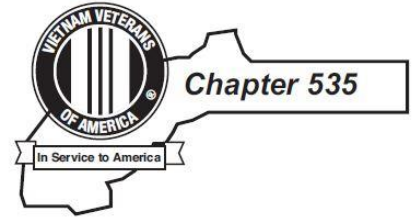




# INCOMING

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA  
**CHAPTER 535**



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

Volume 34 Issue 7

July 2024

## VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA CHAPTER 535 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE July `2024

Hello VVA 535 members,

**Meeting time is 6:00 p.m.**

Hello VVA 535 Members,

Happy 4<sup>th</sup> to you and your families.

On July 4 would be our normal meeting day, but we decided to skip our July meeting and reconvene on August 1. (August 1 is our normal first Thursday meeting---meeting will begin at 6PM on that day)

Viet Nam veterans will again be able to ride in Bill Slade's deuce and a half military vehicle (thank you, Bill). If you wish to participate you must be in the back of Veterans Building in NEVADA CITY between 8 AM and 8:30 AM. See you there.

Ray James  
President

## 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.*

**Veterans Crisis Line**  
**DIAL 988 then PRESS 1**  
**Or text 838255**

**(Put these numbers into your phone)**

## 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**

NCCVC Meeting – July 4, 2024 ?  
July 4, 2024 – **Meeting cancelled due to conflict with Independence Day.**  
VVA Chapter 535 Meeting – August 1, 2024  
August 7-11, 2024 – Nevada County Fair  
August 15 – 17, 2024 Yuba-Sutter Stand Down  
CSC Oct. 3,4,5, 2024 – Visalia, CA

## **Chapter 535 Officers**

President Ray James  
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1-530-273-1087

Vice-President Keith Grueneberg  
Kgberg0178@sbcglobal.net  
1-916-425-1121

Treasurer  
Ralph Remick ..... 530-559-7716

Secretary  
Bart Ruud ..... 530-305-0493  
[bruud45@gmail.com](mailto:bruud45@gmail.com)

## **Directors**

Dale Ferguson ..... 530-272-3300  
Armando Garza ..... 530-906-7188  
Bob Roberts ..... 530-265-0398  
Corbin Smith ..... 916-833-7860

## **Committee Chairs**

Finance ...Ralph Remick & Kent Holley  
Parade and Honor Guard ..... Dick Corn  
Membership Affairs .....Ric Sheridan  
Newsletter ..... Interim Editor... Bart Ruud

Victorian Christmas ...Cancelled for 2022; 2023  
Nominations ..... Ralph Remick & Dick Corn  
Veterans Assistance ..... Ray James  
NCCVC ..... Dick Corn  
Speakers Bureau .. Enrique Vasquez; Carl Cieslikowski  
Web Master ..... Ralph Remick  
Quartermaster ..... Dick Corn  
Facebook Master ..... Mike Laborico ?  
Nevada County Fair ..... Open  
CA State Council Rep... Interim: Bart Ruud

## **Nevada County Veterans Services Officer**

David West II  
Nevada County Veterans Service Officer  
988 McCourtney Road  
Grass Valley, CA 95949  
[David.West@co.nevada.ca.us](mailto:David.West@co.nevada.ca.us)  
(530) 265-1446 (Office)  
(530) 913-5046 (Cell phone)  
“Walk-In” opportunities are available M – F.

## **Placer County Veterans Services Officer**

Richard “Steve” Johnson: 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 open every Tuesday 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. The Carnelian Bay office, at 5252 N Lake Blvd, Carnelian Bay, CA 96140, is now open every 3rd Monday (excluding Holidays) 9:30 a.m. -12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

## **County VSO Resource Closet Needs**

Sleeping bags, duffel bags, small lightweight tents, socks, briefs, bras, tee shirts (white/olive drab), sweatshirts, sweatpants, jeans, shoes, boots, hygiene supplies, grocery store gift cards, gas cards, blankets.

These kinds of items will become components of life packs to assist those in need that are seen by staff at VSO David West’s office. Thank you for your assistance with this project.

## **Guest Speaker (for August 1, 2024)**

No guest speaker scheduled at this time. Carl C. might present a “Second Courage” summary. Or, if we can sort it out we might be able to show a 56 minute documentary film on CD, “Vietnam:

The Secret Agent,” a well-researched film about the legacy of Agent Orange.

### **Matters of Interest as outlined at our meeting of June 6, 2024**

A VVA 535 site at the cost of \$455 has been reserved paid for the August 7 – 11, 2024 Nevada County Fair. Staffing the booth is a work in progress.

Jacket orders were again discussed. A minimum order will be 12 jackets at a cost of \$40 each. Additional costs will be incurred for patches and embroidery. Dick Corn is coordinating this project.

To join the July 4<sup>th</sup> Parade in Nevada City, muster at 9:00 a.m. at the Veterans Building in Nevada City to decorate the deuce and a half

The Scholarship Committee awarded the 2024 Harold K. Graves Jr. Memorial Scholarship to Maegan Grogan as our 4th awardee for the \$1,000 scholarship.

