



PERIMETER REPORT

Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, Inc.

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Together Then – Together Again

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The Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, Inc., established in 1986 in Brevard County, Florida is a non-profit, non-partisan organization of veterans, their families and supporters dedicated to perpetuate the spirit of patriotism, service and remembrance to and for those who have served our nation honorably, risking life and status to insure its principles endure.

Legacy



OIF Marines end operations in Iraq. With their departure this month (official end of duty was January 23) the Marines added some names, both places and personnel to their history book. Nasiriya, Fallujah and Anbar will someday produce volumes of reviews as did Khe San, Hue and Inchon. Obscure places such as Karabilah may have to wait, like Koh Tang, to be discovered by the public some decades later; if at all. But the Marine Corps will record them and those that fought there. Almost 900 lost their lives in Iraq.

In Iraq, selfless behavior was just as prevalent as in past conflicts but recognition was stingy. Cpl. Jason Dunham, *left*, was the only Marine awarded the Medal of Honor in the Iraqi theater. Sgt. Rafael Peralta, *right*, had his “downgraded” to a Navy Cross; a conundrum only Chesty Puller could fully appreciate. Neither man accepted the Honor. It was awarded to them by recommendation of their peers; the one’s whose lives were saved by Dunham and Peralta as



they laid theirs down.

It remains to be seen how much of the darker history will play out. Marine veteran Congressman John Murtha was out of the gate prior to the race to ruin eight fellow Marines in an episode now famously known as ‘The Haditha Incident’. Murtha, for whatever reason decided to use TIME Magazine’s corrupt sources to prosecute the Marines prior to any trial. All were acquitted but all were ruined. Murtha goes on, unapologetic. This Congressman eats his own, a rouge drift in a sea of honorable men and women.

In a sort of twisted tribute to the Armed Forces in general these days but to the Marine Corps in particular, a deluge of phony war veterans has become so prolific that Congress had to pass The Stolen Valor Act to slow it down. Today it is popular to be a veteran, even an old one! And the most popular veteran to impersonate is a Marine.

Why is that? Any given soldier, sailor or airman may surpass any given Marine in a situation where mettle must be tested. But only in the Marine Corps is the highest honor purposely given to the dirtiest job; an infantry rifleman. And all Marines are riflemen first. This is the most level playing field in any large American institution. This equality of status promotes a cohesion that can only be described as spiritual. Although there may be a misfit from time to time, this ‘equity’ bond is what requires fidelity not only to his fellow Marine but to his Marine Corps and its posterity as well. Once a Marine becomes one with his unit, his unit becomes the Marine along with all of its tradition, confidence and success. A Marine recruit is not a Marine until he proves he understands this.

But even this tight brotherhood has its heroes; and they are not Marines at all. The most respected men in the Marine Corps are Navy Corpsmen. The Marines have no medics since medics are traditionally non-combatants. For Corpsmen, the job is to enter the carnage to salvage what’s left, not to participate in its promotion. Navy Corpsmen are Marines by invitation –an exclusive honor. If a phony wants to stand out he should wear his store bought Medal of Honor on a Navy Corpsman’s uniform.

Semper Fi, Iraq Marine veterans, for a job well done. See you in the history books.

New Officers Swear In



New VVB Officers are installed at the January General Membership Meeting. From left to right: John Schaeferhip, Sgt@Arms; Greg Welsh, Membership Rep.; Ralph Earrusso, Treasurer; Floyd Merkle, President; Sue Merckle, Membership Rep.; Jacque Earrusso, Membership Rep.; Linda Marhon, Secretary/Quartermaster; Ken Baker, Membership Rep. and Billy valashinas, Membership Chairman. Swearing in the new Officers is Past President, Bill Vagianos.

President's Message

As the incoming President of the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, I would like to thank the membership for the opportunity of serving in this office. Along with my wife, Sue I have been a member of this organization since 1992. In that same year I assumed the responsibility of operating the Veterans Transitional Facility. My wife and I continued to be involved with the facility until 2008 when we both retired. It is my considered opinion that this operation is a really important service to our veterans and absolutely is one of the finest things this organization does.

I have attended the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard Reunion since 1992. This is an event that is second to none in this country. For this organization to be able to stage such an event every year speaks volumes about those who organize, staff and provide the hard work that it takes to make this event the only place my wife and I care to be at the end of April.

Finally, I watched this organization respond to a crisis regarding the availability of the Wall that honors our fallen comrades and is a crucial element of our annual reunion that creates a "connection" to the times, places and most importantly, to our fallen comrades themselves. A few personnel in the VVB made a conscience decision to create our own "Wall"; first of all, for our own Reunion but they now tour the country with it to allow other veterans to honor their sacrifice.

Under the leadership of Ralph Earrusso and Greg Welsh, the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall was designed, built and made its debut appearance at our Reunion---all in less than one year!

This is indeed a dynamic organization that provides crucial services to our veterans' community. I am privileged to be the President of the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard.



POW/MIA

Bo Bergdahl appeared on a tape Christmas Day. The tape identified the captors as the Mujahdeen of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Bergdahl went missing on June 30, 2009. On the video he appears in a U.S. Army uniform with helmet and sunglasses and disparages the US efforts in Afghanistan as might be expected while in the hands of Jihadists. A Taliban spokesman in the video, repeated demands for a prisoner exchange.. We were unable to find any sources to confirm or deny if any negotiations are underway. **Update, Feb. 6-** The European edition of the Stars and stripes reports that Bergdahl's Taliban captors have threatened to execute him unless the US releases Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani woman convicted in Federal Court recently of attempted murder against US soldiers in Afghanistan. Here again, the wisdom of treating wartime actions as civil crimes in open court is called into question. Sharia Law,

under which all militant Islamic groups operate does not recognize the fairness if any infidel trial. Nor does it recognize the right of any infidel to exist. Appeasing such insanity is insane in itself. The Geneva Convention was designed for civilized nations. Unfortunately, the US rarely finds itself engaged with civilized enemies.

However, the US does have citizens willing to give insanity the benefit of the doubt. It should ask volunteers from the John Adams Project to present themselves to the Taliban in exchange for Bergdahl.

