

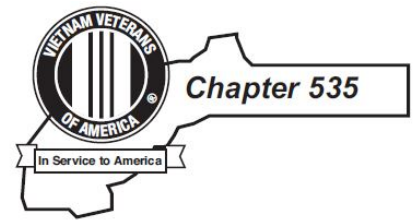


INCOMING

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

CHAPTER 535

Website: www.vva535.org



Volume 29 Issue 2

February 2019

Gentleman and Ladies,

Change. *Change* is not a fearsome word, but mankind needlessly resists change. Now is the time to think about change. Historically, VVA-535 has begun planning for a transformation of leadership roles in February. Elections and installation of new Officers and Directors occurs in April, and the newly elected team takes the helm in May.

Stagnation is a risk in any organization and that risk occurs because those subjected to a leadership style become accustomed to a leader's habits. With that stagnation, an organization can lose vitality.

Assuming one understands the foregoing, he or she should then welcome change as means to stymie complacency. Change, then, is the harbinger of organizational health; that concept alone substantiates the call for a constituency to embrace new leadership.

Every VVA member is laden with the capacity to take VVA-535 into the future. New energy means the quest for new goals and greater organizational achievement.

Take the challenge: Step in, step up, and plan now to deliver new strategies that will enhance the vitality of VVA-535 in 2019-20.

VVA Chapter 535 Mission Statement

To foster camaraderie among members and assist those with disabling mental and physical injuries, to promote the welfare of our brethren affected by the war, and to engender public understanding of the sacrifice, patriotism and bravery of those who served, those who gave all, and those left behind.

The **50:50 Raffle** initiated on May 3, 2018 currently has \$257 in the can. If you choose to participate, the Raffle will continue at the meeting of February 7, 2019. At the current \$309 enticement, if you drew the Black Marble you would pocket \$155. Surely that sum will grow on February 7th. The odds are getting better as only four marbles, including the Black Marble, remain in the sock. I plan to buy in and take my chances!

Guest Speaker for February 7, 2019

Our guest speaker will be Penn Valley Fire Chief Don Wagner. Chief Wagner will discuss fire prevention, evacuation, codes and ordinances, permits, water storage, etc. The Penn Valley Fire Protection District serves 92 square miles in Western Nevada County, including the Penn Valley, Lake Wildwood, Kentucky Flat, Mooney Flat and Big Oak areas. A five member Board of Directors elected by the citizens of the District governs the District. Fire

administration consists of a Fire Chief, and an office manager. The District employs twelve full-time career fire personnel and

relies on part-time firefighters to augment the full-time staff.

Attention

If you do not drive and need a ride to a meeting or any VVA-535 function, please contact Bart Ruud or any local VVA -535 member and we will do our best to arrange transportation for you.

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Upcoming Events

General Meeting February 7, 2019
 Director’s Meeting February 7, 2019
 NCCVC meeting: February 7, 2019
 CSC meeting – Jan. 25-27, 2019, Fresno
 Mardi Gras Parade, Nevada City, Feb. 17, 2019

Chapter 535 Officers

President Bart Ruud bruud45@gmail.com
 (H) 530-823-1368; (C) 530-305-0493

Vice-President
 Dale Epps 368-6156

Treasurer
 Ralph Remick559-7716

Secretary
 Dave Johnson 887-8297

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Dave Chaix269-1431
 Dale Epps 368-6156
 Kent Hawley 432-3551
 Bill Holman 265-8387
 Chuck Holmes 478-1126
 Dave Johnson 887-8297
 Dave Middleton 205-9375
 Ralph Remick 559-7716
 Bart Ruud 823-1368
 Ric Sheridan 274-1413
 Tom Woollard 432-1212

Committee Chairs

FinanceRalph Remick & Dave Johnson
 Parade and Honor Guard Dick Corn
 Membership AffairsRic Sheridan
 Newsletter Interim editor Bart Ruud
 Victorian Christmas Jose Gonzales
 Nominations Dick Corn
 Veterans Assistance Bart Ruud
 NCCVC Dick Corn
 Speakers Bureau Tom Woollard
 Web Master Ralph Remick
 Quartermaster Kent Hawley
 Facebook Master Mike Laborico
 Nevada County Fair Bart Ruud
 VSO Liaisons (Open opportunity)
 CA State Council Rep. Mike Underwood

Nevada County Veterans Service Officer

VSO Officer -David West (530) 273-3396 office
 (530) 913-5046 cell
 988 McCourtney Road, Grass Valley 95949
ncvso@co.nevada.ca.us
 Thursday, 9:00 to 12:00 and 1:00 – 4:00 is a
 “Walk-In” day.