### **With a drop of blood, this new device will test for TBIs in 15 minutes**

By Karen Lowers, June 4, 2024



An i-STAT traumatic brain injury-testing device sits on display at the Special Operations Medical Association annual conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, May 14, 2024. (T.T. Parish/Army)

A new rapid test that checks for traumatic brain injuries using a single drop of blood is expected to make its debut in the military in the coming months.

The product marks one of the most significant steps forward for TBI patients' care in the past 20 years, Lt. Col. Bradley Dengler, an Army neuroscientist who directs the Military Traumatic Brain Initiative at the Uniformed Services University in Bethesda, Maryland, said in a recent release announcing the product's approval by the Food and Drug Administration.

The test can ascertain whether a person's blood contains the protein markers associated with a mild TBI, or concussion, after 15 minutes. In combat, that speed can help military medics quickly decide how to treat an injured service member, avoiding unnecessary evacuations and CT scans and improving TBI case management in the field, officials said.

Earlier tests designed to help diagnose concussions or more severe TBIs rely on blood plasma or serum, and must be processed in a laboratory that can take hours or days to issue results.

The new test requires about 20 microliters of blood, which is about half the volume of a raindrop or a teardrop. Similar to at-home blood glucose tests, a patient's blood is placed on a cartridge that is inserted into a portable device for analysis. While glucose tests use a finger prick, these tests require blood drawn from a vein.

The new test doesn't offer a firm diagnosis but can flag indicators of a TBI and intracranial hemorrhage. The higher the protein levels the test detects, the more significant an injury might be. The device can be used to evaluate patients up to 24 hours following an injury.

The Analyzer Traumatic Brain Injury system, approved for use in the spring, is expected to be fielded to the Army in fiscal year 2025, said

Damien Hoffman, a biomedical engineer and product manager with the Army's Medical Materiel Development Activity. Hoffman's organization developed the test in partnership with medical device manufacturer Abbott Laboratories.

The other military branches can purchase the tests through the Defense Logistics Agency.

Known as one of the signature injuries of troops wounded in Afghanistan and Iraq, TBIs can alter a person's physical abilities as well as their memory, mood and focus. Effects of the "invisible wounds" can range from headaches, vision and hearing problems, to death or extended coma or amnesia in severe cases.

Nearly 500,000 service members worldwide received a TBI during military training or deployment, or day-to-day activities such as sporting events, from November 2000 through December 2023, according to the Defense Health Agency.

### **The cost to rename 9 Confederacy-honoring Army bases has doubled**

By [Karen Jowers](#) Mar 24, 2023



Fort Polk, Louisiana is one of nine Army bases that are changing their names and removing all Confederate references. (via Military OneSource)

The cost of renaming the nine Army bases that honored the Confederacy has nearly doubled, an Army official told lawmakers Thursday.

The Army expects to pay \$39 million, said Lt. Gen. Kevin Vereen, Army deputy chief of staff for installations. In 2022, the congressionally-mandated Naming Commission estimated it would cost \$21 million to rename the nine Army installations.

The Defense Department initially gave the Army \$1 million to change the names, but "that's not anywhere close to what we need," Vereen told members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies.

The renaming involves replacing names not only at the installation gates, but on facilities, streets, numerous smaller signs, and technology, he said.

Service officials have until the end of the year to remove the names, symbols, displays, monuments, and paraphernalia that honor or commemorate the Confederacy or any person who served voluntarily with the Confederacy.

Garrisons won't have to foot the bill, Vereen said, nor will they have to pay the costs upfront and then request reimbursement.

"The Army is trying to solve the funding piece, and we're trying to solve it internally," he said. "We'll take the funds from the department."



### **Renaming 9 Confederate-honoring Army posts will cost \$21M**



The name changes should be completed by early 2024.

By Meghann Myers and Irene Loewenson

### **Bases slated for renaming:**

- Fort Benning, Georgia — Fort Moore, after Army Lt. Gen. Hal Moore and his wife, Julia Compton Moore. Hal Moore received the Distinguished Service Cross for heroism in the Vietnam War. Julia Moore was an advocate for military families.
- Fort Bragg, North Carolina — Fort Liberty.
- Fort Gordon, Georgia — Fort Eisenhower, after President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was also a five-star Army general and served as the Supreme Allied Commander of forces in Europe during World War II.
- Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia — Fort Walker after Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, the first female surgeon in the Civil War, and the only woman awarded the Medal of Honor.
- Fort Hood, Texas — Fort Cavazos, after Army Gen. Richard E. Cavazos, who received the Distinguished Service Cross for heroism in the Vietnam War.
- Fort Lee, Virginia — Fort Gregg-Adams, after Lt. Gen. Arthur Gregg and Lt. Col. Charity Adams. Gregg was a key figure in the integration of black soldiers into the Army. Adams was one of the highest-ranking female soldiers in World War II.
- Fort Pickett, Virginia — Fort Barfoot, after Army Tech Sgt. Van T. Barfoot, who received the Medal of Honor for his actions with the 45th Infantry Division during World War II in Italy in 1944.
- Fort Polk, Louisiana — Fort Johnson, after Army Sgt. William Henry Johnson, who received the Medal of Honor posthumously for action in the Argonne Forest of France during World War I.
- Fort Rucker, Alabama — Fort Novosel, after Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael J. Novosel, an aviator who

received the Medal of Honor for a medevac mission under fire in Vietnam where he saved 29 soldiers.

