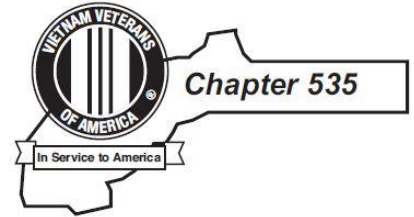




# INCOMING

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

## CHAPTER 535



Website: [www.vva535.org](http://www.vva535.org)

Volume 32 Issue 4

April 2022

### VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA CHAPTER 535 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE April 2022

On Tuesday, March 29, 2022, at 1000 hrs., we dedicated the bridge at the South Fork Yuba River Bridge. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge is now fully dedicated. There were over 60 people in attendance. Assemblywoman Megan Dahle joined in the celebration. The All Veterans Honor Guard presented the colors. We received a number of good comments, and the program went off, as scheduled, without a hitch. I want to thank all of you who came down to the Veterans Building to help load the podium, flags, and banners. Also, a big thanks to all who helped in the set up at the river. The big question that day was, "Where are the signs?" A Cal-Trans supervisor called me Wednesday and apologized and was very embarrassed. He said the sign crew felt terrible. Apparently, they heard the news cast on the radio regarding the ceremony. There was a supervisor change in the unit and our work order was not caught. I am told the signs will be installed the week of April 4<sup>th</sup>. Cal-Trans is going to take pictures and send them to me. Murphy's law was in effect! We had a great time at Trailblazers after the ceremony. We all introduced ourselves and our background in Vietnam. Some interesting stories. We will be serving pizza at our next

meeting, April 7<sup>th</sup>. It will be election night. Dick Corn will pick up the pizza as he has for many years and bring them to the meeting. The leadership team to be voted on for 2022 is as follows: Dave Chaix-President, Keith Grueneberg-Vice-President, Bart Ruud-Secretary, Ralph Remick-Treasurer. I hope to see all of you there! I was honored to serve as your president this last year. Thank You!

Keith

### 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.*

### 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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Parade and Honor Guard ..... Dick Corn  
Membership Affairs .....Ric Sheridan  
Newsletter ..... Interim Editor Bart Ruud  
Victorian Christmas .... Cancelled for 2021  
Nominations ..... Ralph Remick  
Veterans Assistance..... Keith Grueneberg  
NCCVC ..... Open  
Speakers Bureau ..... Dan Davis  
Web Master ..... Ralph Remick  
Quartermaster ..... Dick Corn  
Facebook Master ..... Mike Laborico  
Nevada County Fair ..... Open  
CA State Council Rep..... Open

**Upcoming Events**

Vietnam Veterans Day – March 29, 2022  
S. Yuba Bridge Dedication – March 29, 2022  
NCCVC Meeting – April 7, 2022  
VVA General Meeting – April 7, 2022  
CSC meeting: Visalia, CA – April 14-16, 2022  
Craft Show – June 4, 2022 to benefit WHVs.

**Chapter 535 Officers**

President Keith Grueneberg  
kgberg0178@sbcglobal.net  
916-425-1121  
Vice-President Dave Chaix 530-269-1431  
Treasurer  
Ralph Remick ..... 530-559-7716  
Secretary  
Bart Ruud ..... 530-305-0493

**Directors**

Dick Corn ..... 530-277-8856  
Enrique Vasquez .....530-575-4416  
Ray James .....530-478-1126  
Dave Johnson .....530-887-8297  
Dave Middleton .....530-205-9375  
Ric Sheridan .....530-274-1413  
Corbin Smith ..... 916-833-7860  
Mel Williams .....1-707-391-7692

**Committee Chairs**

**Nevada County Veterans Service Officer**

David West II  
Nevada County Veterans Service Officer  
988 McCourtney Rd.  
Grass Valley, CA 95949  
[David.West@co.nevada.ca.us](mailto:David.West@co.nevada.ca.us)  
(530) 265-1446 (Office)  
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“Walk-In” opportunities are available M – F.

