

The Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee

FY 2017 Report of Recommendations

Letter from the Acting Chairman, Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee

Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

NOV 28 2017

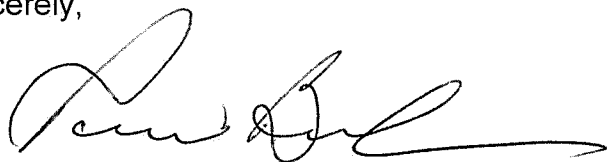
Dear Sir,

The Vietnam War Advisory Committee met on September 28, 2017 following an exercise given to members to individually evaluate the Vietnam War Commemoration Office's Conceptual Plan. We formed the attached report of recommendations with unanimous consent.

I am pleased to submit this report for FY 2017. As the Department plans the Committee's assignments for FY 2018, I would like to point out that the Committee requested more analysis as how to best address Commemoration objectives #2-4 for the remainder of the operating period for the VWC. These three objectives address the service and contributions from other agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and people on the home front during the Vietnam War, as well as the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during the War. It would be ideal to allow the Committee to provide more specific advice on these objectives upon receipt of further analysis.

Overall, the Committee recognizes the VWC has accomplished an enormous amount of work in a short time. The VWC will surely continue to diligently serve our nation through 2025.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul W. Bucha". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mr. Paul W. Bucha,
Vice Chairman of the Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee

BACKGROUND

This Vietnam War Commemoration was authorized by Congress, established under the Secretary of Defense, and launched by the President as follows: In 2007, the 110th Congress incorporated language in H.R. 4986 authorizing the Secretary of Defense to conduct a program commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War.

Congress outlined a total of five objectives for the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration, and the primary objective is to thank and honor Vietnam veterans and their families on behalf of the nation for their service and sacrifice. The four remaining objectives highlight the service of our Armed Forces and support organizations during the war; pay tribute to wartime contributions at home by American citizens; highlight technology, science and medical advances made during the war; and recognize contributions by our Allies.

The Vietnam War Commemoration Office (VWC) is the administrative backbone of the national Commemoration. The Secretary of Defense authorized the establishment of the Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee in January 2013 to gather advice on the Commemoration from Vietnam veterans, their families, and the American public.

This Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee Report reflects its independent evaluation of the Vietnam War Commemoration Office's 2018 – 2025 Conceptual Plan. The Conceptual Plan can be found on the next page.

The Vietnam War Commemoration Office is developing its 2018 – 2025 Conceptual Plan to provide direction for its staff, outline measurable goals (e.g. the number of Vietnam Veterans honored), and anticipate future budgetary requirements. An evaluation, with specific factors outlined below, is desired before finalizing the Conceptual Plan. The objective of getting an evaluation from the Committee on the Conceptual Plan was to gain an external, independent point of view from a group of individuals who represent Vietnam veterans, their families, and the American public.

The Conceptual Plan will document goals for significant future events and close-out activities to occur before closure of the VWC in 2025. Over the next several years, the VWC anticipates a focused outreach campaign to reach Vietnam veterans.

For the period 2023 – 2025, the VWC will encourage all states to host their own commemorative events as the VWC provides materials (e.g., Vietnam Veteran lapel pins) and advice to support their efforts. The VWC would also plan to sponsor a wreath-laying event at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 2023. A major, collaborative project would be planned for a national event on Memorial Day 2025 in an effort to reach a nationwide audience.