Ahmed Ataie was 41 when he was kidnapped in Iraq. His capture is all but overlooked by press accounts of American POWs in Iraq. Army Sgt. Ataie (also spelled Ataaye as well as other derivatives) serving as an interpreter, was taken in October, 2006 and held for \$250,000 ransom. Ataie is an Iraqi who emigrated to England and later, as a teenager to Ann Arbor, Michigan where his mother still lives. The last known contact with him occurred in February, 2007 and came from a short, soundless video released by a group called Ahel Al-Biet Brigade. If there is a post 2007 up-date, I have not been able to find it.

HR 111- In what might be a mixed bag, President Obama issued an Executive Order (EO) on December 29 creating a Declassification Center. The goal is to shift the burden to the government to justify the need to keep documents classified. If the House ever moves on the establishment of a commission to study the POW/MIA issue, this could be the key tool in opening up the secrets to the Vietnam Era betrayal of those left behind. However, the President's promise of openness in government fell on its face in the health care non-debate.

Regardless, it is far better to have a commitment on record no matter how shaky, then to have none at all. There are also concerns that documents that shouldn't be released will be. The ACLU and other left wing groups are constantly digging for information that would jeopardize personnel involved in the anti-terror efforts. It would be ironic to find that this EO might aid in benefitting the search for those lost forty years ago and at the same time endanger those working on our behalf today.

Passings- Retired Air Force Col. Jack Pitchford died last December at the age of 82. He spent seven years as a POW in the Hanoi Hilton. Pitchford served with the Wild Weasels which flew low altitude missions to hunt down surface to air missiles. His brother Jim recalls another POW telling him that once, when it was Jack's turn to bless the meal he said, "Lord, we thank you for this dog@#%& we're about to consume and we ask you to come down and smite these heathen bastards."

Identified- The remains of Air Force Major Russell Goodman have been validated last month from excavations conducted for over a decade in Vietnam. He will be buried in Alaska. The DPMO also identified the remains of Army Specialist Lawrence Aldrich who was buried in Ft. Worth, Texas last month.

In House

Sickness and Distress- The VVB wishes the following members and their families a speedy recovery. For privacy reasons, details will only be disclosed with permission. If contact information appears, you may inquire.

**Deer Feher, John John Steer, John Barrett and Rod Smith
VVB member Ronald Kluewer of Cocoa passed away in November**

The 23rd Annual Reunion- (from Greg Welsh) - Well, it is getting closer to that time, The Reunion. We [the Reunion Committee] have started meeting twice a month. See calendars of events for dates we meet at Post 22 (back page). Also, February 20, 2010 we are having a work party at the bunker (1125 W. King St., Cocoa) and shirt folding. If you're free we can use the help.

I know it's hard to make all the meetings but if you want to help and can't make them, let me know and we'll sign you up when you're free to work. This Reunion is a big project and it needs all the help we can find. Remember, the Reunion is put on by the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard so come out and help.

As I travel with the Wall, you would be surprised how many people have come or want to come to it. People all over the United States know about it and they all say the same thing; either they heard or have said it is the best event ever. So let's make the 23rd [Reunion] one to remember.

Greg and his wife Mo manage the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall.

The VVB Awards event will take place this year on March 21 at the Veterans Memorial Center on Merritt Island. Each year the VVB honors those in the community for their support of our efforts to aid local veterans. The event is not public since space is limited but is open to all VVB members. Award recipients will receive an invitation in the mail. The event takes place between 1PM and 4PM where there will be finger food and refreshments.

Bunker Replacement progress is still on-going. The effort however, is fluid enough to make details sketchy. But things are moving.

General Membership Meeting High Points- Below is a review of the February 8 meeting that isn't covered above.

Honor Flight-Terri White was invited to speak to the members about her involvement in Honor Flights, an organization which arranges flights for WWII vets to Washington DC to visit the WWII Memorial. They are currently in the process of partnering with Valiant Air Command to get a 501c3 backing to begin fundraising for the flights.

There are over 60 chapters in the country conducting these flights and Brevard needs one of its own. As to why these vets can't fly out of the nearest existing chapter, Terri reminds us that these vets are in their 80s and 90s and the trip itself is grueling but worth the reward. Added travel of 100 miles means an even longer day for these men (and a few women).

Honor Flight will set up a booth at the TICO Airshow and at our Reunion to get the word out.

What can we do? Finding eligible vets in Brevard is one. Getting the word out is another. These flights take the veteran to DC at no charge but each needs an escort and that can cost some money. That can be reduced by having friends and family members contribute to the escort's expenses. These flights take place all in one day but Terri said her father took the trip out of Ocala and despite the exhaustion, her father had his day to remember. For more info, contact honorflightbrevard@gmail.com.

Posey's Reps- Congressman Bill Posey's commitment to veteran's issues is well known. With health care legislation scaring many vets and changing VA rules questions flooding his office he added a second representative to deal strictly with these issues. Both Chris Hill and the new rep., Marine veteran Rob Medina addressed the meeting. They gave a run-down of their availability to better address these issues. Anything from obtaining records to reviewing awards—literally any problem you have related to your military service they will make sure you get your answer. To test them out, contact Chris or Rob at 321 632 1776. Chris' e-mail Chris.Hill@mail.house.gov and Rob Rob.Medina@mail.house.gov.

The Veterans Transition Facility is 20 years old this year. Sometime after the Reunion we plan to do something about it. What exactly that will be, we haven't decided yet. Director Paul Whitmore reported that Florida Today spent some 3 hours there following the progress of one of the residents as well as getting a story on the facility itself. We don't know when the story will appear but it may be a Sunday feature. Look for it soon

Currently, there are 16 residents. One was successfully discharged last month as three more entered the program. Six residents are looking for work and we still need microwaves and convertible couches and chairs. Some of the donated furniture went to help the successful resident set up her new place. Clothing is the most donated item.

The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall- Greg's report appears above. At the meeting he confirmed that in spite of the economy, 2010 is booked. He's taking requests for 2011 now. When we first made the VTMW available for outside events the original intention was to keep it within the southeast US for economic reasons. Greg says that we get very few requests for the Wall in the southeast. However, all of his events are coordinated and travel planned to the hour so that extending the territory is financially feasible.