**Placer County Veterans Service Officer**

Derrick Oliveira ... 916-780-3290.  
1000 Sunset Blvd, Suite 115, Rocklin, CA  
Mon. – Fri., 8:00 – 12:00 and 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. The  
Auburn office, at 11562 B Avenue, Auburn, CA 95603, is now open every  
Tuesday 8:00am-12:00pm and 1:00pm-5:00pm. The Carnelian Bay  
office, at 5252 N Lake Blvd, Carnelian Bay, CA 96140, is now open every  
3rd Monday (excluding Holidays) 9:30am-12:00pm and 1:00pm-  
3:00pm.

**Matters of Interest as outlined at Meeting of  
March 3, 2022**

The Veterans Hall kitchen will be reserved for  
the time being for our use in the event VVA 535  
decides to go forward with Victorian Christmas.

VVA 535 voted to participate in a chili cookoff  
on July 4<sup>th</sup> or some other date yet to be  
determined.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge project  
has been approved. As determined later, the

ceremonial opening date will be on Vietnam Veterans Day, March 29, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. Assemblywoman Megan Dahle will attend.

The California Association of VSOs Conference will be held in October 2022 at the Gold Miner Inn. The date is yet to be determined. VVA 535 is sponsoring a comedy show on one evening of the conference.

Traci Hart and Tera Ireland, Veterans Services Representatives, were introduced by county VSO David West.

VVA 535 made a \$1,000 contribution of support to the Welcome Home Vets assistance program.

The passing of Rosanna Johnson, wife of VVA 535 life member Dave Johnson, was announced. Also announced was the passing of life member and past president of VVA 535 Chuck Holmes.

### **Medical Care Bureaucracy Alert**

One among our membership recently used Urgent Care on Education Street in Auburn. Difficulties arose in their billing him directly, rather than working with the VA system. VSO David West was able to help reconcile this problem. The following URL could be worthy of filing away:  
<https://www.va.gov/files/2021-12/Urgent%20Care%20Assistance%20Card.pdf>

### **Guest Speaker for April 7, 2022**

Unknown at this time. Very likely no guest speaker as we will hold elections for 2022-2023 Officers and Directors. New Officers and Directors will be installed at our May 2022 meeting. We have the following:

President: David M. Chaix  
Vice-President: Keith Grueneberg  
Secretary: Bart Ruud  
Treasurer: Ralph Remick  
Directors: Corbin Smith, Dick Corn, Enrique Vasquez, Ray James, and Ric Sheridan

### **B-52 Stratofortress Bomber**

### **New Engines to Give 60-Year-Olds New Lease on Life**

Defense News | Stephen Losey | March 8, 2022

The iconic B-52 Stratofortress bomber has been a mainstay of the U.S. Air Force's fleet since it was first introduced during the height of the Cold War. But with the average B-52 now 60 years old and increasingly showing its age, the bomber is getting a fresh lease on life — in the form of a new slate of F130 engines from Rolls-Royce North America. In a briefing with reporters 4 MAR, officials from Rolls-Royce and Boeing detailed how modern digital design techniques are helping craft the B-52's new engines and related systems.

The Air Force announced in September that Rolls-Royce had received the \$2.6 billion Commercial Engine Replacement Program contract to keep the B-52 flying into the 2050s — roughly 100 years after the first B-52 was flown. The aircraft's current Pratt & Whitney-made TF33 engines, which also date back to the early 1960s, are expected to reach the end of their life spans by the end of this decade. This is the bomber's "pacing concern," Robert Gass, Boeing's strategic development and investment manager, told reporters at the Air Force Association's Air Warfare Symposium in Orlando, Florida. "Pratt made a great engine that has served the B-52 very well, but it is approaching the end of its life," Gass said. "We have to act now in order to keep that B-52 viable."

The Air Force said in September that Boeing, which originally built the B-52, will be in charge of integrating the new Rolls-Royce engines into the bomber. The first group of modified B-52s are expected to be delivered by the end of 2028. And digital design techniques — similar to methods that helped accelerate the creation of other recent aircraft, like Boeing's T-7A Red Hawk trainer — are helping streamline the process for upgrading the B-52. Gass said the digital design effort is focusing on the bomber's power pods — its four nacelles that each hold a pair of engines.

