



PRESS RELEASE

Vietnam Veterans of America

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Vietnam Veterans of America to Hold National Leadership & Education Conference in Palm Springs, July 25-28

(Washington, DC)--Vietnam Veterans of America will hold its biennial National Leadership & Education Conference in Palm Springs, California, July 25-28. Hundreds of Vietnam War veteran leaders will come together at the Renaissance Palm Springs Hotel to take part in seminars, meetings, and other activities, including the Saturday night Awards Banquet. VVA's affiliate organization, the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, is cosponsoring the conference.

Vietnam veteran Rick Francona, a retired U.S. Air Force intelligence officer and renowned on-air TV Middle East analyst, will deliver the Keynote Address at the opening ceremonies on Wednesday morning, July 25. Col. Francona served most of his 27-year career operating in the Middle East. He has worked with the NSA, DIA, and the CIA, dealing with crises in Syria, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Gulf nations.

Following the opening ceremonies, VVA and AVVA leaders from across the nation will take part in four-and-a-half days of activities, including more than two dozen seminars and workshops. The subjects range from the elements of leadership--parliamentary procedures, the duties of the officers and boards of directors--to updates on veterans' healthcare and advocacy issues.

Among the special guests at the conference will be the recipients of the 2018 VVA Excellence in the Arts and Sciences Awards, which will be presented at the Awards Banquet on Saturday evening, July 28: Wayne Newton, the legendary Las Vegas headliner, will receive the President's Award for Excellence in the Arts. The award honors Newton for his decades-long support of American active-duty troops and veterans, as well as his long, illustrious show biz career. Vietnam veteran Dr. Peter A. Singer, a professor of Clinical Medicine, the Chief of Clinical Endocrinology, and the Director of the Thyroid Diagnostic Center at USC's Keck School of Medicine in Los Angeles, will receive the Excellence in the Sciences Award.

John Olson, who also will receive the VVA Excellence in the Arts Award, is one of the most accomplished photographers to cover the Vietnam War. Olson was drafted into the Army when he was 19. Upon arriving in Vietnam in mid-1967, Olson was assigned to a signal battalion. Nine months later, he extended his tour and began working for *Stars & Stripes* as a photographer. Troy Evans—the veteran character actor best known for his role in the TV series “China Beach” (as Motor Pool Sgt. Pepper) and “ER” (as the clerk Frank Martin), and in *Ace Ventura*, *Pet Detective*, *Article 99*, *Under Siege*, *Planes*, *Trains and Automobiles*, *Black Dahlia*, and *Demolition Man*,—will emcee the awards banquet.

For more information, including the complete agenda, go to <https://vva.org/events/leadership-conference/>

