

**Minutes from the Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee Meeting
Public Session
January 15, 2016**

The Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee (VWCAC) 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 VWCAC meets three times a year and held its fourth public session on January 15, 2016 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 PM at the U.S. Access Board, 1331 F St NW, Washington, DC, 20004.

VWCAC Members

Governor Tom Ridge, Chairman
Mr. Michael Gable, Designated Federal Officer (DFO)
Commander (R) Everett Alvarez
Mr. Rocky Bleier
Mr. Paul Bucha
Lieutenant General (R) George Christmas
Mr. Morton Dean
Ms. Jeanette Early
General (R) Larry Ellis
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:

Phil Waite
Devon Hardy
Yvonne Schilz
Mark Franklin
Larry Brom (Assistant Director)

Other Staff:

Major General (R) James Jackson (Director)

Public Session Attendees

5 members of the public attended the session:

Lacy Rourke
Karen Burce
Mike Bengé
John Supple
Marcia Moore
Jim Knotts

**Minutes from the Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee Meeting
Public Session
January 15, 2016**

Meeting Agenda:

8:30 a.m. – 8:40 a.m. **Convene with Committee Chairman Remarks**

8:40 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. **Committee Meeting / Agenda items**

- Commemoration Program Update
- Initial Discussion on Topics for Committee Recommendations
 - Developing a National Voice
 - Activities 2018-2025
 - Closing Event
 - Future Commemorations and Federal Advisory Committee Usage
- Closing remarks

11:30 p.m. **Adjourn**

PUBLIC SESSION

At 8:40 a.m., The Chairman, Mr. Tom Ridge opened the public session and began by explaining that while he appreciated the list of agenda items for the meeting, we had time to consider many of them later, and felt the focus of this meeting should be on developing a national voice to assist the Commemoration in getting the word out to the nation about our Commemoration program.

Mr. Rhodes took a few minutes to welcome the Advisory Committee and thank them for their efforts. He also passed on the well wishes of Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter, for a “productive and effective continuation of our commemoration efforts.”

Mr. Mike Gable (DFO) made administrative remarks and explained the procedures for conducting the meeting.

Staff Presentations

Members from the Vietnam War Commemoration presented the Advisory Committee the following updates and briefings:

Strategic Communications Update, presented by Mr. Phil Waite

Mr. Waite began by explaining to the Advisory Committee that we had broadened our vision to “inspire the country to thank and honor our Vietnam veterans and their families” and that we have added the tag line, “Join the nation, thank a Vietnam veteran” to our promotional materials.

He informed that to date we have thanked and honored 637,000 veterans, 463,000 families and presented 132,000 veteran lapel pins. He further explained the demographic distribution of Vietnam veterans and compared states with a high density of Vietnam veterans to the number of Commemorative Partner events that were conducted in those states as a method to better determine where we should focus our efforts.

Mr. Waite said that the Director, MG(R) Jackson and Mr. Rhodes have done seven interviews to include television, radio, print, and that Mr. Joe Galloway has appeared on NPR’s “Here and

**Minutes from the Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee Meeting
Public Session
January 15, 2016**

Now” to talk about our Commemoration program to a radio audience of approximately 12.7 million listeners. He further explained that we have provided media kits to the media that provide all of the data and the background and the fact sheets, as well as the Presidential Proclamation.

Finally, Mr. Waite said that the 2016 Communications Plan would include placing ads in a five-pronged media stream; Facebook, magazines, newspapers, radio, and television.

Joint Meeting of Congress Update, presented by Ms. Devon Hardy

Ms. Hardy provided a summary of the Congressional Ceremony that occurred on July 8, 2015. She said that House Speaker’s office was the sponsor and that while it was their event to thank and honor Vietnam veterans, we had much more input to the event than we originally thought.

She informed that we estimated approximately 500 to 700 attendees of which we presented more than 400 Vietnam veteran lapel pins. The Secretary of Defense was the keynote Speaker, and other notable speakers included the four leaders from the House and Senate, as well as former Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel. The Service Chiefs and senior enlisted advisors also participated in the event.

As a result, we received positive feedback about the event from a number of veterans and Congressional interest in our Commemoration program has increased significantly, with as many of 18 members of Congress signing up to become Commemorative Partners following the Congressional Ceremony.

Commemorative Partner Update, presented by Ms. Yvonne Schilz

Ms. Schilz updated the Advisory Committee on the Commemorative Partner program and stated that we now have over 9,000 Commemorative Partners. Additionally, as a result of an upcoming event hosted by the Veterans Administration, we have seen quite a number of applications come in literally overnight.

She also informed that we now have 46 of the 56 states, territories and commonwealths, and we are confident we will pick up the other ten when we meet with all of the State Directors at their annual meeting during their mid-winter conference next month (February).

Upcoming Major Events Update, presented by Mr. Larry Brom

Mr. Brom began by telling the advisory committee that for the calendar year 2015, the Commemoration had supported 2,398 Commemorative Partner events, which represents almost double the number of events we supported in the previous three years. This increase was due to an increase in the number of Commemorative Partners that have joined this national program. He also informed that the Commemoration provided staff support to 367 events and provided speakers to 263 of those events. He also confirmed that to date we have presented 132,000 veteran lapel pins.

**Minutes from the Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee Meeting
Public Session
January 15, 2016**

Mr. Brom went on to inform that the Department of Veterans Affairs is planning a major, nationwide event to recognize Vietnam veterans in over 530 facilities, and that the Commemoration will support that effort. He added that we will host a Pentagon Vietnam veteran recognition ceremony in the Pentagon courtyard this year and open the Vietnam War Pentagon Corridor Exhibit sometime in 2017.