Placer County Veterans Service Officer

Suzi Vinci 916-780-3290.

1000 Sunset Blvd, Suite 115, Rocklin, CA

Monday – Friday, 8:00 – 12:00 and 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Matters of interest as outlined at Board Meeting of January 3, 2019

Vice-President Dale Epps was authorized by the Board to market 20 +/- custom belt buckles created by sculpturalist Bill Hald for \$10 each.

The Victorian Christmas project netted \$3,461.84 and VVA-535 remains extremely grateful for Jose Gonzales' leadership of the project. The Board also graciously recognizes Patricia Graves for her efforts in baking hundreds of brownies, without which we would have realized substantially less return.

A committee will be convened to work with Nevada Union High School and with Patricia Graves to develop parameters for the award of the Harold Graves Memorial Scholarship.

Director Dave Chaix in Vietnam

VVA-535 member and Director **Dave Chaix**, with ten travelers in tow, departed CA late January 17, 2019 for a nineteen day tour of Vietnam. The group changed planes in Taipei and landed safely in Hanoi where the group will tour the Hanoi Hilton and the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum before traveling to Ha Long Bay, a World Heritage site located on the coastal reaches of the South China Sea. January 30 – Feb. 3 will find the travelers visiting the Vinh Son Orphanage in Kontum, and the Sao Mai Orphanage in Pleiku, Vietnam. The orphanages have been long supported by VVA-535. Later they will experience Tet in Saigon before returning home Feb. 6, 2019.

Army's long-awaited Iraq war study finds Iran was the only winner in a conflict that holds many lessons for future wars

By: Todd South Army Times. January 18, 2019



Gen. Ray Odierno walks with soldiers through a market in Khalis, Iraq, in 2009. Later, as Army chief of staff, Odierno ordered a detailed history of the war.

A two-volume Army study of the Iraq war is a deep examination of the mistakes and success of the war effort that also takes aim at critics who would slough off the conflict as they shift to near-peer threats.

The study, commissioned by former Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno in 2013 and continued under current chief Gen. Mark Milley, was delayed for release since 2016, when it was completed. Some said it was due to concerns over airing “dirty laundry” about decisions made by some leaders during the conflict.

The 1,300-page, two-volume history, complete with more than 1,000 declassified documents, spans the 2003 invasion through the U.S. withdrawal, the rise of ISIS, and the influence of Syria and Iran.

“At the time of this project’s completion in 2018, an emboldened and expansionist Iran appears to be the only victor,” authors wrote in the concluding chapter.

Col. Joe Rayburn and Col. Frank Sobchak, both

retired, authored the study.

They note the damage to the political-military relationship that the war has caused, even to the American public.

“The Iraq War has the potential to be one of the most consequential conflicts in American history. It shattered a long-standing political tradition against preemptive wars,” authors wrote. “In the conflict’s immediate aftermath, the pendulum of American politics swung to the opposite pole with deep skepticism about foreign interventions.”

Army’s detailed Iraq war study remains unpublished years after completion

By Todd South. Army Times

The study highlights key mistakes made by top generals early in the war. They also bluntly address naysayers who see the war as an aberration, and look only for the Army to move back to its traditional large-scale warfighting role, as a quick path to losing the hard-earned lessons of counterinsurgency warfare, portions of which will no doubt be part of future conflicts whether with terrorist groups or with nation state near-peers.