He had to turn down one event which we could have logistically covered. The problem occurred when it was discovered that the event was to set up the Wall within a boundary that required admission. The admission charge wasn't for the Wall but Greg's experience with these types of events is that they are too often misunderstood as a charge to see the Wall. "That's not going to happen," he says.

From his reports you really don't get a sense of how much work is involved to plan and coordinate these trips to make the Wall available to as many people as possible. Greg and Mo Welsh do just as much work on paper as they do on the road. Our Wall is in good hands.

Our New POW/MIA Rep. is Bill Sauerwine. He'll be keeping us updated on that issue. Since he's a military history book, I'll be tapping into his head for that information from time to time too.

Bill made an interesting point when filling us in on the latest POW information. It was, he said, the Vietnam Veterans who went after their own missing and captured. In no other conflict did that happen. Most veterans relied on their government to do it and trusted that it would do the best it could. It was the Vietnam veterans who preferred to do it themselves. The obvious reason was because of necessity and the complete lack of trust. But to add to Bill's observation, no other group of veterans were so abandoned by not only their government, but many of its citizens as well.

Those we left behind in Southeast Asia will never know how hard we fought to bring them home until they pass from this plane. And when they do, only they will know the specific individuals that fought so hard to keep them imprisoned.

The Memorial Gardens- John Schaefer's at work to finalize the etchings on the Vietnam Memorial at the Veterans Memorial Center in Merritt Island. Some months ago the membership voted to include a tribute to Able Monument and Wal-Mart. Together the two contributed almost the entire cost of the Memorial. That generosity, and it was substantial will be seen on the back of the monument.

The Reunion Committee is at full steam now. Chairman Ralph Earrusso told the membership if it wants to help, they'll get a job. No resume needed. The Reunion Committee meets twice each month, first and third Thursdays. Check the calendar or call Ralph at 321 453 7498.

Membership Chairman Billy Valashinas reports that we're still behind on renewals. Membership dues for annual members is \$15 and for those who find it difficult to meet that goal we ask you to send whatever you can. Make payments if you need to. The important thing is to keep you active. VVB President Floyd Merckle injected that we should be putting a priority on recruiting new members.

Part of the problem as Ralph put it, is few people know about us. So the call went out for all members to do what they can to spread the word. One way to do that is through the newsletter.

The Newsletter prints about 420 copies per month. There are approximately 250 local members and another seventy or so non local. We send newsletters to about 100 other organizations which include media outlets, government officials and other veterans groups.

It was decided that the newsletter should contain a short synopsis of the VVB and its activities to be part of the March and April issues. Sixty extra March copies will go to Greg Welsh to hand out at the TICO Airshow. About 150 extras will be distributed at the Reunion. The VVB promo will appear on the inside back page and we'll be eliminating the credits page. Anything related to the newsletter will appear in the content section. We may continue this promo indefinitely. This way you can tear out the back page and give it to someone who may be interested in joining. Since the VVB promo, the membership application and the contact information appears on this one tear sheet, you don't have to be a salesman. Just hand out the page.

I also put out a call for a 'buddy photo' to put on our Reunion issue cover. The photo must show at least three individuals in uniform. Any time period and any military uniform is acceptable. It does not necessarily have to be BDUs or combat gear. Keep in mind a good photo will have little background distraction and I'm interested in good, clear composition that represents the theme, 'Together then, Together Again'.

That wraps up the meeting high points but in addition, we plan to continue the meeting reviews (as best I can remember them) in the web issue. The newsletter is printed and distributed on the day the membership meets. We then have a week to discover and correct mistakes, pull or add content or update events before posting on the web. With the added meeting high points, members who cannot make the meetings can get a sense of what happened there. It won't substitute for attendance but it's the next best thing.

"Frequent Wind" comes up on its 35th anniversary in April. Were you there? If so, maybe you could write about it.

Another 35th anniversary comes up in May. The 'Mayaguez Incident' was the official end of the Vietnam Era. Ted Whitlock wrote about the Air Force role in that battle last year and I was with one of the Marine units only three weeks after the mission. Even so, I never knew until recently that three Marines were left behind on Koh Tang Island to be executed by the Khmer Rouge. Many people don't even recall the battle. But I'll be paying tribute to those Marines as well as the last 41 men on the Wall in the May issue. If you have some information either first hand or otherwise, I'd like to hear about it as soon as possible.

Check out the promo on the inside back page.

Regional News/Events

Homes for Our Troops for those that aren't familiar with it, provides homes or modifies homes for wounded veterans who need accommodations most of us never consider. Russ Gambill and his wife Carol head the local chapter and in 2008 brought volunteers together to build a specialized home for local vet, Russ Marek.

I asked him for periodic updates on HFOT's continuing efforts on behalf of wounded veterans and the following is his latest report:

As you already know Russ Marek's house was completed in Melbourne. There are two other projects in Florida, one in Wellington for Army SFC Steven Holloway and one for Army SSG Juan Roldan in either the Tampa or Orlando area whichever he decides. Their information is as follows:

SFC Steven Holloway was hit by a sniper when his patrol was to assist a deadly IED attack. Steven underwent several surgeries before being stabilized and transported to Walter Reed and eventually, Tampa VA Hospital. He has been left a paraplegic as a result of his injuries. SFC Holloway and his wife, Laurie and their three children presently live in a townhouse that does not have complete handicap accessibility. They are looking forward to living in a home that will allow Steven more independence.

HFOT has purchased a lot in Wellington Florida outside of the Royal Palm area. A general contractor has volunteered their services and well on their way to securing all the necessary contractors but are still in need of a few others. More information as well as how to help is at <http://www.homesfourtroops.org/site/PageServer?pagename=StevenHolloway>.

Army SSG Juan Roldan was left a double amputee above the knees after an EFP explosion in Sadar City, Iraq on December 29, 2006. SSG Roldan was a vehicle commander, on a patrol through Sadar City when an Explosively Formed Penetrator (EFP) struck the vehicle, immediately killing the driver and gunner and throwing SSG Roldan from the vehicle. Suffering from above the knees leg amputations, a spinal cord injury, life-threatening loss of blood and Traumatic Brain Injury, he says he owes his life to the quick thinking crew members who saved him. SSG Roldan enjoys spending time with his family, especially his daughter, Bryana. He enjoys skiing, playing basketball and lifting weights. Juan's goal is to be able to walk again and do everything in his life that at one point he thought he couldn't. He hopes to attend school and would like to work to help people who need assistance in the future.