The process began by creating a digital map of the B-52's systems and how they function. Once that was in hand, Gass said, designers created 3D models of the aircraft's engines and other components. This allowed engineers to more easily visualize what they were designing, how the pieces would fit together, and how the components they were working on would connect and affect other parts undergoing designs by other teams. The process is still in the early stages, Gass noted, but there are anecdotal reports that this method allowed designers to catch problems, such as parts that were conflicting with one another, earlier in the process.

Candice Bineyard, director of defense programs at Rolls-Royce, said the two companies have been "trading" digital models with one another. This helped engineers spot "minor tweaks" that needed to be made to ensure engines would fit precisely inside the B-52 nacelles, she said, or find the best spot where newly added components should go. "That's really what you want in this phase, is to figure it out sooner rather than later, before you go to full-rate production," Bineyard said. "So we're seeing those benefits already."

In the fourth quarter of this year, she said, Rolls-Royce will start testing its engine prototypes at NASA's Stennis Space Center in Mississippi, to see how they will operate in the B-52 nacelle. The engineering and manufacturing development phase is expected to last into 2026, she added. She noted the new engine will be able to receive maintenance work on the aircraft without the need for removal for major repairs. And the digital modeling will make it easier to produce clear and precise manuals for the maintainers in charge of keeping the engines running, she added. The re-engining will do more than just keep the B-52 in the air, according to Gass. It will give the plane more range, endurance and flexibility in how the Air Force can use the B-52, and it will reduce fuel and maintenance costs.

As the B-52's engines receive upgrades, Gass said, so will its related subsystems, including power generation and pneumatics. The B-52 will also receive new cockpit displays and digital engine controls, new struts and structures for the engine pods, and a new aircraft health maintenance system to help the Air Force sustain it for the next three decades. Gass said the modernization will set the table for additional upgrades in the future to help keep the bomber running into the 2050s.

The F130 is a "proven" engine with more than 29 million flight hours, Bineyard said, and already powers the Air Force's C-37 and E-11 aircraft. And as the B-52 closes in on the century mark, it is likely these new engines will be the last the venerable bomber will have before its eventual retirement. "This engine will stay on [the B-52's] wing for the life of this aircraft ... well into the 2050s," Bineyard said.

### **Ukraine Update Troop Deaths Expose a Potential Weakness of Putin's Strategy**

New York Times | Helene Cooper and Eric Schmitt  
March 2, 2022

When Russia seized Crimea in 2014, President Vladimir V. Putin was so worried about Russian casualty figures coming to light that authorities accosted journalists who tried to cover funerals of some of the 400 troops killed during that one-month campaign. But Moscow may be losing that many soldiers daily in Mr. Putin's latest invasion of Ukraine, American and European officials said. The mounting toll for Russian troops exposes a potential weakness for the Russian president at a time when he is still claiming, publicly, that he is engaged only in a limited military operation in Ukraine's separatist east.

No one can say with certainty just how many Russian troops have died since 24 FEB, when they began what is turning into a long march to

Kyiv, the capital. Some Russian units have put down their arms and refused to fight, the Pentagon said 1 MAR. Major Ukrainian cities have withstood the onslaught thus far. American officials had expected the northeastern city of Kharkiv to fall in a day, for example, but Ukrainian troops there have fought back and regained control despite furious rocket fire. The bodies of Russian soldiers have been left in areas surrounding Kharkiv. Videos and photos on social media show charred remains of tanks and armored vehicles, their crews dead or wounded. The body of a Russian soldier left on the side of a road in Kharkiv, Ukraine, last week and a woman arguing with police during an anti-war protest in Moscow in late FEB.

The Russian Defense Ministry spokesman, Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, acknowledged on 27 FEB for the first time that “there are dead and wounded” Russian troops but offered no numbers. He insisted Ukrainian losses were “many times” higher. Ukraine has said its forces have killed more than 5,300 Russian troops. Neither side’s claims have been independently verified, and Biden administration officials have refused to discuss casualty figures publicly. But one American official put the Russian losses as of 28 FEB at 2,000, an estimate with which two European officials concurred.