“The character of warfare is changing, but even if we face peer or near-peer competitors in future conflicts, they are likely to employ a blend of conventional and irregular warfare — what is often called ‘hybrid warfare’ or ‘operations in the gray zone,’ ” authors wrote.

In his foreword to the work, Odierno wrote that “those who rejected the idea that there is an operational level of war in counterinsurgency were wrong.”

He notes that following the war, the United States has entered “another historical cycle” like wars past, where civilian and military leaders debate the utility of land power. And he points

directly to an overtaxed Army at even higher troop levels than they are now.

One issue raised repeatedly in the study is the lack of troops — within the deployed brigade combat teams, available for other operations such as the war in Afghanistan, and lack of an operational reserve in theater for responses to major events.

However, the study doesn’t just focus on the military’s failures in seeing the changing nature of the war.

Odierno calls the work an “astonishing story of an Army that reached within itself to learn and adapt in the midst of a war the United States was well on its way to losing.”

Milley’s foreword calls the study a “waypoint” on the Army’s “quest to comprehend the OIF experience.” He sees the analysis as a start of what will be a lengthy analysis of the conflict.

“OIF is a sober reminder that technological advantages and standoff weapons alone cannot render a decision; that the promise of short wars is often elusive; that the ends, ways, and means must be in balance; that our Army must understand the type of war we are engaged with in order to adapt as necessary; that decisions in war occur on the ground, in the mud and dirt; and that timeless factors such as human agency, chance and an enemy’s conviction, all shape a war’s outcome,” he wrote.



Vehicles from the Army's 3rd Infantry Division move to the northwestern side of the city to complete the encirclement of Baghdad, Iraq, during the early days of the war.

Highlights of the study include validations of criticisms made at the time the war was being fought, and others that were not foreseen and only understood in the years that followed. Study authors note that technology could not always make up for manpower shortages, that coalition warfare was “largely unsuccessful” for several reasons, that failing to account for a lack of understanding of the inner workings of Iraqi politics and group struggles meant some military unit actions did exacerbate problems.

And those battlefield commanders who did find innovative solutions to ground-level problems were not only often not commended or heeded in their innovations, they were often penalized for their work that inverted policy to adapt to real time needs of the battlefield.

The “short war assumption” and overly optimistic thinking drew out problems by pushing funding and manning to future projects because victory was always 18 months away. The transformation of the Army to create more BCTs resulted in fewer units available for deployment, stretching the active units thin and requiring National Guard units to deploy in a large-scale conflict for the first time since the Korean War.

Half of all brigades in Iraq at the time of the 2005 election were Guard units. While the authors commended the Guard units for their service, they noted that, at the time, they were less experienced soldiers thrust into a critical time of the war without proper resourcing. And how leaders assessed their own performance during the war suffered from a lack of clear understanding of what mattered.

They leaned too much on “inputs” rather than “outputs,” for example, money spent, Iraqis

trained or insurgents killed or captured — rather than whether there was more cooperation with locals or reduced attacks.

“Army leaders have become too enamored with the ‘fetishization’ of statistics and metrics, when they only provide a snapshot in time of a portion of the situation,” authors wrote. Additional highlights include the following, as highlighted in previous reporting:

- **The need for more troops:** At no point during the Iraq war did commanders have enough troops to simultaneously defeat the Sunni insurgency and Iranian-backed Shiite militias.
- **The failure to deter Iran and Syria:** Iran and Syria gave sanctuary and support to Shiite and Sunni militants, respectively, and the U.S. never developed an effective strategy to stop this.
- **Coalition warfare wasn’t successful:** The deployment of allied troops had political value but was “largely unsuccessful” because the allies didn’t send enough troops and limited the scope of their operations.
- **The National Guard needs more training:** While many National Guard units performed well, some brigades had so much difficulty dealing with insurgents that U.S. commanders stopped assigning them their own battlespace to control. The study found that Guard units need more funding and training.
- **The failure to develop self-reliant Iraqi forces:** The U.S.-led effort to train and equip Iraqi forces was under-resourced for most of the war. A premature decision to transfer sovereignty to the Iraqis made it harder to blunt political pressure by Iraqi officials on Iraqi commanders.
- **An ineffective detainee policy:** The U.S. decided at the outset not to treat

captured insurgents or militia fighters as prisoners of war and then never developed an effective way to handle detainees. Many Sunni insurgents were returned to the battlefield.