HFOT is currently trying to locate a lot in either the Tampa area or Orlando area whichever suits his needs best. Please visit HFOT at <http://www.homesfourtroops.org/site/PageServer?pagename=JuanRoldan> to find out more on Juan and how to help.

Brevard News/Events

Brevard Stand Down- This annual event provides distressed veterans, primarily the homeless with services they have an otherwise hard time obtaining. While providing basics such as meals and showers, the Stand Down also gives the veteran an opportunity to seek benefits which he may be entitled to with the VA. The Brevard Stand Down is not a VVB event. It involves a number of veteran service organizations as well as the VA teaming up for a common purpose.

This year's event is to be held at the Cocoa Armory on March 20, from 8AM to 2PM. If you wish to help set up the event that will take place on the day prior, March 19 from 10AM to 6PM. A Stand Down planning meeting will be held at the Wickham Road Sonny's Bar-B-Q on February 16, at 5:30PM. Contact Bill Vagianos (back page) for more details.



The 2010 TICO Warbird Airshow is on for March 12 through 14. This year's theme is honoring the memory of those who served in Vietnam. It is the Valiant Air Command's 33rd annual show. The VVB will have a booth next to the Huey set up to hand out newsletters and answer questions. Greg Welsh will coordinate the crew to man the booth. If you want to help with the booth contact Greg (back page).

The event takes place at the TICO Airport in Titusville, 6600 Tico Road. The itinerary is jam packed for this event and we don't have the space to do it

justice. Visit the website at www.vacwarbirds.org or call 321 268 1941 for more info.

How's the Golf Game? Russ Gambill reports that the Viera East Golf Club has been having clinics for just veterans who like him can use a lot of help golfing. They have set aside four dates in the upcoming months strictly for Veterans, 03/13/2010, 06/19/2010, 09/11/2010, and 12/11/2010. The golf course has been very busy helping our Veterans as well as our troops deployed. Visit their website at <http://www.vieragolf.com/sites/courses/view.asp?id=784&page=47892>.

Welcome Home Vets (WHV) is an organization that supports active duty military men and women who are being deployed or returning home. They provide counseling for returning vets and their families as well to help them readjust to Stateside duty. If you want to learn more about them, their activities and mission they are planning a bowling tournament March 14 at Palm Bay Lanes. To participate contact, Ted Whitlock at twhitlock@cfl.r.com or 321 243 8919.

Zach Brady returned home (to Colorado) last month. He's the soldier who gave his mother, Tess a heads up on the needs of his fellow soldiers. In turn Tess called that need to our attention in a more personal way and inspired me to make it a priority in the newsletter.

You may recall that Zach was wounded and preferred to stay with his unit. He did for the last two months but had to return home for more surgery. Now he and his brother Doug, home for some R&R are doing the packages. They want all to know how much those packages are appreciated.

We'd like to remind you to remind your church or civic organization to get involved with this. They can call Emma Meisner at the Brevard Veterans Council at 321 453 1776 to find out how they can contribute. The guys in Afghanistan are living primitive.

Veterans News/Events

From the Non-Commissioned Officers Association (NCOA) comes the warning that veterans with Tricare will have their access severely restricted when Medicare payments are cut by 21% come March 1. A cap of \$1,860 went into effect January 1 for speech, physical and occupational therapy. A confident Congress thought

Why Your Tricare is in Trouble- (From a gov. press release) Brevard County FL - Following up on a whistleblower's complaint, the federal government spent more than a year investigating billing practices and medical records of Melbourne Internal Medicine Associates' cancer treatment center. The government filed its complaint in federal court in October and lawyers asked for extra time to finalize a settlement agreement with MIMA. The terms of the settlement are not known. The government is seeking to recover losses from false Medicare claims submitted "as a result of the sustained fraudulent course of conduct of MIMA and Dr. Todd Scarbrough, the former medical director of its cancer center. The government alleges the cancer center had "defrauded Medicare and Tricare through various schemes designed to improperly inflate the claims that MIMA submitted on behalf of (the cancer center) to Medicare." The investigation started with allegations made by Fred Fangman, the former director of radiation oncology at MIMA Cancer Center, in a whistleblower complaint in JUL 08. Fangman claimed Scarbrough filed thousands of false claims -- worth at least \$8 million and perhaps more -- in unnecessary radiation procedures from the time the cancer center opened in 2003 through 2008.

*Editor's Note: We have NOT contacted MIMA for a response. There are always two sides to any story and we will attempt to follow up next month. This local story was just one of many frauds **discovered** that we receive each month.*

“The Pacific” is coming to HBO on March 14. The production to complement the European Theater’s “Band of Brothers” is a ten part series that took nearly two years to produce. Capt. Dale Dye, USMC (Ret) was the technical consultant for the film which spared no expense to accurately portray the gear, the equipment, the setting and most of all the attitudes as they were when America struggled for its very existence.

I’ve always believed the most effective training tactic is to work from the inside out rather than the other way around. You can train actors to walk, talk, maneuver and handle weapons appropriately – and that’s been done by others before me – but the real convincing performances come from the heart and from places deep in the brain that are unreachable without full and complete immersion in the alien experience of intimacy, lack of privacy, total inter-dependency, deprivation, hardship and unselfish devotion to a larger ideal that only those who have served in the military can understand. The idea is simply to give the performers a large, unavoidable dose of experience with the way real military people must feel, think and function to survive.

Back Lines

President Declares War! President Obama, in a speech delivered on January 7th clearly stated, “We are at war. We are at war with al-Qaeda.” What prompted the revelation was the close to catastrophic mission of a jihad enthusiast called, among other things the Christmas britches bomber.

A Short History of Declaring War

A formal declaration of war may forever be a concept of history. These declarations date back to chivalrous times when it was considered dishonorable to attack an enemy without letting him first know he was vulnerable. A subsequent victory would be considered honorable in the sense that it was a fair fight. But such chivalry was confined to European nations. When barbarians attacked, they sent no advanced notice. That’s why civilized nations adopted the term ‘barbarian’ to describe---well, to describe barbarians.