Senior Pentagon officials told lawmakers in closed briefings on Monday that Russian and Ukrainian military deaths appeared to be the same, at around 1,500 on each side in the first five days, congressional officials said. But they cautioned that the figures — based on satellite imagery, communication intercepts, social media and on-the-ground media reports — were estimates. For a comparison, nearly 2,500 American troops were killed in Afghanistan over 20 years of war.

For Mr. Putin, the rising death toll could damage any remaining domestic support for his Ukrainian endeavors. Russian memories are long — and mothers of soldiers, in particular, American officials say, could easily hark back to

the 15,000 troops killed when the Soviet Union invaded and occupied Afghanistan, or the thousands killed in Chechnya. Russia has deployed field hospitals near the front lines, say military analysts, who have also monitored ambulances driving back and forth from Russian units to hospitals in neighboring Belarus, Moscow’s ally.<sup>5</sup>

“Given the many reports of over 4,000 Russians killed in action, it is clear that something dramatic is happening,” said Adm. James G. Stavridis, who was NATO’s supreme allied commander before his retirement. “If Russian losses are this significant, Vladimir Putin is going to have some difficult explaining to do on his home front.” Representative Adam B. Schiff, Democrat of California and the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, added, “There are going to be a lot of Russians going home in body bags and a lot of Russian families grieving the longer this goes on.”

In particular, Pentagon officials and military analysts said it was surprising that Russian soldiers had left behind the bodies of their comrades. “It’s been shocking to see that they’re leaving their fallen brethren behind on the battlefield,” said Evelyn Farkas, the top Pentagon official for Russia and Ukraine during the Obama administration. “Eventually the moms will be like, ‘Where’s Yuri? Where’s Maksim?’” Already, the Ukrainian government has begun answering that question. On 27 FEB, authorities launched a website that they said was meant to help Russian families track down information about soldiers who may have been killed or captured. The site, which states it was created by Ukraine’s Ministry of Internal Affairs, says it is providing videos of captured Russian soldiers, some of them injured. The pictures and videos change throughout the day.

“If your relatives or friends are in Ukraine and participate in the war against our people — here you can get information about their fate,” the site says. The name of the site, 200rf.com, is a grim reference to Cargo 200, a military code

word that was used by the Soviet Union to refer to the bodies of soldiers put in zinc-lined coffins for transport away from the battlefield; it is a euphemism for troops killed in war. The website is part of a campaign launched by Ukraine and the West to counter what American officials characterize as Russian disinformation, which includes Russia's insistence before the invasion that the troops surrounding Ukraine were simply there for military exercises. Information and the battle for public opinion around the world have come to play an outsize part in a war that has come to seem like a David vs. Goliath contest.

On 28 FEB, Ukraine's ambassador to the United Nations, Sergiy Kyslytsya, read out before the General Assembly what he said were the final text messages from a Russian soldier to his mother. They were obtained, he said, by Ukrainian forces after the soldier was killed. "We were told that they would welcome us and they are falling under our armored vehicles, throwing themselves under the wheels and not allowing us to pass," he wrote, according to Mr. Kyslytsya. "They call us fascists. Mama, this is so hard."

The decision to read those texts, Russia experts and Pentagon officials said, was a not-so-veiled reminder to Mr. Putin of the role Russian mothers have had in bringing attention to military losses that the government tried to keep secret. In fact, a group now called the Union of Committees of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia played a pivotal part in opening up the military to public scrutiny and in influencing perceptions of military service, Julie Elkner, a Russia historian, wrote in *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies*.

On 1 MAR, a senior Pentagon official said entire Russian units have laid down their arms without a fight after confronting surprisingly stiff Ukrainian defense. In some cases, Russian troops have punched holes in their vehicles' gas tanks, presumably to avoid combat, the official said. The Pentagon official, who spoke on the

condition of anonymity to discuss the operational developments, declined to say how the military had made these assessments — presumably from a mosaic of intelligence including statements from captured Russian soldiers and communications intercepts — or how widespread these setbacks might be across the sprawling battlefield.

