VI IN VIETNAM
May 15 - June 5, 2023
Following a three-year hiatus in travel to Vietnam due to the pandemic, in May, VVA sent a two-person team to restore the faith, reconnect with the veterans, and display our continuing commitment to the recovery of those still not home from our war.

Born out of a resolution first adopted by the delegates to VVA’s convention in 1989, the Veterans Initiative has worked for 30 years to identify possible Vietnamese missing in Southeast Asia through various methods — the reclamation of personal effects taken during the war, personal statements and eyewitness accounts, and the identification of unmarked gravesites.

As outlined in the resolution, the Vietnamese government participates with U.S. government investigators in locating and excavating crash and burial sites and has unilaterally located and returned the remains of missing Americans.

In The Year of The Cat, The Mission Continues: The Veterans Initiative Marks Its 30th Year

The goodwill gesture by American veterans in turning over such reports and effects to the Vietnamese has further induced them to be forthcoming with additional information on missing Americans. Several Joint Task Force personnel have said, “simply put, the Veterans Initiative is a program that contributes to the successes in our MIA missions.”

Moreover, the Veterans Initiative offers our veterans who continue to hold on to disturbing, negative wartime memories and memorabilia the opportunity to turn these to positive, healing effects.

From May 17 – June 5, the VI traveled from North to South, beginning in Hanoi. They met with representatives of the Vietnamese government at the national and regional levels, attending 29 meetings in 20 days. They reestablished VVA’s commitment to the accounting issue and reconnected with the leadership of VAVN at the national and regional levels.

In addition to the accounting of their martyrs, the issue of Agent Orange and unexploded ordnance were topics of discussion at each meeting.

The Veterans Association of Vietnam (VAVN) has a deep interest in receiving reports on gravesites, letters, personal effects, documents, photos, and personal statements that would help resolve the fate of their missing.

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The VVA Veterans Initiative’s first meeting on arrival in Hanoi, May 17, was with the Veterans Association of Vietnam (VAVN), under the leadership of VP Colonel General Khuat Viet Dung:

“We highly appreciate the Veterans Initiative of VVA. From your veterans, we have received 306 files relating to 12,000 fallen soldiers of Vietnam. Thanks to VVA, we have discovered 1,500 remains and have buried them in national cemeteries. These are very important and very good results from our cooperation. Searching for the remains of Vietnamese is a priority of the party and government of Vietnam. To date 100,000 have not been discovered. We have also recovered hundreds of thousands of remains, but we haven’t been able to identify them. We are trying our best to continue in our efforts. We need continued assistance and cooperation from American veterans organizations. We have confidence in VVA carrying out this accounting work by providing us with the information we need to recover our war martyrs.”

For thirty years, VVA and VAVN have been collaborating on the recovery of those who remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam War through the exchange of information, maps of mass burial sites, and other fate-clarifying items taken in the aftermath of battle.

Representing three million members, VAVN was founded over 33 years ago. With its national office in Hanoi, VAVN has chapters throughout Vietnam at the province, city, and ward level. Its missions: to defend the rights of the veterans and guarantee their place in the social order of society. VAVN works in its communities to assist in the welfare of its citizens, to relieve poverty, assist with the victims of Agent Orange, educate about the consequences of war, and return their fallen comrades to their families.

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COMMENTS BY GRANT COATES, CHAIR OF VVA’S POW/MIA COMMITTEE

Time is the enemy—when COVID hit the world, it cut off our access to the National Archives, limiting our ability to conduct research. Many of the witnesses are passing away—COVID took many of them.

We have had to look at how we get information and who gives us the information—with the passing of time, some of the losses are from 55 years ago... and in some cases, longer.

Now we are dealing with the next generation—the family of the veteran—who may have this information, but who may not know what to do with it.