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION



Strategic Plan for 2019-2025

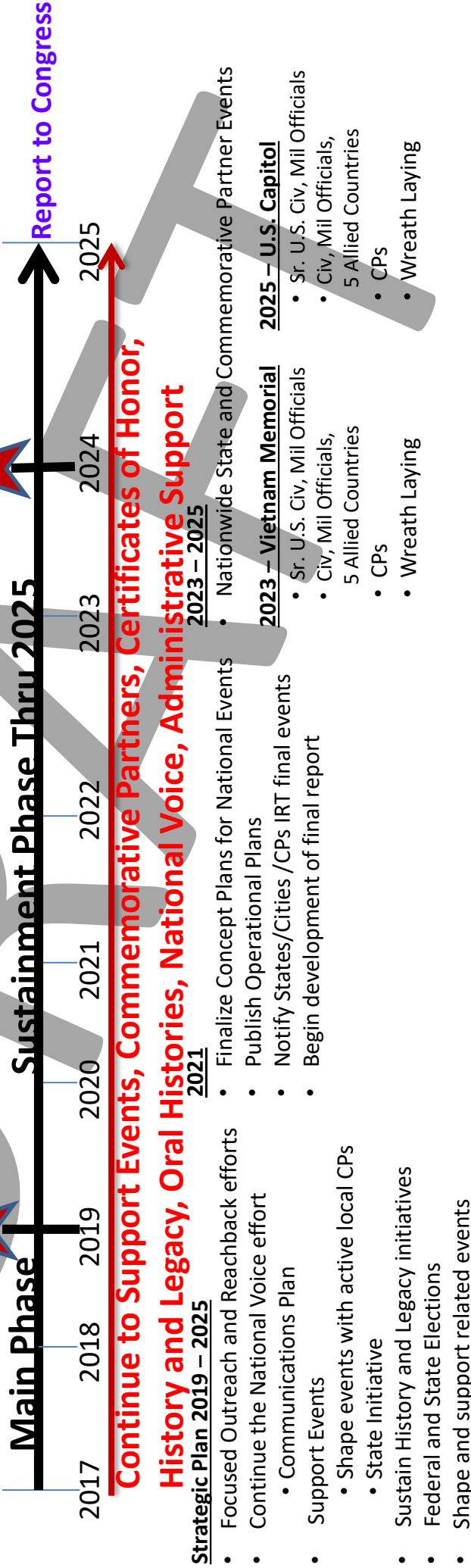
- 5 Congressional Objectives
- Primary Mission
- Define Success Criteria

Paradigm Shift

- 10,917 Commemorative Partners
 - 10,661 Events 2011 – 2017
 - 414 Oral History Interviews
- As of September 8, 2017

Concept Plan

- 2023 – 2025 Events throughout the Nation
- 2023 – National Event, Vietnam Memorial
- 2025 – National Event, U.S. Capitol ICW Memorial Day Concert



Continue to Support Events, Commemorative Partners, Certificates of Honor, History and Legacy, Oral Histories, National Voice, Administrative Support

Strategic Plan 2019 – 2025

- Focused Outreach and Reachback efforts
- Continue the National Voice effort
 - Communications Plan
- Support Events
 - Shape events with active local CPs
 - State Initiative
- Sustain History and Legacy initiatives
- Federal and State Elections
- Shape and support related events



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www.VietnamWar50th.com

The Committee's deliberation was conducted in compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

The evaluation factors were:

1. Relevance Evaluate and comment on the Strategic Plan as it relates to the requirements set forth in section 598(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 ("the FY 2008 NDAA") (Public Law 110-181), that the appropriate audiences are targeted, and that the focus is on the Vietnam veteran, rather than the Vietnam War, with sensitivity to the messages most likely to appeal to Vietnam veterans and their families?
2. Evaluation Factor: Cooperative Assets Evaluate and comment on the objective as it relates to developing and/or capitalizing on partnerships with groups most ideal to meet the requirements set forth in section 598(c) of Public Law 110-181, and how likely will the Strategic Plan obtain cooperation from groups most ideal to meet the requirements set forth in section 598(c) of the FY 2008 NDAA? What, if any potential partnerships are missing?
3. Evaluation Factor: Multi-year Goal-setting Evaluate and comment on the goals set over the 2018-2025 period as they relate to sufficiently and ideologically supporting the Commemoration's culmination in the 2025 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, with respect to the actual milestones of the Vietnam War and recognized holidays to likely meet the interest of Vietnam veterans, and if these goals properly align with the Congressional objectives in section 598(c) of the FY 2008 NDAA?

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Recommendations pertaining to Objective 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:

1. Place more emphasis on these populations in the VWC's messaging and events:
 - a. Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Families
 - b. Blue Star Families
 - c. Gold Star Families

Rationale: Overall, the VWC is doing a good job in reaching living Veterans and POW MIA families. The goal here is for the VWC to place more emphasis on reaching the families of deceased veterans.

2. After a review of current partnerships, make a greater effort to form new commemorative partners.
 - a. Avoid burdensome requirements to become a partner.
 - b. Develop messaging specifically for potential partners.
 - c. Involve individual Committee members in soliciting partnerships.
 - d. Identify partners that can maintain a significant and public presence through 2020.