### **Lawmakers move to automate Selective Service registration for all men**

Defense News.

By Leo Shane III and Bryant Harris. Wednesday, May 22, 2024



All men ages 18 to 26 would be automatically enrolled in the Selective Service System under a plan approved by a House committee Wednesday night. (Yasuo Osakabe/Air Force)

A new plan from House lawmakers would automatically register men for a potential military draft when they hit age 18, avoiding potential legal consequences connected to failing to file the paperwork at the proper time.

Language included in the House Armed Services Committee's draft of the annual defense authorization bill would mandate the automatic registration of all males between ages 18 and 26 living in America in the Selective Service System, the federal database used for a military draft in case of a national emergency.

The system hasn't been used for that purpose for 52 years, but men who fail to register can face a host of legal consequences, including forfeiture of eligibility for federal programs and possible jail time.

But the number of individuals who have skipped registering has increased in recent years, in

large part because registration options were removed from the federal student loan process two years ago. That had accounted for nearly a quarter of all registrations in prior years.

Rep. Chrissy Houlahan, D-Pa., sponsored the automatic registration language and called it both a money-saving and common-sense reform.

“By using available federal databases, the [Selective Service] agency will be able to register all of the individuals required and thus help ensure that any future military draft is fair and equitable,” she said during debate on the idea Wednesday night.

“This will also allow us to rededicate resources — basically that means money — towards reading readiness and towards mobilization ... rather than towards education and advertising campaigns driven to register people.”

The Selective Service System costs roughly \$30 million a year. Lawmakers have proposed a number of reforms to the database in recent years, including adding women and completely eliminating the agency altogether, but none have made it through Congress.

The latest proposal was approved unanimously by the committee but still must advance through the full House and Senate before it can become law. The authorization bill, which contains a myriad of military budget and policy priorities, is expected to be finalized by the two chambers sometime this fall.

### **Taliban assault on women’s rights continues in Afghanistan**

by UN News June 14, 2024

It has been almost three years since the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan and women’s rights continue to be under attack.



Now unemployed, a woman sits at home with her two daughters. © UN Women/Sayed Habib Bidell

On Thursday, UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) spokesperson Liz Throssell revealed that in its latest act of disempowerment, de facto authorities have told women civil servants prohibited from working that despite qualifications or experience, their salaries will now be cut to the lowest level.

The Taliban overtook Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, in August 2021, and quickly began eroding women’s rights, including strict dress codes, banning higher education for

girls, excluding women from certain jobs, and more.

According to Ms. Throssell, authorities had told women they could return to work when “the necessary conditions” are in place, yet women have not received any information on when that might be.

Three years on, steps to allow women civil servants to all return to the workplace have not been taken.

This latest discriminatory and profoundly arbitrary decision further deepens the erosion of human rights in Afghanistan, following decisions to restrict women and girls’ access to education and employment, limit their freedom of movement, and curtail their presence in

public spaces, effectively entrenching the exclusion of women from public life,” Ms. Throssell said.

### ‘Three billion learning hours lost’

Thursday also marks 1,000 days since the Taliban banned education for girls beyond the sixth grade – a “sad and sobering milestone” according to the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

Executive Director Catherine Russell said “For 1.5 million girls, **this systematic exclusion is not only a blatant violation of their right to education, but also results in dwindling opportunities and deteriorating mental health**” in a public statement.

Ms. Russell said that education not only provides opportunities but it “protects girls from early marriage, malnutrition and other health problems, and bolsters their resilience to disasters like the floods, drought, and earthquakes that frequently plague Afghanistan.”

UN Women recently reported that this ban on education is related to a 25 per cent increase in child marriage rates and a 45 per cent increase in early childbearing rates.

The UNICEF chief said the agency is working extensively to support all children in Afghanistan.

### End rights violations

As human rights continue to be violated in Afghanistan, independent rights experts are calling on the Taliban to provide medical aid for

United States national Ryan Corbett who is being held in detention.

Mr. Corbett was detained in 2022 when he travelled to Afghanistan to do humanitarian work and has been held captive since.

His mental and physical health has severely declined and Alice Jill Edwards, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel treatment, said he must be given medical treatment “in a civilian hospital without delay”.

She said conditions in detention were “utterly inadequate and substantially below international standards.”

Special Rapporteurs and other UN Human Rights Council-appointed rights experts are independent of any government, receive no salary for their work and serve in their individual capacity.