In March, we held a POW/MIA roundtable to discuss how best to keep this issue in front of the American people. We are running out of time to get the history of the past that we need to locate the missing, for our losses and for the Vietnamese losses. The VI is focused on finding the Vietnamese missing from the Vietnam War.

A veteran recently joined one of our chapters and was informed of the Veterans Initiative program. He had an item he wanted to return to the family but didn’t know how. He came back in April 2023 to return to the surviving family a diary with hand-drawn items that he had taken from the battle of Dak To. This is the type of information that we strive to return.
On May 17, in Hanoi, VVA Veterans Initiative team met with Ambassador Pham Quang Vinh, President of Vietnam-USA Society, and Vietnam's emissary to the U.S. from 2008-2014; Ambassador Bui The Giang, who served from 2007-2012 as Deputy Permanent Representative of Vietnam to the United Nations; and Ambassador Bui Van Nghi, General Director of the Americas Department of the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations. Ambassador Nghi has been interacting with the Veterans Initiative for 30 years and has served as our facilitator, historian, and translator for most of that time. He will soon be serving as Vietnam's envoy to Brazil.

In Hanoi, while meeting with Le Cong Thien, Deputy Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we reviewed the progress of relations between the U.S. and Vietnam, reflecting on the past and the present.

When VVA began the Veterans Initiative in 1993, the U.S. and Vietnam had no formal diplomatic relations. In 1981, VVA had set the stage, sending its first delegation to Hanoi to meet with the former enemy on issues still lingering after the war's end.

It wasn’t until 1995 that the U.S. formalized relations; our first U.S. envoy to Vietnam was Ambassador Pete Peterson, who had been held prisoner of war for over six years in the Hanoi Hilton.

In the intervening thirty years, thanks in large part to the foundation laid by VVA and Vietnam veterans, today, the two countries are in their tenth year of “Comprehensive Partnership.”

Le Cong Thien noted, “our countries’ relationship has never been as strong.” He expressed Vietnam’s gratitude for the U.S. gift of 40 million doses of vaccine; in turn, we thanked Vietnam for their gift of 420,000 medical face masks.

Despite the pandemic, these past three years have seen much in engagement between the two governments.

On July 2021, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin made an official visit to Hanoi at the invitation of General Phan Van Giang, Vietnam Minister of National Defense, to discuss bilateral cooperation. Vice President Kamala Harris traveled to Hanoi in August 2021, making history as the first U.S. Vice President to visit Vietnam, and in May 2022, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh made a state visit to the U.S. In April 2023, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken attended the groundbreaking of the new U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, and in May 2023, at the G7 summit in Japan, Pham Minh Chinh and President Biden agreed to continue an exchange of delegations.

For Vietnam, the war legacy issues remain at the forefront of foreign policy. Le Cong Thien stated, noting that cooperation on the MIA issue has been a key element leading to the normalization of relations. “Your organization has been an important partner in that,” he noted. He also referenced the completion of the dioxin remediation at Bien Hoa; the unexploded ordnance clearing with the help of USAID; the exchange of documents to help locate Vietnamese losses; and the transfer of DNA technology to identify the losses.

On Wednesday, May 17, in Hanoi, the VI team met with Senior LT Gen. Nguyen Van Rinh, President of the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxins (VAVA), for a briefing on the status of the Agent Orange remediation efforts and assistance to the victims.

Established in December 2003 with the goal of mobilizing resources for the victims and finding justice for them and their families, VAVA has been in operation for 20 years. With chapters in all 63 provinces and cities across Vietnam, VAVA has a membership of more than 400,000 members. It coordinates activities with the Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs sector and advises on policy related to AO/dioxin victims.

Gen. Rinh, formerly a member of the Party Central Committee, had served as Deputy Minister of National Defense. “On behalf of VAVA, I would like to thank VVA for your help over the years as well as the American people for their continuing support,” noted Rinh, “I hope that the solidarity we have established over the Agent Orange issue will continue to develop over time.”