Rationale: The relentless efforts to build commemorative partners has been very successful. Naturally this level of commitment has varied, but the numbers are remarkable. The momentum to find potential partners should not wane any time soon.

3. Take advantage of this period where numerous books and documentaries, not all of which are supportive of the Vietnam War, are widely available to increase outreach efforts. We should be able to arrange a public service announcement on the VWC's mission with major media companies like CBS or CNN. Examples:
 - a. *The Vietnam War*, 2017 documentary directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick.
 - b. Discussions/anniversary of the 1968 Tet Offensive.
 - c. Discussions/anniversary of the Paris Peace Accords.
 - d. *Phantom Force Revisited*; 2017 documentary by David Shoup.
 - e. *American Medevac*; 2017 documentary by Morton Dean.

Rationale: This set of recommendations is meant to encourage the VWC to seize the opportunity to get the message about the Commemoration out while the general public is paying attention to other major projects. These recommendations do not imply that there must be a partnership between the VWC and the sponsoring organization.

4. Strategize for repetitive VWC messaging and ceremonies to continue recognizing Vietnam War veterans.
 - a. Invest more efforts with the top 10% of partners that are clearly reaching our target objectives.
 - b. Encourage collaboration among partners, specifically smaller entities, to plan and host commemorative ceremonies.

Rationale: Like recommendation #3, the Committee believes the key to the VWC's success is a campaign that involves numerous entities working together for the same cause, with a common mantra to recognize Vietnam War veterans.

5. Provide information articles in popular veteran publications, such as Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association, Wild Weasels, Air Force Association, Army Times, Navy Time, and Air Force Sergeants Association. All service organizations should be included along with key organizations that have magazines such as the Disabled American Veterans and Paralyzed American Veterans.

Rationale: We know the VWC can easily reach Vietnam veterans who remain engaged with veterans' organizations. It is important to maintain a presence in publications frequently read by this audience.

6. The VWC should significantly expand the use of social media to reach target audiences.

Rationale: Unlike the veterans who remain engaged with veterans' organizations, the veterans who do not remain engaged with veterans organizations or the families of the deceased are harder to find. It is important to maintain a presence in popular social media to reach this largely younger demographic group.

7. The VWC is encouraged to post a list of what veteran interviews are available from various organizations.

Rationale: We suggest the VWC exchange products from its Oral History Program with those of the Armed Services and patriotic non-profit organizations

such as Witness to War. The VWC benefits by receiving interviews completed by other organizations.

8. Continue to encourage services to exhibit art at commemorative ceremonies. Select work from the Vietnam War era by the Army's Combat Artist Teams.

Rationale: The art works of Combat Artist Teams depict skills and knowledge of those who served in the military during the Vietnam War, and our appreciation for their contribution in preserving our U.S. military history.

9. Increase outreach through private family reunions to allow family members to honor Vietnam War veterans.
 - a. Encourage military bases to do community outreach.
 - b. VWC can give instructions to partners to encourage them to reach families through reunions.

Rationale: Many families designate at least three days annually to celebrate their family reunion. This is opportune to include a ceremony to thank and honor veterans in attendance who served during the Vietnam War era. Many of our Vietnam Veterans are not affiliated with Veteran organizations, neither are they engaged with popular social media, which makes word-of-mouth paramount. The presence of family at pinning ceremonies will greatly enhance the veteran's reception of thanks and appreciation for his/her service and sacrifice to our great nation.

10. Continued emphasis and outreach efforts through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the National Association of State Veterans Directors.
 - a. Collaborate on the VA's annual ceremonies honoring veterans.
 - b. The VA, working with local Veteran Service Organizations, has the ability to reach down to the local level in identifying and contacting these veterans, and their families. Focus on the Vietnam veteran. The families are going to help reach the reluctant veterans. With the decreasing population of Vietnam veterans, it is going to be harder and harder to find them. Five million veterans cannot be the sole responsibility of the VA. Also, the VA does not know how many vets are in each state.
 - c. National Association of State Veterans Directors can provide excellent information not only on states, but also the territories.

Rationale: The VA holds annual ceremonies honoring veterans, especially former POW's, throughout its vast system. The majority of patients for whom the VA now provides care in its hospitals and clinics are Vietnam War era veterans. The VA, working with the local veteran service organizations, has the ability to reach down to the local level in identifying and contacting these veterans, and their families.