### 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.

### **VVA 535 Member Biographies**

**Do you know \_\_\_\_\_**

*Now, our readership and Brotherhood knows  
\_\_\_\_\_ better than we might ever  
have known this man, this leader.*

*Who will be next to share*



## HOW THIS SUBTERRANEAN LOGISTICS BASE IN AFGHANISTAN BEDEVILED SOVIET INVADERS

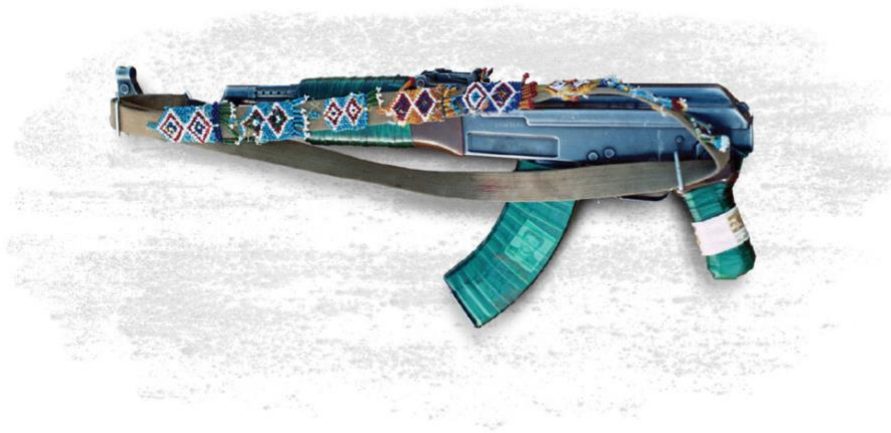
**While the Soviets ultimately prevailed in the back-to-back battles for Zhawar, they gained nothing.**

History Net. By MICHAEL G. STROUD 9/15/2023



On invading Afghanistan in 1979, Soviet forces quickly captured the cities, but the cave-riddled mountainous region along the Pakistani border remained the realm of Mujahideen guerrillas. (Vivian Moos (Getty Images))

It had taken two battles, near constant artillery bombardment and massive airpower, but the combined forces of the Democratic Republic of **Afghanistan** (DRA) and Soviet Union were finally poised to take the key Mujahideen logistics base at Zhawar on a relatively cool April 19, 1986. The Mujahideen had masterfully utilized local topography to carve out their base of operations against the communist DRA and its Soviet backers, and Zhawar had become a key strategic objective as both sides fought for control of Afghanistan amid the 1979–89 Soviet-Afghan War.



An AK-47 with a sling bearing tribal needlework speaks to the age-old nature of warfare in Afghanistan. (Abdul Rashid (Afghan Media Resource Center))

By 1979 widespread rebellion had engulfed broad swaths of Afghanistan, countered by a commensurate increase in Russian intervention on behalf of the pro-Soviet government. DRA General Secretary Hafizullah Amin's grip on the country was on the verge of collapse. His primary control mechanism, the Afghan army, was a mere shell of what it once was, having dropped from a high of around 100,000 troops to less than half through desertions and internal combat operations. The **Soviets**, by contrast, had more than 8,000 troops and 1,500 advisers on the ground, with tens of thousands more poised for

intervention in order to prevent the collapse of Amin's administration. The time had come for the Russians to take control of the situation and, in their minds, stabilize the country.



Hafizullah Amin. (Francois Lochon/Gamma-Rapho, Henri Bureau (Getty Images))

Direct Soviet intervention began that Christmas Day when the 40th Army and supporting air units crossed into Afghanistan. Two days later the Russians landed more than four divisions at Afghan airports. In the capital city of Kabul their assault troops engaged in especially fierce fighting with troops loyal to Amin. Though suffering heavy casualties, the Soviets eliminated the guards at the outlying Tajbeg Palace before executing Amin, all of his male family members and members of his inner circle. By day's end they'd installed their chosen puppet, Babrak Karmal, as DRA general secretary.

The invasion, the toppling of Amin (who, though not exactly beloved by Afghans, was still *their* leader), the installation of a puppet ruler and the presence of a Soviet occupation force was too much for many of the fiercely independent Afghans. Within months the Mujahideen joined forces with thousands of Afghan army deserters to take up fierce armed resistance throughout the country, especially in rural locales. A panicked Karmal beseeched the Soviets for more military assistance, which promptly flooded into the country, raising the Soviet troop count to 105,000 in short order. The long, bitterly contested struggle for Afghanistan ensued.

Fast forward five years. By 1985 the Mujahideen enjoyed widespread support from rural Afghans, while the puppet government and its Soviet backers held sway in the major cities. The Mujahideen put their efforts into hit-and-run attacks on Soviet and DRA convoys, supply lines and communications, while the Russians sought to deprive the rebels of their logistics, supplies and food by ruthlessly bombing and destroying villages, food stores, crops and even animal herds. The Soviet dictum was to "kill the fish by draining off the water."



