

**Minutes from the Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Public Session**  
**June 8, 2015**

The Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee (hereafter referred to as the "Committee") is a federal advisory committee within the Department of Defense (DoD) operating pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972, the Government in Sunshine Act of 1976, and other relevant federal regulations. The Committee meets two to three times per fiscal year. The Committee held its third meeting on Monday, June 8, 2015, from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Residence Inn Arlington Capital View, 2850 South Potomac Avenue, Arlington, VA 22202.

**VWCAC Members**

Governor Tom Ridge, Chairman  
Commander (R) Everett Alvarez  
Colonel (R) C.R. Anderegg  
Mr. Rocky Bleier  
Mr. Paul Bucha  
Lieutenant General (R) George Christmas  
Mr. Morton Dean  
Ms. Jeanette Early  
General (R) Larry Ellis  
Vice Admiral (R) James Hull  
Mr. Jerome Johnson  
Command Sergeant Major (R) Andrew McFowler  
Ms. Ann Mills-Griffiths  
Lieutenant General (R) Roger Schultz  
Mr. Jan Scruggs  
Brigadier General (R) Wilma Vaught

**DoD Sponsor**

Michael Rhodes (Director of Administration, DoD)

**Briefing Staff:**

Mark Franklin, Designated Federal Officer  
Devon Hardy (T)  
Jose Ramos  
Yvonne Schilz  
Phil Waite

**Other Staff:**

Larry Brom (Assistant Director)  
Michael Gable  
Major General (R) James Jackson (Director)  
Lieutenant Commander John Supple

**Public Session Attendees**

3 members of the public attended the session.

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**PUBLIC SESSION**

**Agenda**

1. Introduction and Administrative Remarks
2. Staff Presentations
  - Vietnam Commemoration Program update
  - History and Legacy Update
  - Strategy and Engagement Update
  - Communications Plan
3. Advisory Committee Deliberation and Discussion
4. Closing remarks

**Staff Presentations**

1. Vietnam Commemoration Program update Mr. Joe Ramos provided an update on the current status of events and noted that we have had a 315 per cent increase in events compared to last year, but that the number of Commemorative Partners requiring our support had dropped significantly from 1 in 3 events to 1 in 10 events.

Ms. Yvonne Schilz provided an update on the status of the Commemorative Partner program and informed the Committee that we now have over 8,000 Commemorative Partners from all sectors to include major corporations such as Coca Cola and FedEx, as well as 474 fire stations from the New York City Fire Department, and all the U.S. military commissaries and exchanges. She also noted that 43 States have signed up to become Commemorative Partners along with almost all of the Veteran Administration State Directors. She explained that the reason we did not have all 50 states was due to the recent gubernatorial elections and the need to bring the new governors up to speed on the Commemoration program.

2. History and Legacy Update. Mr. Franklin informed that he had followed up on LtGen Christmas's recommendation to collaborate with the Witness to War project in Atlanta on our oral history project and that they were in fact going to support another round of interviews for us in July. He further explained that TV stations were offering to donate studio time to support this effort and that we would do another round of interviews with a Dallas TV station in August.

For new members, Mr. Franklin explained that we had changed the branch name from "history and education" to "history and legacy," as that really better represents what we're trying to achieve, which is to help the American public better understand the service and sacrifice of our Vietnam veterans and to ensure that legacy endures.

The Committee requested that at the next meeting a more comprehensive list of the topics / subjects of posters and displays that the history and Legacy Branch plans to develop.

Mr. Franklin also explained that following some criticism about the website timeline, the History and Legacy team was directed to obtain an independent review of the timeline by reputable scholars. We have completed one review and are incorporating those edits and looking for our second reviewer.

3. Strategy and Engagement. Mr. Waite explained that when the Commemoration stood up, we were planning on the Commemorative Partners from a grassroots level to assist in strengthening

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our ability to get the word out to the country about the Commemoration program, but that has not really taken off. We realized that we needed to develop a “vibrant, resonant national voice”.

He went on to explain that to date, we have thanked and honored 230,000 veterans across the country at those Commemorative Partner events that we know about, but we expect the numbers are actually higher, as there are Commemorative Partners who don’t always tell us what they have done for their Vietnam veterans, and so we have extrapolated from that data. (Refer to PowerPoint briefing graph).

Mr. Waite also provided the Committee statistics on the number of living Vietnam veterans. There are 316 million Americans living today in the 50 states and Washington D.C. and according to the VA, 7.2 million are Vietnam veterans. That means 1 in 8 Americans above the age of 65 is a Vietnam veteran and if you introduce gender, one in every three men over the age of 65 is a Vietnam veteran. The conclusion drawn from this is that we need to do a better job getting the word out, which comes back to developing a vibrant, resonant national voice. This was a good lead to the final topic, which addressed the Commemoration communication plan.

4. Communications Plan Mr. Waite explained that one way to strengthen our national voice was to develop and email a bi-weekly communique to our Commemorative Partners (CP) which we have called the VWC SITREP. To date we have sent out five issues. We use this as a way to keep our CPs informed about the Commemoration program and request that they keep us informed about events they conduct to thank and honor Vietnam veterans in their communities. We are currently sending these to about 12,700 separate email addresses, and discovered that about 1,000 of these email addresses were no longer valid, either because the original CP member had moved on or had changed email addresses.

Mr. Waite went on to explain that we also have Mr. Rhodes and MG(R) Jackson teed up for a radio interview with the VFW which has a listening audience of about 1.2 million.

He also offered a list of other efforts that we will take on as part of an overall communications plan. (Refer to PowerPoint Briefing slides), including providing the Committee members with approved talking points that they can take with them when they speak about the Commemoration efforts.

5. Advisory Committee Deliberation and Discussion

Mr. Bucha praised the efforts of the Commemoration for having achieved so much in such a short period of time, particularly the rigorous analysis and statistics that we developed to measure our success.

The following recommendations resulted from the FAC member discussion and deliberation:

1. The FAC members requested that we provide member biographies for each member
2. Look at civic organization to become CPs, such as the Rotary, Lions, Elks, etc.
3. Reach out to local PBS stations for possible airing of our material.
4. Provide a list of the projected new posters for potential development to next briefing update.
5. Tap into other organizations that are doing oral histories for possible collaboration.
6. Provide our plan for how we will use these interviews at the next meeting.
7. For History and Legacy, consider role that the draft played in the war and how we might convey this.

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8. Consider expanding our efforts to get more Congressional support...each Congressman connects with a certain number of voters.
9. Develop a plan for what we will do with all the records, materials, etc. at the end of the Commemoration.

**Closing Remarks and Adjournment**

At the recommendation of the Chairman, the DFO, Mr. Mark Franklin, adjourned the VWCAC June 8, 2015 public session at 4:30 PM.

I hereby certify, to the best of my knowledge, that the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.



Tom Ridge  
Chairman  
Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee

A copy of the Advisory Committee's briefing and these minutes may be found at  
[http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/vietnam\\_war\\_advisory\\_committee/](http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/vietnam_war_advisory_committee/)