- **Democracy doesn't necessarily bring stability:** U.S. commanders believed the 2005 Iraqi elections would have a "calming effect," but those elections instead exacerbated ethnic and sectarian tensions.

- The report praises the 2007 surge and other COIN efforts, many of which have been attributed to leaders such as Odierno, retired Gen. David Petraeus and retired Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, who most recently served as President Trump's national security adviser.

At the same time, some of its critiques can be levied at specific decisions of past Army leaders, including former Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker's decision to move ahead with the BCT restructuring as part of the Army transformation. Also, the consolidation of U.S. forces on large bases, leading to a security vacuum around Baghdad, can be attributed to then-Gen. George Casey.

Trump still poised for a drawdown in Afghanistan after the deadliest year for US troops since 2014

By: Kyle Rempfer. Army Times. January 17, 2019



Soldiers with the 101st Airborne Division watch as two Chinook helicopters fly in to take them back to Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan.

The Trump administration has been contemplating a massive change in the U.S. commitment to Afghanistan, as the war there enters a new year.

In late December, U.S. defense officials confirmed reports that they were planning for the possibility of bringing home up to 7,000 of the roughly 14,000 U.S. troops currently serving in Afghanistan.

And while there has been push back against President Donald Trump's proposed drawdown, the president appears poised to follow through with those plans after a meeting with Republican lawmakers Wednesday.

"In today's meeting, he stood up for a strong America and steadfastly opposed foreign wars. Putting America First means declaring victory in Afghanistan and Syria," Sen. Rand Paul, a longtime critic of foreign military interventions, said in a statement after the meeting.

If the change indeed goes through, it would come after the bloodiest year for U.S. forces in Afghanistan since the previous drawdown in 2014, when the U.S.-led coalition shifted to an advisory role under NATO's Resolute Support mission.

The death toll has been matched with increased airstrikes against insurgent forces that rival all other years on record. The bombing was a component of Trump's South Asia Strategy, a plan designed to drive the Taliban to the negotiating table through a mix of international pressure and kinetic operations.

The troop drawdown being floated by Trump is far from solidified, but it does hint at how little faith the president has for the mission.

At his first Cabinet meeting of 2019, Trump said former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis was "essentially" fired because he didn't do "a good

job" with the war in Afghanistan.

"I gave the generals all the money they wanted, and they didn't do such a great job in Afghanistan," Trump said. "I'm not happy with what [Mattis] has done ... and I shouldn't be happy."

By contrast, Mattis appeared to not favor a change to the troop count in Afghanistan. He wrote in his resignation letter last month that Trump would be better served by "a secretary of defense whose views are better aligned" with his own.

Leaving Afghanistan would backtrack on a main tenet of the South Asia Strategy, which stipulated that "a hasty exit from Afghanistan would simply allow terrorists to flood back into that country and begin planning attacks on America," according to the Defense Department website.

Marine Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie Jr., the incoming head of U.S. Central Command, appeared to still agree with that sentiment during his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee Dec. 4.

"What we are doing is preventing the homeland from being attacked," McKenzie said. "We're going to go through this winter. We'll see how they do, but I don't know how long it's going to take."

However, the president's patience appears to have grown thin, as evidenced by his social media posts calling for the return of American forces from multiple conflicts abroad. Last week, Trump tweeted that America must "stop the endless wars."

In 2018, 13 U.S. troops were killed during combat operations in Afghanistan and 115 were wounded in action. That is a slight increase from 12 killed in action and 106 wounded in 2017.

And while the U.S. has caused far worse casualties for the Taliban, the militant group shows little interest in quickly negotiating an end to the war.

Some long-time watchers of the conflict argue against a troop number change. Instead, they are pushing for a change to mission's focus. One such advocate is Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution who specializes on defense policy.