A barbaric act and its ensuing consequences were something the Japanese hoped to avoid prior to their attack on Pearl Harbor. They fully intended to make such a declaration of hostilities to America 30 minutes prior to the attack. Unfortunately, their two top diplomats, the only two privy to the intended declaration, were horrible typists and did not get the notice translated and delivered until well after news of the attacks reached Washington. In his war declaration address to the nation on December 8, Roosevelt called the attack ‘unprovoked and dastardly’ implying the Japanese were ‘barbaric’. Such rhetoric stirs the emotions. Any notion of a negotiated peace with dastardly barbarians was discarded. All focus and effort was applied to the total defeat of this enemy and their German allies who declared war on America the next day.

We can only speculate on the turn history may have taken had Japan assigned a diplomat who could type but it is a fact that when Admiral Yamamoto heard that the attack had been delivered prior to Japan’s intentions being conveyed to the Americans, he said to his staff, “Gentlemen, I regret that all we have managed to accomplish is to have awaked a sleeping giant.”

Yamamoto himself was assassinated in 1943 by American P-38’s after it was discovered that he had planned the Pearl Harbor attack. Up to that time, the assassination of an enemy military commander was a rare and consequential decision. But such was the animosity generated by an ‘undeclared’ attack.

In contrast, the last formal Declaration of War by the U. S. was against Romania in 1942 which had a wishy-washy alliance with Germany. Hardy anyone noticed.

When North Korea invaded the South the UN Security Council, absent the Soviet Union authorized member nations to ‘legally’ come to the aid of South Korea. Fifteen nations responded. Oddly, President Truman declared a ‘Police Action’ apparently afraid the ‘war’ word would set off the Soviet Union and China. If so, it was a wasted effort. China and the Soviet Union involved themselves anyway rendering the declaration absurd for the carnage it would generate. Ask a police force to save a nation? Why would you need an army?

In Truman’s defense, the Soviet Union had acquired nuclear capability a year earlier and Stalin was still in charge. In weighing the circumstances at the time, Truman may have averted some substantial carnage because he was dealing with an insane man with a nuke and another Chinese murderer with a two million man army of stick wielding cannon fodder to back up his professional army.

However, Truman set a modern precedent to go to war in a foreign country with no intention to conquer an enemy’s territory or save our own.

There was an earlier instance were America invaded a foreign country with no intention to occupy it known as the Barbary Wars.

In 1786 America had won its independence from Britain and lost its protection from pirates looting ships along the North African coast. These Mussulmen, as Muslims were called at the time, were running an extortion racket which the U. S. was paying to protect our merchant shipping in the Mediterranean. `

Shortly after Jefferson became President this practice came to an end when the extortion fees increased and Jefferson stopped payment. In response, the Pasha of Tripoli declared war on the U.S. Jefferson did not formally respond with a declaration of war but

sent the Navy in and crushed the bandits. It was the first overseas military action by our new country. So early in our history we have gone to war, overseas, with no formal Declaration of War.

Formal declarations of war between hostile nations serve to rouse the citizenry, prepare them for sacrifice (which includes by necessity, limitations on civil rights) and spur their participation in the war effort. This formality can be powerful in that it opens the door to prosecute sedition and treason. A declaration of war defines the enemy and the legal and illegal associations by the citizenry toward the defined enemy. However, if proposed military action overseas is not expected to affect the home front adversely, why make such a declaration?

The problem occurs when the expected limited military action morphs into full blown, long term military participation which all recognize as war. During the Korean 'Police Action' there were few Americans who did not know our enemy was communism; and most could see that the 'Police Action' was a real war. But our citizenry wasn't as inconvenienced as it was during World War II, a memory only five years old at the time. There was no 'win or perish' mindset during the Korean 'Police Action'.

It was a 'resolution' that began the ground war in earnest in Vietnam. Again, there was no intention to conquer an enemy but rather to save an ally. Again, our enemy was communism. A slow escalation coincided with massive social change in America itself. With the help of a very clever enemy who was outgunned on the ground but virtually unopposed in public relations, a loud minority of the American citizenry forced its leaders to consider abandonment of the effort or at the very least to force restrictions on its conduct.

The snowball continued to roll as incredibly ignorant rules of engagement gobbled up more and more American soldiers to be recorded and broadcast by American TV crews. Communists could launch attacks from safe havens in Cambodia but the American military committed a criminal act when it went in after them. America 'violated' a neutral country, a country that harbored another country's soldiers who were attacking America's soldiers. How does that work? After years of televised carnage and incompetent leadership America wanted out.

On the other side, the communists cared little about manpower losses. They cared about power. The brilliance of the communist PR campaign was obvious as early as 1968. The Tet offensive was a disaster for communist forces but a complete victory for their PR department. Their atrocities were ignored by the American press but it did report that America couldn't even secure its own Embassy.

Peace talks began that year in Paris; between the U.S. and North Vietnam. South Vietnam wasn't invited. That in itself was a North Vietnamese victory handed to them by Henry Kissinger. "You see, peace loving comrades of the socialist states, Americans *are* imperialists and their ally really *is* their puppet," is the message the communists seized upon and used with great success.

It can only be speculated on how the war would have turned out had President Johnson declared war on North Vietnam. The Gulf of Tonkin incident however, was no Pearl Harbor. Even a Korean comparison falls short. With the exception of the Easter Offensive in 1972, North Vietnam never made a conventional, world waking invasion of the South. Ironically, America's 'puppets' beat back that attack with only an American skeleton crew on the ground, air power and funding. A gutless Congress cut off all funds for South Vietnam and removed all American soldiers in 1973 and it still took two years for the North conquer them.

Vietnam's Pearl Harbor moment probably came during the Tet Offensive. However, it is doubtful the American press would have reported the multitude of communist atrocities our troops saw after that event even if they were dragged there. It is doubtful too, that Johnson had the fortitude to lead on the issue. Vietnam interfered with his Great Society for which he wanted to be remembered.

Commanders on the ground knew how much damage had been inflicted on the communists after Tet and the communists; far after the conflict tell us so. If the politicians didn't know, they should have. North Vietnam agreed to 'peace talks' that year.