Rinh recalled the visits to Danang Airport of Presidents Clinton and Obama, noting the completion of remediation of the soil. He noted the progress of the remediation of Bien Hoa Air Base and the funding the U.S. is providing in monetary relief to the victims of Agent Orange in eight provinces—Quang Tri, Thua Thien-Hue, Quang Nam, Binh Dinh, Kon Tum, Bien Phuoc, Dong Nai, and Tay Ninh. He noted that USAID has agreed to expand monetary relief to the provinces of Ca Mau, Bac Lieu, and Quang Ngai. VVA has been engaged in a dialogue regarding Agent Orange since its first visit to Hanoi in 1981. Our early engagement with the 10/80 Committee and Dr. Le Cai Dai, an army doctor who spent seven years in the South and made his post-war mission to shed light on the human health consequences of Agent Orange exposure, at a time when there was no government dialogue on the topic.

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Gratitude was expressed by DPAA for VVA’s advocacy on behalf of additional funding for the Vietnam recovery efforts.

In Hanoi, we met with U.S. Ambassador Marc L. Knapper and Gen. Daniel Hokanson, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and member of the DOD Joint Chiefs of Staff—Gen. Hokanson spoke of the influence his uncle, a Vietnam veteran, had on his motivation to serve. Currently, Ambassador Knapper is serving his second duty assignment in Vietnam. We had met the Ambassador in 2005 in Hanoi when he served as U.S. Political Attaché. The son of Vietnam veteran Col. Roger Knapper, USMC, he relayed how his decision to bid on a posting to Vietnam was influenced by his father’s tours of duty in Hue. When he received the assignment, his father visited the country for extended stays on three occasions. We learned his father had passed away in 2014 due to the consequences of Agent Orange. As Ambassador he is deeply connected to the war legacy issues. He is spearheading a U.S. project at Hanoi’s Bach Mai Hospital, razed during the Christmas bombings of 1972 and since reconstructed with U.S. assistance. The hospital will receive a much-needed trauma center, which will improve access to emergency medicine.

On Friday, the VI team visited the VAVA Center for Protection and Care of A/O Victims in Thach That District, Hanoi. This residential center cares for the most severely disabled adult victims of Agent Orange—not pictured. There are currently 6 sets of siblings who reside at the center.

In Hanoi, we met with Lt. Col. Travis Walter, Commander of Detachment 2, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, and Ray Kelley, analyst. In April 2023, the 160th Repatriation Ceremony was held. At the time of our meeting, two overland recovery missions and one active underwater recovery were underway.

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While in Hanoi, we met with Vietnamese researchers interested in information on specific sites related to Vietnam’s war dead. They work with a television broadcaster who has a show dedicated to assisting the families in recovering their loved ones. In partnership, we anticipate being able to assist them with further information regarding their active cases. They had specific interest in the disposition of the 53 NVA soldiers, KIA the night of May 11, 1969, at the 1st Cavalry Division’s Landing Zone Jamie, 21 miles northeast of Tay Ninh.

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— Col. Gen. Khuat Viet Dung, VAVN

Ambassador Nguyen Phuong Nga, President of the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations (VUFO), was host to VVA’s Veterans Initiative delegation. She extended her regards to VVA National President Jack McManus and expressed her gratitude for the VI’s work on behalf of the Vietnamese families.

We are indebted to Ambassador Nga and VUFO for a successful 30th mission. Throughout the country, the regional offices of VUFO facilitated meetings and arranged for our escorts and translators.
The Cửa Hòa Bình (Peace Gate) is in the north part of the Imperial City. It is the only gate that leads directly from Hue Citadel to the Forbidden Purple City.

At the Vietnam Centre for Social Protection for Agent Orange/Dioxin Victims, veterans of the “American War” receive R&R and a detox regime defined by L. Ron Hubbard—long saunas, arduous walks, and heavy doses of vitamins. Several veterans wished to share their war stories with the American veteran.