History and Legacy Program Update, presented by Mr. Mark Franklin

Mr. Franklin presented an update on the History and Legacy program and began by stating that we had 206 video-recorded oral history interviews of Vietnam veterans and after next week we would have approximately 218 interviews when we conduct another round of interviews, including our Advisory Committee member LTG(R) Schultz.

He acknowledged the Advisory Committee's earlier comments about reaching schools throughout the country and explained that we have developed a teacher's tool kit, which is a guide to resources and ideas that are available on the web and elsewhere that focus on recognizing and honoring Vietnam veterans within the local communities, and focuses on service learning programs. He explained that most schools require a service learning / community service project as part of their graduation requirements, and many schools incorporate honoring, thanking, and recognizing veterans into their service learning programs. This 30-page guide will direct teachers across the country to those programs, where they exist, and how they can get involved. He also explained that D.C. Public Schools agreed to serve as the pilot for this tool kit and once they are finished evaluating and providing their comments, we will revise and take it to the next step.

Finally, he informed that he had been asked to sit on a panel for the American Historical Association annual meeting to explain how we use public history through our Commemoration program to bring the history and legacy of the Vietnam War veteran to the public. This was our opportunity to engage the academic community, some of which aren't always friendly towards our cause. A highlight of the conference was the realization that the historiography of the Vietnam war is evolving and changing.

Deliberation and Advisory Group Recommendations

Following the Commemoration update briefings, the advisory committee took a five minute recess from 0935 to 0940.

1. Upon return from the five minute recess, the DFO explained that we would address the other agenda items, specifically – the activities we might consider from 2018-2025; ideas for a closing event; and how DoD should conduct commemorative programs in the future – at a future meeting and would focus today on developing a national voice. He asked each of the members to consider their experiences with their organizations and how that could assist us with developing a national voice.

Minutes from the Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee Meeting
Public Session
January 15, 2016

2. The Chairman recommended the forming of a sub-committee that would assess messaging and integration in support of developing a national voice. He further recommended that Committee member Morton Dean chair the sub-committee and asked Messrs. Jan Scruggs, Don Clarke, Paul Bucha and anyone else interested to serve on the sub-committee. The Committee concurred.
3. Mr. Scruggs observed that many of the events that welcome home our veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan are led by Vietnam veterans and this demonstrates that the American public really embraces military service and military veterans. He recommended that we find some sort of a theme that can piggyback on that to elevate the idea of service, service to your community, service by being a Federal employee, and service by being in the military.
4. Mr. Dean relayed a conversation he had with one of the editors of Air & Space magazine who had been a very ardent anti-war protester during the Vietnam War, but had since changed her views about the veterans, particularly pilots, who she came to realize much later were, “. . . smart guys. . .and good guys.”. He opined that we should “enlist people to understand that those of you who fought in Vietnam were good guys. . .and you should be befriended and embraced.”
5. Others committee members recommended that when we develop a “catchy phrase” it should also be succinct, and sustainable to live beyond 2016 and 2025.
6. Mr. Clarke observed that it appears very little attention has been paid to Objectives 4 and 5 (highlight advances in science, medicine and technology and recognizing the contributions of our allies, respectively) and opined that there are resources out there that could be tapped to ensure we address these objectives adequately.
7. Mr. Bucha suggested that we consider encouraging large corporations to have events that celebrate “service before self” as opposed to celebrating ourselves, [Vietnam veterans] as that would establish our legacy. He further suggested that we hold our Commemorative Partners accountable to demonstrate that they are in fact conducting two events a year.
8. Brig.Gen.(R)Vaught observed that in addition to developing a national voice, we needed to find a way to convey that voice to the public. She offered that people today almost all use phones to communicate everything and suggested that we needed to develop an app that would assist us in delivering our message and provide the public better access to our Commemoration effort.
9. LTG(R) Schultz relayed a conversation with he had with a young student which convinced him that we needed to develop an app as well.
10. Mr. Belier suggested getting a corporate entity to sponsor a “Service Before Self” YouTube campaign where students could compete for cash awards, etc as it would be another way for us to tell our story.
11. LtGen(R) Christmas stated that if you wanted an example of the legacy of Vietnam, you only need to look at the success and professionalism of the Armed Forces today. The lessons of Vietnam were incorporated into an Armed Forces that have not only gone to an all-volunteer

**Minutes from the Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee Meeting
Public Session
January 15, 2016**

force, but as part of that all-volunteer force have also assimilated the families and created programs that have made our Armed Forces so much better and stronger.

12. MG(R) Jackson, Director for the Vietnam War Commemoration, offered his thanks and gratitude to the Advisory Committee for all they do and explained that we were working some of the issues that the Advisory Committee recommended in the meeting.

Outcome:

1. All members agreed that we needed to develop a “catchy phrase” [tag line] that captures the public’s attention, and that it should be succinct and sustainable.
2. The FAC created a sub-committee of six members to explore this topic in greater detail and report to the full FAC at the next meeting. The six members are Morton Dean (Chair), LtGen(R) Ron Christmas, Paul Bucha, Don Clarke, Jan Scruggs, and Ann Mills-Griffith. Preliminary topics for the sub-committee include: review of key messages developed by the VWC staff; identifying key groups for developing the national voice; and, recommendations for distribution of the messages.

A copy of the Advisory Committee’s briefing and these minutes may be found at http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/vietnam_war_advisory_committee/

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1130 a.m.

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