Who knows how history could have been different on this particular war? Who knows how the undeclared Barbary War would have turned out had it escalated in comparison to Vietnam? These two undeclared wars are similar in that they occurred gradually over time with no real detonator to define the moment America should be asked to sacrifice. Where they diverge is in their prosecution. Jefferson was a leader who saw a problem, made assessments on his means to fix it and did so with no hesitation. Johnson and Nixon were forever pandering to popularity or in the latter case, trying to avoid unpopularity. Vietnam escalated because there was no intent to pay the costs necessary to destroy the problem, only diminish it for the next administration to deal with. In the end the problem multiplied and the costs far exceeded the original estimate. This Vietnam legacy has important and ominous implications today. Unfortunately, no Jefferson's are in our foreseeable future.

Ambiguous War/Friendly Enemy

Although our subsequent conflicts which required military solutions had goals, most of which were clear (a notable exception was the use of the military to secure the kidnapping of a foreign leader, Panama's Noriega); two incidents in post WWII history should have been candidates for a Formal Declaration of War.

The first occurred in November, 1979 when the newly installed Islamic revolutionaries invaded America and seized its citizens. That is what Iran did when it overran the American Embassy in Tehran. A State of War could have been declared within days. However, this was only four years after the Vietnam War ended and Jimmy Carter was President; two unfortunate confluences that worked against a determined response.

From their first victory then, jihadists expanded worldwide in a gradual creep. Al-Qaeda formally arrived a decade later to become the face of jihad, established its independent franchises, created its spectacle and now begins its formal fade. It now has volunteers it never heard of. It will eventually dissipate into an idea.

The second and more destructive Pearl Harbor occurred on 9/11. It took a while to figure out who was behind the attack, at least publicly. Privately, almost two-hundred Saudis and their entourage were flown out of the U.S. when *all* flights were grounded. This is a common point made by '9/11 truthers' to justify their theory that the Bush Administration knew about the planned attack. The more thoughtful truth is that the Bush family has had close relationships with the Saudi Royal family dating back to the 70s. An

exhaustive study of pre 9/11 actions by U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies indicates that it was known that an Islamic storm was gathering all though the Clinton Administration. Inter-department rivalries, arrogance, ignorance and career cover ruled these agencies and a weak political will contributed to the *surprise* 9/11 truly was—at least in its scale.

President Bush acted consistent with his and his country's convoluted and sometimes conflicting relationship with the Saudis. Saudi Arabia is a cesspool of Islamic dirt. But it is also harbors two of Islam's holiest sites. A reluctance to crack down on a nation with so much significance to moderate as well as jihadist Muslims is pragmatic and understandable even if it is detestable.

The Enemies Among Us

What is not understandable is why we allow jihadist training camps (some 35 known) to operate on U.S. soil. Corrupt Mosques, Islamic charities and schools still preach hatred and murder with impunity here. Last year militant Muslims held a hate convention in Chicago. On the streets of New York they were found praising the Ft. Hood shooter. Islamic finance is being taught to U.S. government officials and AIG offers home insurance policies governed by Sharia law. Why? Who's our enemy?

Bush declared war against al-Qaeda and nations that support it. He pursued a course of action overseas which appear to be consistent but under closer scrutiny is baffling. What would be the reaction if Roosevelt allowed the Japanese to operate a boot camp in Sacramento in 1942? How about a Nazi school of eugenics in Philadelphia? Then why do we let people who have declared their dedication to our destruction, who are allied with and supporting those that are actively engaged in that pursuit operate much less breathe on our soil?

So we declare war on al Qaeda and continue to let jihadists train here?

Mr. Obama's assertion that we are at war is significant only in the fact that we now know he understands the word; upgraded from 'overseas contingency operation'. But does he understand what it means?

Declaring war nine years after the fact is like putting cheerleaders on the field nine hours after the game. Who do you expect to motivate? And what about our enemy? Who is he? Al-Qaeda?

Hardly. al-Qaeda is only a thick spot in an expanding mist called jihad. Jihadists are our enemy; here, there, everywhere. Anyone who funds, trains, recruits, transports, supplies, praises or proselytizes on behalf or in support of an Islamic holy war directed toward America or its interests is our enemy. Our enemy can be defined even further by his motivation. **Our enemies are Islamic Jihadists dedicated to the spread of Islamic Sharia law to undermine and replace Western democratic principles.** These include American citizens, the *domestic enemies* all military and elected officials swear to protect the Constitution *from*.

The Enemy Beyond

America's reluctance to recognize our enemy is based in our own traditions of religious freedom guided by secular principles. We do not understand that traditional Islam makes no distinction between politics, governing and faith. Clerics wield immense power, even over life and death. In the mid-80s the Wahhabi imam Abdul Aziz bin Baz withdrew his fatwa against those who believed the earth was round when a Saudi prince who had been part of a Space Shuttle *Discovery* mission convinced the cleric that the earth really was round. Such absurd ignorance is a formidable check on more mature, rational Muslims. Absurd ignorance is not a Muslim exclusive. The West has thought crimes too.

European Christianity had similar irrational and deadly practices prior to Martin Luther's very public objection that started the reformation. Islam has had no reformation.

WWIII

In hindsight, WWIII formally started with the Iranian revolution but few recognize that fact. The invasion of American soil (its Embassy) was an act of war. Here the jihadists named their enemy, The Great Satan—America. The Israeli-Palestinian issue was assigned its due relevance; that of a local battle. We aided this enemy in its first hot war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan because we thought the Soviet Union was our greater enemy. Few considered the price of victory; an American armed jihadi army with nothing to shoot at.

Throughout the 90s we monitored the steady drip against the hillside and argued about its meaning and whose responsibility it was to stop the drip. While still pointing fingers at each other, the landslide that is 9/11 broke.

Our military fights the hot war but we are involved in all-out war as well. This involves the home front and requires vigilance to guard our finances, industries and our people for they are important targets of jihad. But the most coveted target for which jihad cannot succeed if it remains intact, is our freedom to think independently; the base of our freedom itself. This war may ask us to limit some freedoms from time to time to safeguard its full return when the danger is over.

The Enemy is Sharia/ Their Defeat is Islam

If carefully pursued, this war may serve as the vehicle for an Islamic reformation. Already there are signs that modern Muslims are not happy with 7th Century barbarity. Those signs come from the very place where WWIII started—Iran.