Images of body bags or coffins, or soldiers killed and left on the battlefield, a Biden administration official said, would prove the most damaging to Mr. Putin at home. Ukrainian officials are using the reports and images on social media of Russian casualties to try to undercut the morale of the invading Russian forces. On 28 FEB, Ukraine's defense minister, Oleksiy Reznikov, offered Russian soldiers cash and amnesty if they surrendered. "Russian soldier! You were brought to our land to kill and die," he said. "Do not follow criminal orders. We guarantee you a full amnesty and 5 million rubles if you lay down your arms. For those who continue to behave like an occupier, there will be no mercy."

### **VA Presumptive Cancer Diseases Proposed Expansion**

VBA Message | March 1, 2022

The Department of Veterans Affairs will propose adding certain rare respiratory cancers to the list of presumed service-connected disabilities in relation to military environmental exposure to particulate matter. When the proposal becomes final, dependents, survivors, and Veterans who had claims previously denied for any of the below respiratory cancers would be encouraged to file a supplemental claim for benefits.

- Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) of the larynx;
- SCC of the trachea;
- Adenocarcinoma of the trachea;
- Salivary gland-type tumors of the trachea;
- Adenosquamous carcinoma of the lung;
- Large cell carcinoma of the lung;
- Salivary gland-type tumors of the lung;

- Sarcomatoid carcinoma of the lung; and
- Typical and atypical carcinoid of the lung.

Any Veteran who had one of these cancers manifest to a degree of 0% or more at any time during or after separation would become eligible for service-connection. VA intends to focus its rule on the rare respiratory cancers above in Veterans who served any amount of time in the Southwest Asia Theater of operations and other locations. VA will invite and consider public comments as part of this process. The publication date of the federal register will occur in the coming weeks.

Once rulemaking is complete, VA will conduct outreach to impacted veterans and survivors to inform them about potential eligibility. The Southwest Asia Theater of operations refers to Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, and the airspace above these locations.

If you are a Veteran who has been diagnosed with one of these conditions, but have not filed a claim, please notify VA of your intent to file a claim.

### **Vet Ukraine Support Those Joining the Fight Given Russian Warning**

Military.com | Steve Beynon & Konstantin Toropin  
March 8, 2022

A plea for foreigners to join the fight against the invasion of Ukraine was met 4 MAR by a warning from Russia: Don't expect to be treated as legitimate combatants if you're captured. The Russian warning, leaning on language that echoes America's own history of legally questionable imprisonment from the War on Terror, comes as the initial surge of popular interest in joining the nearly two-week-old fight for a democracy against an authoritarian regime

is met with the reality of conflict, risk and a soup of uncertainty.

Top officials including President Volodymyr Zelenskyy have touted numbers of volunteers that exceed 15,000, but scattered media reports from Ukraine suggest that only a tiny fraction of - 49 - that number actually makes it to the front lines. Military.com has repeatedly reached out to Ukrainian officials for details on the numbers of volunteers, including the number of American veterans seeking to join the fight, with no reply. Some veterans are making their way into Ukraine for humanitarian purposes, like Chad Robichaux, a Marine Corps force recon veteran who founded the group Save Our Allies during the fall of Kabul, Afghanistan, to help evacuate interpreters and other Afghan allies.

The group's ranks are primarily made up of U.S. veterans, most of whom come from the special operations community. In addition to providing medical aid, they have been running rescue missions to get Ukrainian civilians away from the fighting. "One of our teams just missed a tank blowing up," Robichaux told Military.com. "There were bodies still smoldering. There's a huge security risk."

The public discussion of reinforcements pushed Russian defense ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov to issue a statement clearly intended to deter any volunteers from boarding planes for the front lines. "None of the mercenaries the West is sending to Ukraine to fight for the nationalist regime in [Kyiv] can be considered as combatants in accordance with international humanitarian law or enjoy the status of prisoners of war," said Konashenkov, according to TASS, Russia's state-run news agency. He added that all "foreign mercenaries" who are captured in Ukraine "would be brought to justice" on criminal charges.