11. Continue supporting traditional veteran organizations (e.g., Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Disabled American Veterans organizations.) with an emphasis of including families. The VWC should identify which organizations to support. Where national organizations do not give the local organizations support, the VWC should do so.

Rationale: Overall, the VWC is doing a good job in reaching appropriate audiences. The goal here is for the VWC to place more emphasis on these families in the Conceptual Plan.

12. Identify key dates annually and increase significant events around dates.
 - a. Join with VA to ensure that March 29 anniversary of the last United States troops left South Vietnam, ending America's direct military involvement in the Vietnam War. Focus on the Vietnam veteran. The VWC could do much to cement March 29th as Vietnam Veterans' Day.
 - b. Memorial Day.
 - c. November 11-19 highlighting Veterans Day and the Anniversary of the Wall.
 - d. POW/MIA Day.

Rationale: Currently, the VWC is taking planning events on a national and the local scale when it comes to holidays. These are excellent plans, but we recommend more promotion, particularly for Vietnam Veterans' Day.

All members unanimously approved the recommendations under Objective #1.

NOTE: The following recommendations under Objective #1 are being held for discussion at a later date:

- Culminate the Commemoration with a weeklong event at the Vietnam Memorial. Don't use a single holiday for the culmination.
- The Committee should provide advice on the design of one major, time specific event (day or week) to conclude the commemoration in 2025.
 - Seek an amendment to the Commemoration's statute, if necessary, to conclude this effort by 2020 or even 2023. A closing event as late as 2025 presents difficulty for maintaining interest and enthusiasm over a prolonged period of time.
- The Conceptual Plan should have a minimum of three phases. Recommend each year's activities be spelled-out by phase.

Recommendations pertaining to Objective 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:

1. The VWC Conceptual Plan should identify Federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental that served with or in support of Armed Forces. Continue efforts to recognize and acknowledge other agencies on the website. Focus on the Vietnam veteran, but through Federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations, particularly the State Department and sub-agencies like USAID etc.
2. Other strategic partners may be necessary to meet the requirements of Objective #2.

Rationale: The Committee does not believe the Conceptual Plan identifies the preponderance of Federal agencies and other organizations that served with or in support of Armed Forces.

All members unanimously approved the recommendations under Objective #2.

Recommendations pertaining to Objective 3: To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War:

1. The VWC Conceptual Plan should specifically continue to increase the recognition of the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War. Provide a study to inform the Committee on about activities of organizations such as Red Cross, USO etc. supported the Vietnam veterans and their families and those on active duty. VWC should provide recommendations on how to identify and address this objective.
2. Place more emphasis on these populations in the VWC's messaging and pinning events: See #1 also. Veterans who served between 1955 thru 1965 and were not actually in Vietnam: VWC could provide more information on this population.

Rationale: Objectives #3, 4, and 5 were written to cover what was not mentioned in objectives #1 and 2, that are more obvious in determining what must be done during a formal commemoration of war. All of these efforts help to rid the negative stigma of the Vietnam War. The VWC should provide more information on these objectives in its conceptual plan.

All members unanimously approved the recommendations under Objective #3.

Recommendations pertaining to Objective 4: To highlight the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War:

1. The VWC Conceptual Plan should identify and provide more detail on the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War.

Rationale: Objectives #3, 4, and 5 were written to cover what was not mentioned in objectives #1 and 2, that are more obvious in determining what must be done during a formal commemoration of war. These all help get rid of the negative stigma of the Vietnam War. The VWC should provide more information on these objectives in its conceptual plan.

All members unanimously approved the recommendation under Objective #4.

NOTE: The Committee requested further analysis from the VWC for the Committee to consider as how to best address Objectives #2-4 going forward.

Recommendations pertaining to Objective 5: To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War:

1. Continue to work with veteran service organizations and the U.S. allies to reach out to recognize their Vietnam War veterans, including those who served for the Republic of Vietnam and their families
2. Increase outreach to our Korean, Australian and New Zealand and other allies in the U.S.

Rationale: The VWC is handling this objective well, we recommend that it be continued and clearly addressed in the Conceptual Plan.

All members unanimously approved the recommendations under Objective #5.