It is not a good sign to modern Muslims if we treat barbarians with dignity because mature Muslims are the only effective weapon against al-Qaeda's idea. It may be too late to declare war to gain the advantage such a declaration traditionally secures. But it is not too late to formally define the enemy in terms both friend and foe can understand; and in particular those ambiguous foes that resent Sharia required beheadings for eating chocolate, attending a dance or seeing a movie. It's time to let mature Muslims know that their fight is our fight and we do that by defining our enemy precisely. That assures mature Muslims that we are not fighting their faith, only the interpretation that enslaves them. It will be those Muslims that lead their faith to reform and woe be to the West if it ever abandons them. They're the only ones that can win this war and defeat their tormentors and the residue of al Qaeda—its idea.

A Torturous Look at Abuse- A look at the military's abuse policies and how they are handled makes a confusing story. Three Navy Seals have been charged with abusing the leader of the group that captured, murdered and mutilated four Blackwater employees in Fallujah, Iraq in 2004. One of the Seals is charged with punching terrorist Ahmed Hashim Abed in the gut after he was captured after a four plus year hunt.

Special Operations Commander, Army Maj. Gen. C. T. Cleveland decided to push for formal prosecution of three Seals when they refused NJP (administrative discipline). Those trials have been pushed back when witnesses hired their own attorneys and refused further cooperation with the prosecution.

With the Navy Seals awaiting their fate, the fate of Brandon Neely, a former guard at Gitmo in 2002 seems to be secure. In December 2008 he came forward with tales of abuse of Gitmo detainees in a pitch to The Center for the Study of Human Rights in the Americas (CSHRA). He did an interview with Harper's Magazine in February 2009 and has had numerous friendly articles written about his experiences since; mainly in left wing publications. Last month he appeared on BBC television in London with two of his victims to issue a personal apology. Neely's story came out in 2008, three years after his discharge and a year after refusing to report for reserve reactivation.

One gets a sense of his complaints in the original source, the CSHRA interview where most of his stated observations are believable but hardly the horrendous torture subsequent stories embellish. At the time of his arrival at Gitmo, January 7, 2002 we were only a few months past 9/11 and hardly had a handle on the scope of the enemy we faced. Many a veteran who went through boot camp can relate to the torture Neely describes in the CSHRA interview.

From various reads, Neely seems to be suffering from PTSD and his Gitmo duty may have contributed. But all guards regardless of conscience are sworn not to disclose their experience at Gitmo for a reason; and that reason is Abu Graib. There are few incidents that set back our efforts with moderate and friendly Muslims more than the Abu Graib photos. Some of those soldiers were prosecuted but not all, not high enough and not as long as they should have for the damage they caused to our war effort.

Neely's conscience should have prompted him to report the abuses as they occurred, not years after the fact. No soldier is expected to obey an unlawful order. Had he believed his orders to have been so, he should have made that plain when they were issued.

There are two primary reasons Neely does not face prosecution (which would occur in civilian courts now); 1) his prosecution would open a can of worms on torture at Gitmo and 2) there was no torture. From Neely's own interview taken in context with the time of the event, lawful orders were vague. It would be just as easy to find him guilty as not. It was an ambiguous time.

But Neely is guilty of disclosing operations he was sworn to conceal. His invitation to take his show on the international road to London last month could be a precursor to a book deal and a major propaganda coup to our enemies and their supporters. If he's guilty of anything, that would be it.

Update: In a Virginia Pilot article dated January 11, it was reported that the military judge, Navy Cmdr. Tierney Carlos (a man) presiding over the trials of the three Navy Seals ordered the courts-martial moved to Camp Victory in Iraq. The reason? Authorities will not allow the terrorist the Seals allegedly abused to testify in the States. In fact, they won't let him testify at all. He can only be deposed. So the Navy will send the accused Seals to Iraq to face their accuser. It gets better.

As of this date it appears that the court's order was rescinded by the 'convening authority', Army Maj. Gen. Charles Cleveland. Since the Seals have a right to face their accuser and the accuser and the defendants are not going to get together, then the charges have to be dropped, right? Wrong. Now it has been determined that Abed wasn't the original source of the accusations. The original sources now are other military men who saw the 'attack' and first reported it. This way Abed doesn't have to participate at all and the trials can go on. Two are scheduled for April and the other for May.

Danger Close

Psychopaths Anonymous- When the President declared war on al Qaeda on January 7, we made an effort to try to define them. This is the closest we could come:

Alcoholics Anonymous is the organization we found that most closely resembles al Qaeda. In AA you will find the leadership in New York sitting on the Board with their identities fully displayed as the law requires. In aQ the leadership is well known but they keep moving their offices.

AA members are unknown, even to their leadership. So is aQ.

Some AA members are known to the general public but they still keep their activities obscure. So too, do aQ members.

AA does not issue membership cards. Neither does aQ.

AA is fully self-supporting. So is aQ.

There is no registry of AA members. They may leave and return at will. So too, aQ.

Each AA group acts with autonomy and limits coordination with other groups. The same with aQ cells.

AA is worldwide and its members could be your next door neighbor or your airplane pilot. As with aQ.

There is a big difference between the two however, pertaining to goals. AA promotes anonymity to protect members on their way to recovery and to encourage humility. aQ promotes anonymity to keep from being discovered while planning to kill you.

If al Qaeda is our enemy and there are known militants in contact with al Qaeda even within our borders, why don't we kill them? The Taliban are not al Qaeda as far as we know. Why are we killing them with drones?

The President named our enemy. So who are they---really?

The Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard --- About Us

A small group of Vietnam veterans in Central Brevard started to meet in 1985 to help each other to deal with lingering issues from the Vietnam War. In 1986 it developed a philosophy and a purpose to attract other Vietnam vets and formally organized. The primary goal was to assist other veterans. The camaraderie was the glue that developed into a program to help those with PTSD symptoms and the concomitant problems associated with it such as substance abuse and homelessness.

An area of great concern was the POW/MIA unresolved problem and the actions of the government to deal with it honestly. It is still a frustrating matter that we continue to pursue.