To honor MOD’s request, no images of this meeting are posted.

On Thursday, May 18, while meeting with Vietnam’s Ministry of National Defense, the team received a briefing from a representative of the Committee 515, the office responsible for searching for and recovering Vietnamese martyrs.

We learned of MOD’s recent association with the Ash Center for Democratic Governance at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. While Committee 515 expressed gratitude for the information being provided from U.S. archives by the Ash Center, they noted the information is not organized into cases and is difficult for them to review and organize. They requested that the information be developed into specific cases like that provided by VVA’s Veterans Initiative.
On Saturday, Ambassador Bui Van Nghi invited the VI team to join him on a trip down the Ngo Dong River in Ninh Binh Province.
The Perfume River—the Hương Giang—crosses the Ancient Capital of Hue

Nam Khanh, son of Ambassador Bui Van Nghi, surrounded by his family, holds a frame containing a hand-drawn picture and photograph of the late Richard DeLong, past member and Chair of the POW/MIA Committee. When they first met in 2015, Nam Khanh (then 8) drew a picture of his buddy, Richard (with mustache), which he had kept. After his passing, Richard’s wife, Leslie, found the picture and wanted to return it to Nam Khanh. Her letter and the framed drawing were delivered during the 2023 Veterans Initiative mission.

Sunday, May 21 On to Hue —
Traveler’s note:

It’s already Sunday here in Vietnam, and we are on our 5th full day in country. Grant’s suitcase arrived last night just as we head to Hue—and that lost suitcase is the only hitch so far. The temperature yesterday was 117F on the heat index, so we are getting used to some hot weather.

We have concluded our 3 days of formal meetings (9) in Hanoi and (2) visits to Agent Orange centers for the disabled, we are looking forward to heading to the provinces. Thus far, we have been very well received by all levels of the Vietnamese government as well as by our U.S. ambassador—they are all very familiar with our 30-year program, and VVA’s 40 years of engagement in war legacy issues.

The relations between our two countries are better than I have ever seen—the Vietnamese veterans, for the first time in my 30 years’ experience, posted an American flag along with their flag in honor of our meeting! The hospitality has been overwhelming, and every minute thus far has been accounted for.
On May 22, the VI team traveled to Dong Ha to attend the inaugural Congress of the Vietnam-USA Friendship Society of Quang Tri Province. This new Association will advise the Union of Friendship Organizations of the province on how to engage and expand the solidarity between the people of Quang Tri and the U.S. Representing our Embassy at the inauguration of the Congress was Deputy Chief of Mission to Vietnam Mellissa Bishop.

On May 22, we met with Maj. Gen. Ho Thanh Tu, VAVN President, and the veterans of Quang Tri Province.

Noted Gen. Tu, “We have a common Goal—we are still looking for our fallen comrades. Both sides have despair from the war. Vietnamese soldiers don’t have information on mass burial sites. We need your information.”

He updated the VI team on recent recoveries resulting from information provided from American veterans, noting, “we have had some success—we have surveyed, found, recovered, and returned to the families their loved ones.”

For example, “In Ba lang Commune, after years of frustration, we were able to locate the remains of 43 in a group burial site. That was cause for great celebration.

“In a field in Con Thien, we were able to recover 58 bodies.

“At the site of the of Dau Mau Bridge on the Ho Chi Minh Trail at Cam Lo, we were able to recover 70 remains, though for years we had been unable to locate them as we were looking on the wrong side of Highway 1. Eventually when farmers were cultivating the land, they uncovered the bodies.

“We find the information you have provided invaluable. In some cases, we need more information to determine the coordinates, and some information is not clear. This is important work. It is the mission of the soldier.”

— Maj. Gen. Ho Thanh Tu

In Hue we purchased three bicycles to deliver to children whose families had been impacted by Agent Orange. We delivered the bicycles, adjusted the seats, and watched as they took off for the ride home—15 kilometers away.
We were invited to visit the homes of two families with disabled children so that we could see first-hand how the families were managing. We stopped by a local market to buy milk and treats for the family visits.

