responsibility for the assassination of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem. (*Chicago Tribune*)

HANOI: The death toll from Typhoon Dawn, which slammed into central Vietnam late last week, had risen to at least 187, officials said yesterday. The typhoon, the worst in the region in more than three decades, left 2 million people homeless after 500,000 houses were flooded and almost 700 collapsed. (*Friday, November 27. Australian News Network*)

“There are various ways of keeping truth out of sight.”

”Truth necessary for our own character must not be suppressed.”

“The only exact testimony of a man is his actions.”
author unknown from a veterans news group.