Within two years, the VVB organized and hosted its first Vietnam Veterans Reunion. This event eventually became famous throughout the country and is still one of, if not *the* most premier event of its kind. After the Gulf War it became evident that the problems faced by Vietnam veterans were not much different than those faced by subsequent generations and we began a systematic effort to welcome all veterans into the VVB. We changed our name in 2000 to reflect that commitment when the Vietnam Veterans of Brevard became the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard (we still abbreviate to VVB to, well, to abbreviate).

From the start efforts were made to find a place for distressed veterans to go to regroup and get back on their feet. The story cannot be told in this brief synopsis but suffice it to say, we stumbled our way to it. In fact, we did it ourselves and the hard work and perseverance of those who got it off the ground cannot be understated. We call it the Veterans Transitional Facility and over the past twenty years it has helped thousands of local vets, which include their families, get back on track. Today the program houses 20 vets and their family members at any given time and sets the pace for a smooth transition back into the mainstream of life. Those that have taken advantage of the opportunity never forget.

Our Reunion depended on various organizations to provide the sacred centerpiece, a mobile Memorial Wall. Getting those commitments coordinated were sometimes nail biting scary. In 2005 we came close to not having one; so we made one. In less than a year, with the committed efforts of several local businesses, Brevard citizens, a laid off vet and other VVB volunteers we had our own Wall in less than a year. It debuted at our Reunion in 2006. In addition, we make The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall available for other events throughout the country.

Those are the stars of the VVB but in no way are the only services we offer to the veteran community here in Brevard and even beyond. We have a Color Guard and Rifle Team who manage to come together for local events and memorials in spite of the fact that they must coordinate their own work schedules to accomplish those duties. We provide veterans to speak to school students about the experience of war firsthand, beyond what they find in the history book. There is a mobile museum available for community events where citizens can touch the experience; even smell it. Our newsletter has been published since day one and is the source for other events, projects and activities in which we and other veterans groups are involved.

So what about membership? The most common theme heard at reunions for not joining is—I'm not a Vietnam vet. But that isn't a requirement to join. We are an organization dedicated to the support of our local *veteran community*. A veteran who served in peacetime, a veteran's family and any citizen that wishes to lend hands-on support of veterans is part of that community. The Vietnam veterans who started the VVB never intended it to be an exclusive club. They recognized that family members and friends were also affected by the times in which the War took place and as we grew, new generations and their families were welcomed as their own Eras unfolded.

The only requirement for membership in the VVB is a \$15 check and a desire to support your veteran community. Many members will assist at the reunion. Others find they're best suited for other activities. So if you like what you've read so far, give Membership Chairman Billy Valashinas (back page) a call or fill out the application below and join; even if it's just to stay informed through the newsletter.

For more about us and our work check out the website www.vietnamandallveteransofbrevard.com.

--The Membership

2010 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION - CHANGE OF ADDRESS - RENEWAL FORM VIETNAM AND ALL VETERANS OF BREVARD, INC. 1125 W. King Street - COCOA, FL 32922-8505

Membership in the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard is open to all concerned at a yearly fee of \$15 (Jan-Dec).

After July 1 all new members \$10. You need not be a Veteran to join, but if you are, we need a copy of your DD-214. We also have a Life Membership for a non-refundable fee of \$175, prorated with age 55-64 \$125 age 65 and up \$75.

() - 2010 Membership \$15

() - Life \$ _____

Name (As listed on card) _____ Spouse _____
Address _____ Home Phone _____
City _____ State _____ Zip+4 _____ Work Phone _____
Occupation _____ E-Mail Address _____
Branch of Service _____ Rank _____ Dates _____
Units in Service _____
Location in Service _____ Dates _____
Birth Dates: Self _____ Spouse _____ Kids _____
Marriage Anniversary Date _____ Recruited In VAVB By _____
Comments _____ Member # _____

O - I Do Not Want To Join Now, Send Me Your Next Newsletter So I Can See What the VVB Is All About

2009 VVB Officers

***President:** Floyd Merckle 264 0581 ***Vice Pres.:** Don Wassmer 726 6752 ***Treasurer:** Ralph Earrusso 453 7498
Secretary/ Quartermaster: Linda Marhon 453 9824 ***Sgt. @ Arms:** John Schaefer 504 7680
***Membership Reps.:** Jacque Earrusso 453 7498; Sue Merckle 264 0581; Rod Smith 632 6702 ; Greg Welsh 501 6896;
Ken Baker 632 4928 ***Membership Chairman:** Billy Valashinas 323 6475 ***Past President:** Bill Vagianos 431 0364
***Chaplain:** Jim Peterman 635 8911

Contacts and Locations

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VVB Transitional Housing Facility: 700 Fee Ave., Melbourne 32901; Ph. 321 409 8167
Veterans Memorial Center: 400 S. Sykes Creek Pkwy., Merritt Island 329953; Ph. 321 453 1776
Titusville Veterans Memorial: Bob Socks bobbysocks@cfl.rr.com; 321-848-1630
American Legion Post 22: 241 Peachtree St., Cocoa 32022
Melbourne Vet Center: 2098 Sarno Rd., Melbourne 32935; 321 254 3410
VVB Annual Reunion: Wickham Park, Melbourne; (Entrance on Parkway Drive between Wickham Road and US 1). Ralph Earrusso Ph. 321 453 7498; e-mail: Daydrmr333@aol.com
Brevard County Veteran Services Team: 321 633 2012
Veterans Administration, Viera: Benefits Information, Ph. 321 637 3693; Patient Advocate, Ph. 321 637 3788 X 3534
Rifle Team: Bob Bodine; 321 242 1904, kbob4wic@juno.com
Color Guard: Tom Hart; 321 254 3514.
School Speaker Program: Rod Smith; rsmith2580@bellsouth.net; 321 632 6702
Perimeter Report: (VVB Newsletter); e-mail; hancrafters@bellsouth.net



Florida's 23rd Annual Vietnam & All Veterans Reunion April 22nd - 25th, 2010

Memorial Walls April 18- 25, 2010 At Beautiful Wickham Park, Melbourne, Florida
Wall Escort 10AM, April 18, 2010 - Web Page: www.floridaveteransreunion.com
Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall - Web Page: www.travelingwall.us

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