Babrak Karmal. (Francois Lochon/Gamma-Rapho, Henri Bureau (Getty Images))

To counter such efforts the Mujahideen established a nationwide network of supply bases and depots to serve as logistical hubs for their operations. Among the more hotly contested such sites was Zhawar. On the central-eastern border a scant 15 miles from the Mujahideen's supply hub at Miran Shah, Pakistan, Zhawar became a primary center for rebel operations and a major thorn in the side of the Soviets and DRA. Literally blasted and carved from the base of Sodyaki Ghar mountain, the base comprised 41 caves linked by 11 major tunnels extending up to 500 yards underground. The extensive facility included a hotel (used by visiting Western journalists), a mosque, a weapons depot, a medical station, a radio hub and a garage housing, among other vehicles, two captured Soviet T-55 tanks.

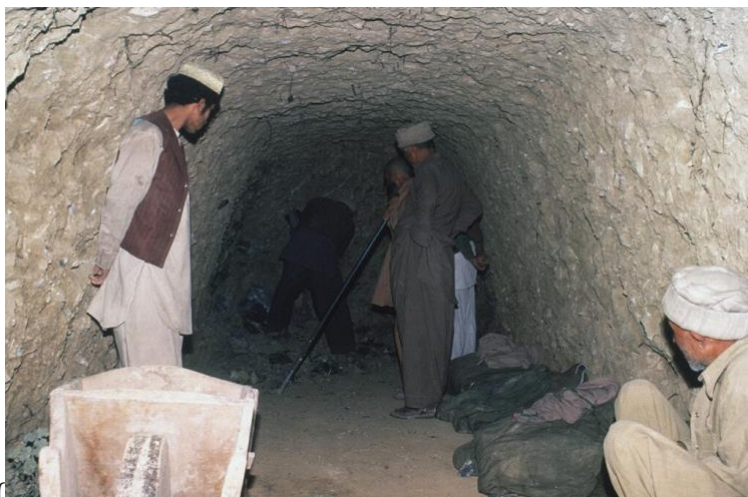
Zhawar served as a supply base for area Islamic Party (HIK) groups, and its garrison policed checkpoints along the border to identify and prevent infiltration by KHAD (Afghan intelligence) and KGB agents. Commanded by provincial Mujahideen leader Jalaluddin Haqqani, it was garrisoned by the 500-strong Zhawar Regiment and outfitted with, in addition to the pair of T-55s, a Soviet D-30 122 mm howitzer, several Chinese BM-12 ML 102 mm multiple rocket launchers and an assortment of machine guns and small arms. Deployed on the surrounding high ground was an air defense company equipped with five ZPU-1 and four ZPU-2 14.5 mm anti-aircraft guns.

This substantial logistics hub handled more than 20 percent of the supplies powering the Mujahideen war effort, thus it represented a valuable asset for the rebels and a prime target for the DRA and Soviets. In September 1985 the latter moved to take out the base in what became known as the First Battle of Zhawar.





The fortified entrances to Zhawar conceal tunnels up to 500 yards long. Garrisoning the complex was a 500-strong Mujahideen regiment armed such modern weaponry as tanks. (Philippe Flandrin/Gamma-Rapho)

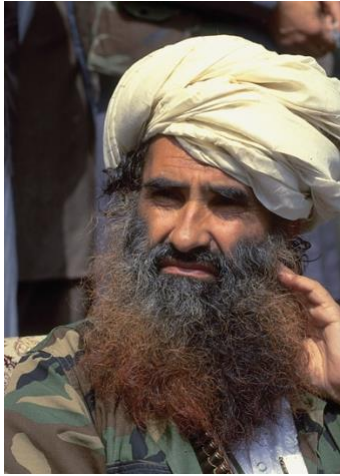


Zhawar was a work in progress before and after the 1985–86 battles. Above left: Using basic tools and sweat equity the Mujahideen carved out 41 caves linked by major 11 tunnels. (Philippe Flandrin/Gamma-Rapho)



Facilities included a medical station, a radio hub and a weapons depot with gunsmithing tools. (Philippe Flandrin/Gamma-Rapho (Getty Images))

That fall the DRA 12th Infantry Division, along with elements of the 37th and 38th Commando brigades, moved out from Gardez and took a circular route to Khost to avoid the Mujahideen-controlled direct route through the Khost-Gardez (aka Sata-Kandow) pass. Joining up with the 25th Infantry Division at Khost, the column coalesced into a composite force (due to strength deficiencies). In early September the DRA infantry, under the command of Lt. Gen. Shahnawaz Tani, with supporting artillery fire and targeted air strikes, struck rebel positions northeast of Zhawar at a place called Bori. As Haqqani and most of Zhawar's top commanders and field officers were away on *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) and thus unprepared for such a strike, Bori quickly fell to the DRA, who pushed on toward Zhawar.