On May 23, we met with Maj. Gen. Nguyen Van Chung, President of Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange (VAVA) of Thua Thien-Hue Province, and fellow leaders. We learned that in Hue, the fourth generation is displaying disabilities. We were interested in learning how the aging veterans were caring for the now-adult children affected by Agent Orange.

We learned of the positive impact of USAID-funded projects in Hue, and direct aid given on a monthly basis—$40 per month for the child of a veteran impacted by Agent Orange. Those with no family to care for them are placed in sheltered homes for the disabled.

Over the last 30 years, the U.S. has contributed more than $140 million in assistance to Vietnam with the stated purpose of improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities.

In Hue, USAID has the following five projects targeted at the disabled: “Inclusion” is focused on improving the quality of life by providing direct assistance; “Advancing Medical Care and Rehabilitation Education” improves the quality and delivery of care for persons with brain-function impairments; “Thrive” provides rehabilitation services to those with intellectual and developmental disabilities; “Moving Without Limits” provides assistive devices; and “Raising Voices, Creating Opportunities” is focused on removing barriers to inclusion of persons with disabilities.

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Her father, son of a veteran, was born without any visible effects. Her father’s two siblings were severely disabled and died in childhood; she has two younger brothers who appear healthy.

Her father is a Vietnam veteran. She has three siblings whose disabilities are minor. When the parents are unable to care for her, she will be cared for by her siblings.
The topographical changes to the area of Firebase Tomahawk prevented the V.I. Team from its traditional climb up the mountain to honor the war dead of Americans of the “C” Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138 Field Artillery, supporting the 101st Airborne Division, and the People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN) 4th Regiment.

Instead, they stopped at the Phu Loc District Martyr Cemetery and offered prayers to all who perished on June, 20, 1969. Walking up the 118 steps to the top was not to happen that day with the cloudless sky and temperature near 100. Discussions with residents at the roadside yielded history of the improvements to the cemetery over the years.

In Vietnam, as well as in the United States, veterans pray, honor, celebrate the memories of the departed comrades. VVA’s Veterans Initiative Program honors all war dead of the Vietnam War and strives to gain information from American and Vietnamese veterans to aid with determining the location of those still not home from war.
Meeting with the Danang Association for Victims of Agent Orange Victims.

For a small donation, we were able to provide staples for a month’s worth of lunches for the 116 disabled children who attend the Friendship School for Agent Orange victims. In the past, we had delivered pigs for the families of the disabled.
Meeting with the Veterans in Hue

On May 24, we met with the Hue VAVN under the leadership of President Col. Le Ngoc Thanh. Noted Thanh, “We are grateful and respect your actions on our behalf. After the war, the mission of the warrior is to bring home our comrades in arms. In our province, we have made great strides and have brought 10,000 martyrs home, however 9,000 remain missing.

“As time passes, our mission becomes more difficult—the witnesses are dying, the soil is acidic and corrosive, and development has disturbed the landscape. At VAVN we acknowledge your great support for dealing with this issue. However, we must speed up the pace if we are to accomplish our mission.”

They reported that their excavations in the Phu Loc District had not produced results. The VI team was able to close the loop on the mass burial at Firebase Tomahawk. We informed them that the remains had been recovered and buried in the local cemetery. They were glad to receive this news.

In Thua Thien Hue Province, 22,000 people are living with the consequences of Agent Orange, and one third of the land is contaminated by UXOs. The Au Luoi District and the A Shau Valley are particularly hard hit. “Although all these issues belong to our past war, together in the present, we are joining hands to deal with these issues,” noted Thanh.

Another veteran spoke up: “We are grateful the Au Luoi Special Forces base clean-up is moving forward. We have cooperated with the U.S. along the border of Laos to find U.S. Missing, but without success yet—we will continue to assist.”