Konashenkov's suggested legal status for foreign fighters in Ukraine would mean they would not be entitled to the protections of the Geneva Conventions if captured by Russian

troops. Those conventions, among other things, set out rules for how prisoners of war should be treated -- free from violence, intimidation and abuse -- and stipulate their return at the end of hostilities. Claire Finkelstein, founder and academic director of the Center for Ethics and the Rule of Law, described the idea that Russia could sidestep the Geneva Conventions as "a gross distortion of international humanitarian law" in an interview with Military.com.

"There is nothing illegal about fighting for the Ukrainian army under these circumstances, and history is replete with examples of foreign fighters joining the causes of other countries," Finkelstein said. "Ironically, the Russians will be violating international law by refusing to recognize their status." Even if the legal logic employed by Russia is questionable, the country has a track record of imprisoning people -- including American citizens -- for long periods of time after sham trials. Former Marines Paul Whelan, convicted of espionage and sentenced to 16 years of prison in 2020, and Trevor Reed, sentenced to nine years after assaulting police while drunk, remain in Russian custody. U.S. officials say both were convicted based on flimsy evidence in a court system not known for its impartiality.

Russia has also criticized America's recent history of torture and detainment without trial, looking to deflect attention from its own history of human rights abuses by engaging in rounds of whataboutism. It's unclear how many foreign volunteers are flocking to Ukraine to fight Russians. Experts interviewed are skeptical of high numbers reported in the media, believing that Ukraine is incentivized to exaggerate how significantly its ranks are being bolstered by international sympathy. Traveling into Ukraine is incredibly dangerous. It isn't just the Russian artillery shells, which can fall at any time. Moving around a country amid an invasion is a delicate operation.

"Tensions are high," Robichaux said. "You got 18-year-old kids who were just drafted. Now, he

has a [rifle] and he's scared at a checkpoint, and you roll up at night trying to pass. Accidents can happen. These situations are dangerous and risky. We don't want to give the appearance we're combatants." Other veterans working with Robichaux have stayed on the Poland side of the border to assist the refugees, more than two million of whom have fled the fighting in Ukraine. Dakota Meyer, a retired Marine who earned the Medal of Honor for heroics in Afghanistan, said he couldn't sit at home as the crisis continued. "I got two little girls at the house, but this is the most evil our generation has witnessed," he told Military.com. "It's good versus evil."

While some veterans are working to provide humanitarian aid, others want to volunteer to fight. Two current Army Special Forces officers told Military.com that building a guerrilla force is difficult and can have unforeseen secondary and tertiary effects. If Russia is already threatening not to honor basic prisoner of war rights for foreign fighters, that could have a potential domino effect in which those foreign fighters brutalize Russian prisoners or use unnecessarily vicious tactics. "It's a two-way street," one officer told Military.com on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

The [Ukrainians] want to be the good guys here. But ... a lot of armed men running around a country can be bad news in the long run." "War can make good people do bad things," the officer added. "If I were operating in Ukraine, I'd be worried about these guys playing by the rules long term. What is stopping a Ukraine commander from using foreigners to do dirty work?" Some sources interviewed were concerned about unregulated groups of fighters on the battlefield leading to more chaos, including uncoordinated missions, alcohol abuse or stealing military equipment, they said. It is unclear how Ukrainian commanders are deploying the small number of foreign fighters that have reportedly made it to the front.



The information war has been critical for Ukraine. Since the invasion, videos have flooded social media of Zelenskyy appearing calm and collected, having traded his fitted suit for tactical clothing in his new role as a wartime president. He has balked at Russian threats and positioned himself to be the last man standing amid the blitz. Other videos show Russian prisoners seemingly being treated well, allowed to call their mothers and being fed warm meals. Still others show apparently highly motivated civilian guerrilla fighters defending their homeland from falling to totalitarian rule.