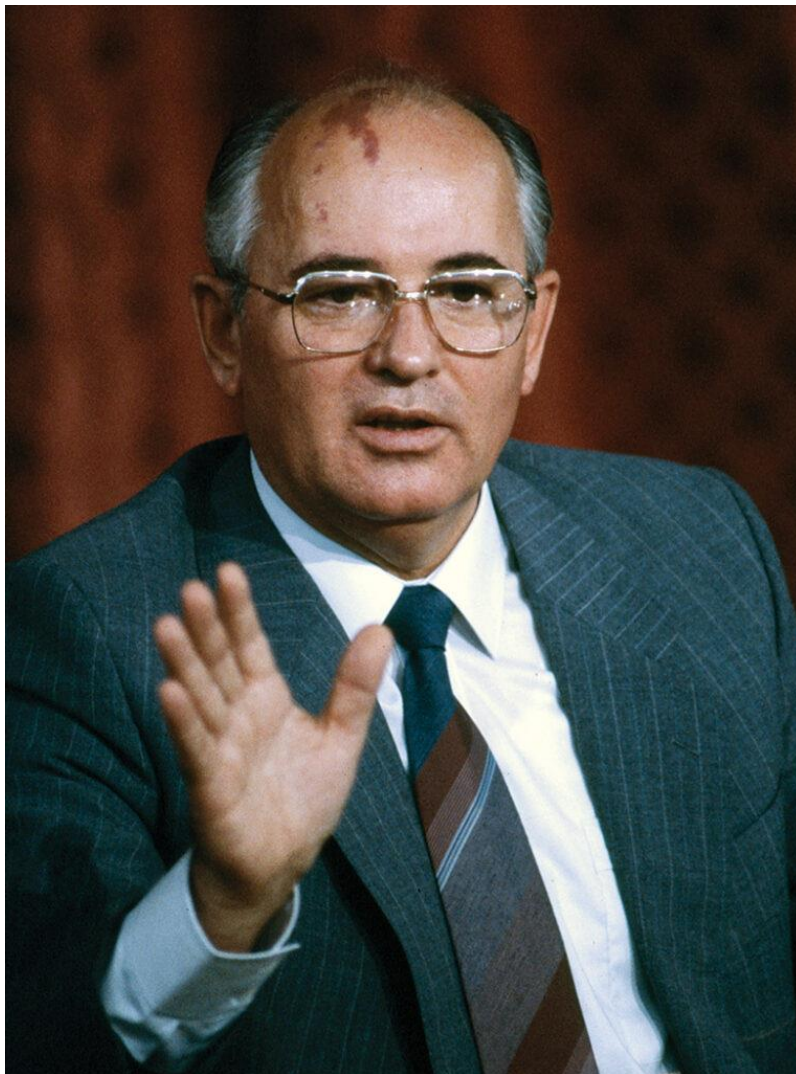
Jalaluddin Haqqani. (Philippe Flandrin/Gamma-Rapho; Robert Nickelsberg; Francois Lochon/Gamma-Rapho (Getty Images))

On learning of the fall of Bori, the Mujahideen deployed an 80-man blocking force along the eastern slope of Moghulgai Ghar, which formed the eastern perimeter of Zhawar. The DRA force arrived outside the base under cover of darkness, only to be immediately engaged by defenders and lose two armored personnel carriers and four other trucks. The dispirited DRA force ultimately withdrew to Khost, allowing the Mujahideen to reclaim Bori.

The DRA force next attacked and captured the town of Lezhi, killing its Mujahideen commander. That same day, September 4, Haqqani and other high-ranking rebels returned to Zhawar and took command of the situation. While the Mujahideen from Lezhi withdrew south, a force of 20 rebels deployed to block Manay Kandow pass.

Manay Kandow was a natural fortified position, with high peaks and a thick rock slab cap that could shelter up to a couple dozen troops from shelling and air strikes. The Mujahideen had also dug defense and communications trenches with clear views of the exposed Tani plain below. The DRA presumptively launched its infantry straight at the Mujahideen positions, only to be turned back by withering fire. Making no progress against the entrenched Mujahideen, the DRA called in massive air strikes and artillery bombardments and then sent in the infantry once again. It repeated this cycle for 10 straight days with no gains before calling on its Russian allies for heavier, sustained air bombardments. Under the continuous pounding of Soviet air strikes, fearful the cave would collapse on them, the Mujahideen finally pulled out on September 14, allowing the DRA to move in and occupy the high ground.





Mikhail Gorbachev. (Philippe Flandrin/Gamma-Rapho; Robert Nickelsberg; Francois Lochon/Gamma-Rapho (Getty Images))

That tactical gain in turn allowed the DRA to refocus its air strikes and bombardments against Zhawar while its infantry moved through the pass. The Mujahideen rear guard contested the crossing as well as they could, but they lacked the numbers and necessary firepower and slowly gave way. Eventually the DRA pushed through and gained the high ground of Tor Kamar, little more than a half mile from Zhawar. Assuming victory was at hand, the DRA carelessly grouped its forces on the high ground in preparation for the final push.