"The focus should not be on nation-building," O'Hanlon said in a new report this January. "Nor should it be on helping the Afghan government extend its control over more of the country's territory — a desirable, but nonessential, objective. Rather, the emphasis should be squarely on making the Afghan security forces more resilient and capable."



A platoon leader for Provincial Reconstruction Team Farah provides rooftop security during a key leader engagement in Farah City, Feb. 25, 2018

Strengthening Afghan forces will help keep the country's cities and main roads in government hands, allowing the U.S. to continue counterterrorism operations in South Asia for the long haul, O'Hanlon said.

After more than 17 years, Afghan security forces still need significant coalition support, as they proved incapable of halting Taliban offensives from temporarily taking portions of Farah City and Ghazni City this summer. "If we left precipitously right now, they would not be able

to successfully defend their country," McKenzie said during his confirmation hearing.

O'Hanlon recommended drastically expanding the Afghan National Army Territorial Force concept — a locally recruited "hold force" that frees up Afghan regular troops for offensive operations. The program could help with Afghan Army recruiting and retention, since many Afghans prefer to defend their home territories rather than distant parts of the nation.

O'Hanlon's report also recommended that the Afghan strategy in 2019 focus less on remote parts of the country. Instead, Afghan forces should consolidate police checkpoints into fewer, better defended outposts so they are less vulnerable to being overrun by Taliban ambush, he said.

While O'Hanlon's recommendations would be more readily achieved by keeping the number of U.S. troops in-country at roughly their current number, "it can also be attempted, with reasonable prospects, at smaller deployment figures if necessary," he said.

Meanwhile, another issue U.S. forces have been plagued with in Afghanistan is also reportedly being addressed. Insider attacks have long been a staple of the Afghan conflict. But this year, the attacks were much more prominent. Army Gen. Austin Scott Miller, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, was even present during an Oct. 18 insider attack that left a key Afghan general dead and wounded an American one-star general.

There have been four insider attacks in 2018, according to archived press releases on NATO's Resolute Support website. That is compared to no insider attacks in 2017, one in 2016 and two in 2015, the year the Resolute Support mission began.

In September, Mattis said the Afghan military

began to increase its vetting of local forces working with Americans after the first spate of insider attacks. The increased security checks for Afghan forces will "make certain we're catching people who have been radicalized," Mattis told reporters at the Pentagon. "And there's a lot of attention from their military side that's actually in the field with the troops," he added. "And by 'attention,' I mean training of their people on how they protect the coalition troops."

Last year also saw a massive increase in the U.S. bombing campaign in the country, as the Pentagon worked to negotiate with the Taliban from a position of strength.

The U.S. dropped more munitions in Afghanistan during the first 10 months of 2018 than in any other full year since documentation began, according to data published by U.S. Air Forces Central Command.



Gen. Austin Miller, commander Resolute Support Mission and United States Forces - Afghanistan, visited the capital of Ghazni province Nov. 21, 2018, amidst ongoing operations of Afghan and coalition forces to repel insurgents.

From the beginning of the year until the end of October, U.S. forces released 5,982 munitions in Afghanistan. That surpassed the previous annual record of roughly 5,400 munitions dropped in 2011, a time widely considered the height of the war. AFCENT's figures include

bombs, missiles, AC-130 gunship shells and strafing fire.

The scaled-up airstrikes do not appear to be having a major impact on the Taliban's control of territory, however.

As of July, the Afghan government controls or influences a little more than half of the country's 407 districts.

That is the lowest level since the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction began tracking district control in November 2015, according to the agency's quarterly report released in late October.

Although the exact numbers are classified, Resolute Support also said that the average number of Afghan government force casualties from May to October 2018 is the highest it has ever been during similar periods.

For the commander of all NATO forces in Afghanistan, though, the pressure remains on both the Taliban and the Americans to end the conflict, because neither will win through force alone.

"This is not going to be won militarily," Miller said in an October interview. "This is going to a political solution."

"My assessment is the Taliban also realizes they cannot win militarily," he added. "So if you realize you can't win militarily at some point, fighting is just, people start asking why. So you do not necessarily wait us out, but I think now is the time to start working through the political piece of this conflict."