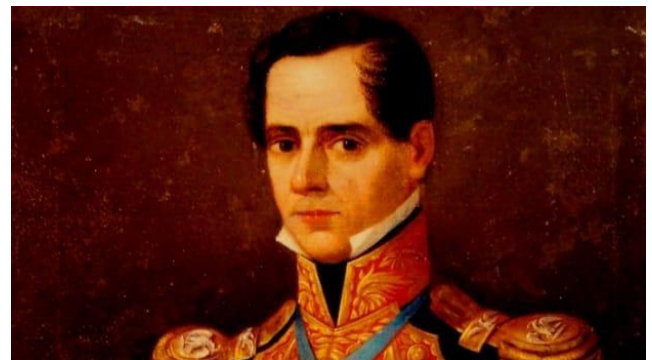
But foreign fighters being accused of committing war crimes could destroy all that accumulated goodwill. "It's important Ukraine uses these [foreign] fighters under Geneva principles," Katherine Kuzminski, director of the Military, Veterans, and Society Program at the Center for a New American Security, told Military.com. "Everyone already believes Russia is - 51 - playing dirty; Ukraine wants to show they're fighting the right way. They have a reputational cost."

Veterans' desire to help Ukraine could arise from frustrations over Afghanistan, what some at one time called "the good war," that became a prolonged conflict with a botched conclusion and little to show for two decades of blood and treasure spent. "Some veterans wrestle with Afghanistan," Kuzminski said. "There is an appeal to have a black and white situation, a clear aggressor. Coming just 10 months from Afghanistan and [the] outstanding question of what that was all for, this war might be easier."

### **Battlefield Chronicles The Fall of the Alamo**



Few battles in American history resound so powerfully in our collective memory as that of the Alamo. The Battle of the Alamo had everything we could ever want in an epic story. It featured a handful of defenders fighting for freedom, facing down an overwhelming but cruel enemy, and among those defenders were some of America's most legendary names.



When the defenders of the Alamo were killed to the last man, it inspired a country to take up arms and win their freedom, lest they all meet the same fate. The Texians who fought at the Alamo may not have won the battle, but their sacrifice helped win the war and freedom for their country.

For years before the battle, Texas enjoyed a swell of population and autonomy to grow far from the heavy hand of government from Mexico City. When General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna came to power in 1832 and changed all that. By 1835, he consolidated power and tried to rule through a more centralized government. Mexican immigrants across the country took up arms, but nowhere was the rebellion more vocal and violent than in Mexican Texas.

By the end of 1835, Texians had expelled Mexican troops from Texas, convened a governing council, and formed an Army led by Commander-in-Chief Sam Houston. Santa Anna was livid at the losses, declared the new volunteers of the Texian Army to be pirates, and that his forces would take no prisoners. He also mounted a 6,000 strong force called the Army of Operations to quell the revolt.

Standing in Santa Anna's way were an estimated 182 Texians and volunteers under the command of William Travis, manning an old Spanish mission called the Alamo at San Antonio de Bexár. Stopping the Mexican Army at San Antonio was critical because of its strategic location at the Texian crossroads. If Santa Anna captured the mission, he could march anywhere in the young country. The volunteers remained in the fort.

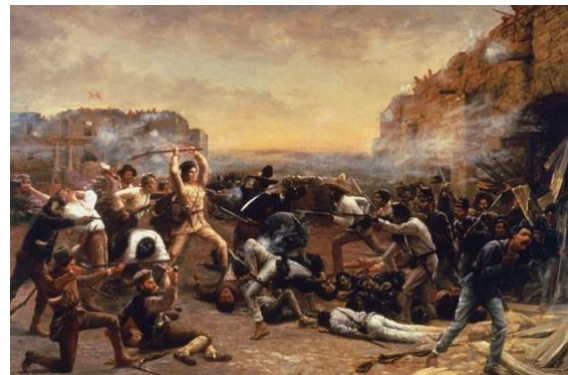


When the Mexican Army arrived, there were 18 cannons and 150 men to defend the Alamo. James Bowie met with a Mexican envoy before the battle. Santa Anna demanded the Texians surrender at discretion, which meant the Mexican general would decide what happened to the men after they surrendered. For the Texians in the Alamo, the battle meant victory or death. Travis responded to the terms with a single cannon shot.