A surprise was in store for them, as the supposedly cowed Mujahideen counterattacked, its two captured T-55s emerging from their subterranean garage to open fire on the grouped government ranks. Moving from position to position, the tanks sent soldiers flying and stunned their officers, who had no idea the Mujahideen had *any* heavy weapons, let alone tanks. The ravaged DRA forces fled in panic, the Mujahideen throwing up blocking positions wherever possible to continue hammering them at every step.

After 42 days of fighting and the loss of a helicopter and untold numbers of government troops (statistics vary, but casualties were presumed to have been heavy), General Tani ordered a nighttime withdrawal of his men. Faulty to nonexistent intelligence on the part of the DRA had cost it the battle, as

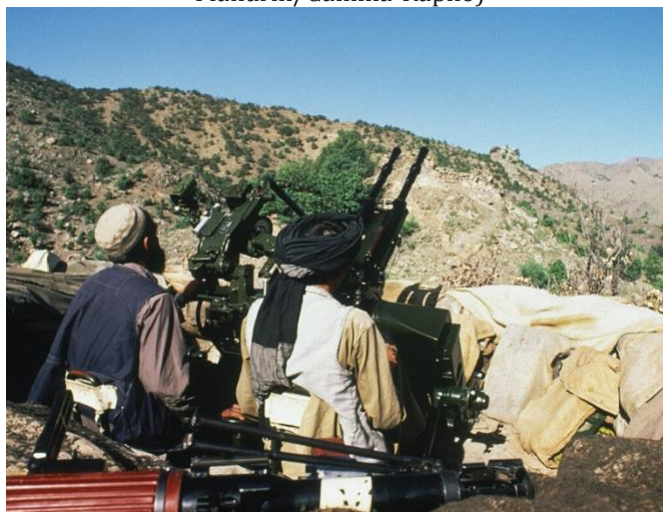
the lack of a properly prepared defense nearly had for the rebels. It proved a tactical victory for the Mujahideen, at the expense of 106 killed and more than 300 wounded. More important, it reaffirmed their control of the country and perceived invincibility in the hinterlands. But the DRA would try again in a few short months, this time with direct and substantial Soviet assistance.

In February 1986 Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev announced the signing of an agreement with the Afghan government for the planned withdrawal of Soviet troops, while simultaneously strengthening the DRA ranks in order for it to assume the leading combat role. Meanwhile, the Soviet High Command urged the DRA Ministry of Defense to take the fight to the Mujahideen and destroy the base at Zhawar.

The DRA committed 54 battalions (nearly all understrength), artillery and air support to the operation. The 7th, 8th, 14th and 25th infantry divisions, the 38th Commando Brigade and the 666th Air Assault Regiment—close to 12,000 troops—would constitute the DRA army tasked with taking Zhawar. This time the Afghans would be operating with the direct Soviet assistance of more than 2,000 troops from the 1st and 3rd battalions of the 191st Separate Motorized Rifle Regiment. The operation was led by Lt. Gen. Nabi Azimi, with Soviet Maj. Gen. V.G. Trofimenko serving as his combat advisor. On February 28 DRA and Soviet forces moved out of their staging grounds at Gardez toward Zhawar.



Among the larger caves at Zhawar was one housing two captured Soviet T-55 tanks—a nasty surprise for invaders. (Philippe Flandrin/Gamma-Rapho)



Deployed on high ground surrounding Zhawar were Soviet-built ZPU-1 and ZPU-2 (twin) 14.5 mm anti-aircraft guns. The Mujahideen downed two-thirds of DRA-Soviet transport helicopters during the second battle. (Philippe Flandrin/Gamma-Rapho (Getty Images))

After nearly a month of painstakingly slow progress hampered by wet snow, driving rain and shelling by the Mujahideen, the DRA force made its way into the Khost valley in preparation for the offensive on Zhawar. The initial assault began at around midnight on April 2 with a two-hour artillery barrage, followed by an airborne insertion of elements of the 38th Commando Brigade via six Mil Mi-8 transport helicopters in conjunction with an attack by the 7th and 14th infantry divisions in the east and the 8th and 25th infantry divisions in the west.

The airborne insertion itself was a disaster, as it was discovered around 3 a.m. that paratroopers had overshot their objective and ended up a few miles inside Pakistan, where they were soon surrounded and captured. Regardless, Azimi ploughed ahead with the main assault. After an initial strike against Mujahideen positions by **Sukhoi Su-25** attack aircraft, 15 transport helicopters inserted the remaining units of the 38th Brigade across seven landing zones. Next came the infantry attack, meant to link up with the already destroyed air assault forces. In their absence, intense fighting soon raged at every landing zone, and Mujahideen troops took out helicopter after helicopter. To quell their accurate fire, field officers called in Soviet jets to bomb and strafe rebel positions, against which the latter's defenses proved largely ineffective.