A Link to the Friends of Vinh Son Orphanage website:

<https://www.friendsofvso.org>

Writing Your Story for INCOMING

(Ongoing repeat solicitation)

Ideas for your story:

- Think about what you appreciated about the Vietnam experience. There is surely a means to segue into that with very little reflection on the negative aspects of war.
- What did you appreciate about the Vietnamese people during your deployment?
- Can you steer away from the bad stuff and reflect on the best experience you had in the Nam?
- Surely you had a close buddy and you supported each other. Maybe there is a story in that.
- What really got you through the day-to-day anxieties and fears? There might be a positive recollection in that regard.
- How did your experience instill in you a sense of patriotism that you possibly express every day of your life.

So far we have heard from Ruud, Epps, Chaix, Hamer, Chuck Holmes, current Marine LCpl. Jesse Hernandez, Kent Hawley, and Mike Laborico. (Thank you!)

No writer needs to dwell on the negatives of war. Each of us who was there lived the negatives, and all of us are better people for having served, especially when we look at how we matured as a result of our experiences. Each of us has derived a sense of being and an energy that is different from what it might have been had we not been sent across the pond.

Do share with us, in your own words, something of that chapter of your life. And, thank you for your service.

Forward your story to Bart Ruud at bruud45@gmail.com or hand deliver to Bart.

Application For Membership
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC., CHAPTER 535

P.O. Box 37, Grass Valley, CA 95945

Membership is open to U.S. armed forces veterans who served on active duty (for other than training purposes) in the Republic of Vietnam between February 28, 1961, and May 7, 1975, or in **any duty location** between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975.

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: (_____) _____ Cell Phone: (_____) _____

Email Address: _____ Gender: _____

(Optional) Chapter Number: _____ Sponsor: _____

_____ I am already a VVA member and I want to become a Life Member. My VVA Number is _____.

Membership: Individual Life Membership: \$50. (Effective Oct. 20, 2018)

ATTENTION New members: You must submit a copy of your DD-214 form along with this application and dues payment.

Payment Method: ___ Check ___ Money Order ___ Credit Card (Visa, MasterCard, AMEX, Discover)

Credit Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Return your completed application, payment and a copy of your DD-214 to:

Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., Chapter 535
P.O. Box 37
Grass Valley, CA 95945

Revised: January 2019

January

2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 New Year's Day	2	3 VVA Board & General Meetings	4	5
6 Epiphany	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17 Operation Desert Storm began (1991)	18	19
20	21 Martin Luther King Day	22	23	24	25 VVA CSC meeting	26 VVA CSC meeting
27 VVA CSC meeting Vietnam Peace Accord signed (1973)	28	29	30	31		

FEBRUARY

2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 Groundhog Day
3	4	5	6	7 VVA General Meeting & Board Meeting	8 Boy Scouts of America founded (1910)	9
10	11	12 Lincoln's Birthday (1809)	13	14 Valentine's Day	15	16
17 Mardi Gras Parade Nevada City	18 President's Day	19 U.S. Marines landed on Iwo Jima (1945)	20	21	22 Washington's Birthday (1732)	23
24 Desert Storm Ground Campaign Began (1991)	25	26	27	28		

MARCH

2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 Operation Rolling Thunder began (1965)
3 Star Spangled Banner made U.S. Anthem (1931)	4	5	6 Ash Wednesday	7 VVA General Meeting & Board Meeting	8	9
10 Daylight Savings begins	11	12 Girl Scouts of America founded (1912)	13	14	15 American Legion's 100 th Birthday	16
17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19 Start of Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003)	20 First Day of Spring	22	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29 Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day	30
31						

APRIL

2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 April Fools' Day	2	3	4 VVA General Meeting & Board Meeting. VVA -535 Elections	5	6
7	8	9	10	11 Persian Gulf War Official Cease Fire (1991)	12	13
14 Palm Sunday	15	16	18	14	19 Good Friday	20
21 Easter Sunday	22 Earth Day	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				