Santa Anna moved on Bexár, occupying the town with 1,500 troops, he raised the red flag signifying there would be no quarter. Over the next two days, the Mexican force fired 200 cannonballs at the fortress as the two sides

skirmished outside the Alamo walls. Bowie became ill and bedridden as Mexican reinforcements arrived. There was no word from anyone about Texian reinforcements.

By March 4, the Mexican Army was ready to assault the Alamo, a move the Texians knew was imminent. At 2200 the next day, the Mexican guns went silent, and many of the Texians fell into a deep sleep. Four columns of 1,800 Mexican soldiers prepared to assault the Alamo, with 500 cavalry troops left to prevent any escape. At 0530, they moved, silently approaching the walls and killing three guards who fell asleep on duty. The texians only awoke when buglers sounded, and troops screamed, "Viva Santa Anna!"



By then, they were already in musket range. Still, they were at a disadvantage. Texian rifles were much more accurate, and the Brown Bess muskets the Mexicans were using could only be fired by the front row of infantry. Many Mexican soldiers died from being shot in the back by the untrained conscript soldiers.

In mass formations, they were also prime targets for defending artillery. The Texians fired everything they could out of the cannons, including horseshoes. Mexican troops attempted to scale the walls using ladders but were shot for their efforts. Texian defenders were beginning to use so many shots they ran out of preloaded rifles.

William Travis was killed in the first attack. Mexican soldiers fell back and regrouped, only

to make a second failed attempt at an assault. In just fifteen minutes since the buglers played, they began to make their third attack. It looked like another failure, but Santa Anna sent in his reserves, who scaled the walls and opened the doors from the inside.

Mexican troops poured into the Alamo, taking the defenders' cannon and each of the walls in turn. Those who could make their way to the barracks and the chapel to make a last stand. Texians who couldn't make the barracks fled toward the San Antonio River but were cut down by Mexican cavalry.



Using the captured cannon, the Mexicans shot open the doors of the barracks and killed everyone inside, some in hand-to-hand combat. Bowie was killed in his sickbed. In the chapel, the last of the Alamo defenders fired their last cannon shot and fired a volley from rifles before being bayoneted. Combatant survivors were executed on Santa Anna's orders.

A third of the Mexican force involved in the attack were killed or wounded. Yet, he still held a six-to-one advantage over the Texians. Combined with the victory at the Alamo, he assumed the Texians would flee, and that would be the end of the Texas Revolution. Instead, Sam Houston's army received hundreds of volunteers,

Houston surprised Santa Anna while his army was in camp, catching it completely by surprise in the Battle of San Jacinto in April 1836. Within 18 minutes, the Mexican Army was routed, half

of it destroyed, and Santa Anna himself was captured the next day. Texas had won its sovereignty.

### **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, Mike Laborico and Dave Johnson. (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](mailto: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 November 1, 1955 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:

# March

# 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 Ash Wednesday	3 VVA-535 Board & General Meeting	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 Daylight Saving Time begins	14	15	16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19 Operation Iraqi Freedom began (2003)
20 Spring begins	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29 ∩ S. Yuba Bridge Dedication Ceremony  No Host Luncheon at Trailblazer Pizza, Alta Sierra	30	31		

# April

# 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7 VVA 535	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 CSC meeting - Visalia, CA	15 Good Friday Passover Begins at sundown CSC meeting	16 CSC meeting
17 Easter	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30 Saigon falls (1975)

# May

# 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 Army 173 <sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade begins landing in South Vietnam (1965)	4	5 VVA 535	6 National Nurses Day	7
8 Mother's Day	9 Operation Linebacker begins (1972)	10 Battle of Hamburger Hill begins (1969)	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 Armed Forces Day
22	23	24	25	26 Operation Menu ends (1970)	27	28
29	30 Memorial Day	31				

# June

# 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4 VVA 535 sponsored Craft Show- Vet Hall parking lot
				VVA 535		
5 Pentecost	6	7	8	9	10 Creighton Abrams takes over command from William Westmoreland (1968)	11
12	13	14 Flag Day  Army Birthday	15	16	17	18
19 Father's Day	20	21 Summer Begins	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