Grant: “It is our main mission to bring the soldiers home from the battlefield. Time is the enemy: As the war united the world against COVID, the only war that the veterans of the U.S. and Vietnam have now is the war against time—time will take away the memory of the veteran and time will take away the footprint of the battle. As soldiers, though we are aging, I have the same energy to sit and do research as the soldier does to dig in the field to recover the remains.”
On May 26, we were received by our long-time colleague, Ms. Nguyen Thi Kim Tuyen, in her new position as Vice Chairperson of the Danang Union of Friendship Organizations, the umbrella organization overseeing twelve Friendship organizations.

Speaking of the Veterans Initiative program, Ms. Tuyen noted that 1,500 Vietnamese martyrs had been recovered with information provided by American veterans. “In Vietnam, yours are very important actions in healing the pain of the war.” These activities have enhanced relationships between the Vietnamese president and the American president. Despite our past, we have made great progress in advancing the friendship between our two countries. We thank the U.S. people for the donation of 40 million doses of vaccine—43,000 Vietnamese passed away from the effects of COVID.

With the pandemic in the rear-view mirror, more people are traveling to Danang. Tuyen noted that there are 33 new flight routes to Danang, 25 of which are international.

At present Danang is concentrating on the hospitality sector, as well as the industrial and economic sectors. The goal for Danang in 2045 is to be the largest economic center of the region and SE Asia. “We hope you will encourage your friends and families to come visit beautiful and hospitable Danang—a favorable environment for investment. We hope, in the meantime, you will continue to address the legacy of war issues and continue to provide information on the missing and Agent Orange.”

In 2020, after a meeting with the Danang veterans association, the VI team was informed, their counterparts had had difficulty following our dialogue due to hearing loss. They offered that we might provide hearing aids so we could better communicate. On our return, the VI team provided five, over-the-counter, rechargeable hearing devices, and took time during their meeting to instruct the veterans on their use. In Ho Chi Minh City, the team prevailed on the U.S. Consul General to channel some of the already allocated aid to persons with disabilities towards simple hearing devices for the aging veterans, so that they can participate in our continuing dialogue.

“We remember your comments about hearing, and it has been reinforced by others—the impact of the concussion of bombings—the median age of veterans from our war is 74—we also suffer from hearing loss.” — Grant

Friday, May 26: VAVN Danang

“On behalf of VAVN Danang City, we are glad to welcome your delegation and to thank you for the fate-clarifying information you have provided to bring our war dead home. We are very pleased with the actions of your veteran in New Jersey. After 57 years, he came in March of this year, and he returned the diary of the soldier from the battlefield and shared information which has helped the family locate the missing and bring their loved one home.

“There are many veterans who have information still, so that we want you to continue to assist in searching for the material that will help us account for our missing.

“From VAVN, more of the veterans are the elderly and most are victims of Agent Orange. The most common hindrance we have is our hearing, so we highly appreciate your gift of hearing aids.”
Meeting with the Veterans of Quang Nam Province

Monday, May 29, 2023
VAVN of Quang Nam Province

“Today it is our honor to greet Grant Coates and the delegation of the POW/MIA Committee of VVA—I would like to express our gratitude for the support of VVA in assisting the families of our war martyrs in finding their loved ones and our Agent Orange victims. Those activities are meaningful, and from that, we strengthen the relationship between our two countries.

“In 2015 we have received from you a map and photo related to the south side of Kham Duc airport—After a second excavation, we found a hole, a tunnel, but yet we have found no artifacts. We are trying to collect information for further research.

“Our province has been severely affected by Agent Orange. There are 6,353 who are victims of Agent Orange. We are seeing the effects on the third and fourth generations. The people of Quang Nam are still feeling the pain of the war. I would like to express my appreciation for your visit and encourage you to make more progress.”

Grant Coates
For VI, we are celebrating our 30th anniversary of the Veterans Initiative. Some of these losses occurred 50 to 60 years ago. The footprints of battlefields have been destroyed by progress. Many of the veterans of the battles are passing away, along with their memories of the battlefield.

Peoples Committee of Quang Nam Province

Tran Anh Tuan, Vice President welcomed VVA. “On behalf of the Peoples Committee of Quang Nam Province, welcome to VVA as well as the leadership of the province. Quang Nam has been severely affected by the war. Quang Nam has a lot of strengths—we have the coastline and sea, railroads, and highways; historically, Quang Nam has served as a trade site. However, we also face difficulties—We have the mountainous topography of the highlands with its poverty, and we are deeply affected by the weather disasters. We are trying to attract the support and development of foreign entities, in the education, hospitality, and electronics sectors.

“Since 1991, we have been assisting the U.S. Accounting office in Hanoi to carry out different initiatives, and we have done our best to help with the accounting of your missing. Quang Nam will continue to create favorable conditions to search for the missing soldiers.

“On behalf of provincial leaders, I urge you to provide more information on our missing so that we can find our martyrs and return them to their families. We also hope that VVA will spend more time paying more attention to Agent Orange and support Quang Nam in landmine clearance.”

Preparing the certificates in recognition of 30 years of partnership on the accounting mission.
On May 31, we met with the leadership of the Ho Chi Minh City Veterans Association:

“You have been here before... I welcome you back on behalf of the 70,000 members of Ho Chi Minh City Veterans Association. Our purpose is to support veterans in their national unity and solidarity. One of our missions is to mobilize resources to support veterans who are invalids; another is to educate the younger generation about the contributions of the veterans.

“We are very impressed with VVA’s Veterans Initiative program. We appreciate the information you have provided on more than 12,000 of Vietnam’s soldiers who are still unrecovered from war. Together with VVA, on behalf of the families, we have searched for the remains of the veterans. We have recovered the remains of 1,500 martyrs.

“We have cooperated on the recovery of U.S. missing and are glad for the return of more than 1,000 remains back to America. We consider the MIA issue one of the biggest elements of our cooperation, and we will do our best to continue to increase that cooperation. In May, U.S. Consul General Susan Burns visited our office to thank us for our efforts on the MIA efforts. Your government has also assisted us in the remediation of the Danang Airport.

“We are very grateful for the efforts to provide COVID vaccine—HCM City was one of the hotspots of the COVID infection.

“Until now we still have more than 1,000,000 soldiers unrecovered from the war – 3,000 have been found without identity. We hope that you continue to support us in finding remains.

“We hope that we keep our cooperation to realize our mission.”

Grant

It is always an honor to come back to HCM City— I was here in 1968—I can’t call it home, but I can say that I have been very impressed with the change. Our issues are the fullest accounting of the missing and the issues of Agent Orange. In a letter in 1982, our founding president stated the same two priorities—we started this effort before the normalization of relations. As veterans who were once enemies, we understand the importance of returning the remains of our war casualties. Progress removes the landmarks to be able to find the missing. This is speeding up our desire to find the bodies before the construction happens.

On June 1, we were welcomed by the leadership of the Ho Chi Minh City Union of Friendship Organizations. We were joined by Yasmeen Hibrawi, Political-Military Officer at the U.S. Consulate in HCMC. “Within our capacity, we pledge whatever support you need in your mission to locate your fallen heroes,” said Nguyen Hoai Nam, Head of the Foreign NGOs Affairs department, “History is important. It must be taught by the veterans of war, he noted.”

“We must teach our children what is wrong with war, so that the children understand the results and work to not have war,” Vice President Diem added. “We are working with the children of war on the Two-side Project. These American sons and daughters have lost their fathers to war, and now they are building houses for the poor in locations where their fathers died. This is very healing for both the American and the Vietnamese children of war.”

The War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City
VI IN VIETNAM

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