The Mujahideen remained undeterred. Led by Haqqani, who with dozens of other rebels had managed to escape a collapsed cave, more than 700 Mujahideen emerged from concealment to attack the landing zones, overrunning four of them. The timely arrival of rebel reinforcements from the Pakistani border caught the DRA forces in a tactical vise, leading to the capture of more than 500 commandos of the 38th Brigade by day's end.

After three days of combat, counting both casualties and men captured, the 38th Brigade had been effectively destroyed, as had two dozen of its 32 transport helicopters. The conduct of the operation had proven so abysmal that the Soviets were compelled to assume direct command, tasking General of the Army Valentin Ivanovich Varennikov with turning things around.



Mujahideen sift the wreckage of a downed Soviet helicopter. (AFP (Getty Images))





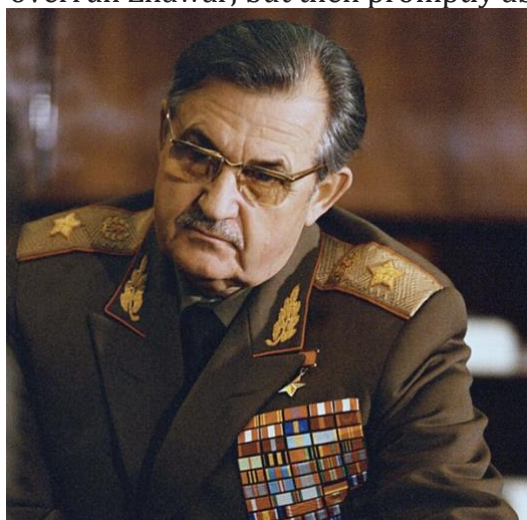
The Soviet insertion of DRA troops at the outset of the second battle proved disastrous, as defenders overran landing zones, destroying or disabling 24 of 32 transport helicopters. A Mujahideen inspects the hulk of a disabled Mil Mi-8. (Associated Press)

The Soviet general immediately buttressed available forces, bringing in three additional DRA regiments, a DRA *spetsnaz* (special forces) battalion and six Soviet battalions before resuming the offensive. During the 12 days Verennikov was granted to prepare his assault, Soviet/DRA artillery and air strikes continued around the clock. With the launch of the renewed effort on the morning of April 17, the artillery and air units stepped up the intensity of their fire support. DRA infantry then hit the Mujahideen from both east and west. After several staggered assaults and a tactical adjustment—in which Afghan government troops moved to high ground under cover of darkness and assaulted without a preemptive artillery strike—the Mujahideen faltered and withdrew from the heights of strategically important Dawri Gar.

Several events had transpired to turn the tide for the DRA troops and their Soviet backers. First, during the fight for Dawri Gar and that of greater Lezhi a critical Mujahideen unit had suddenly and unexpectedly withdrawn without having fired a shot. Around the same time an air strike had wounded Haqqani. But as that news was relayed down the line, a rumor spread he'd been killed. Word their popular leader was dead was enough to prompt the discouraged rebels to evacuate Zhawar. Emerging with the two captured T-55s, a rear guard held off the enemy long enough for the main body to flee into the mountains. Amid the hasty pullout the Mujahideen left behind most of their equipment and supplies, while they abandoned the tanks in the foothills. After months of expended blood, sweat, toil and munitions, DRA and Soviet forces finally claimed Zhawar at noon on April 19.



DRA forces did finally manage to overrun Zhawar, but then promptly abandoned it.



Valentin Varennikov. (Jafari (Afghan Media Resource Center) )

They wouldn't remain long, as intelligence indicated that Mujahideen along the Pakistani border were already mobilizing multiple rocket launchers in preparation for a counterattack. Time being short, the occupiers were given but four hours to destroy the complex—far from enough time to do an adequate job. Communist sappers detonated several hundred antitank mines in the primary caves, doing what little damage they could, before pulling out before dark.

The Second Battle of Zhawar had proved both a short-lived and costly victory for the DRA and its Soviet backers. In addition to their presumed heavy casualties, more than 500 of their men had been captured, and they'd lost two dozen helicopters and two attack jets. By comparison the Mujahideen had lost 281 killed and some 350 wounded. Adding insult to injury, the minute DRA and Soviet forces abandoned Zhawar, the **Mujahideen** moved right back in to repair the damage, improve defenses and bring the base back up to operational status within weeks. The reconstituted rebels subsequently filtered back into the region, reclaiming all areas previously taken by DRA and Soviet troops.



The collective Battles of Zhawar were to have been a showcase for the Afghan government, an opportunity for it to establish its legitimacy as the governing body of its fractured nation. Instead, its poor handling of the offensives cost it dearly in manpower and materiel. The fiasco also put the Soviets in a lose-lose position even as they prepared to transition out of the country. While Russian firepower had given the DRA the edge it needed to capture Zhawar, Afghan intelligence had failed to properly assess enemy defenses and strengths, to its own detriment.



This woven Afghan rug tells a different story, with anti-aircraft guns at bottom and small arms at center chasing the Soviets back north. (British Museum.)



From the colorful festoons to the paradelike nature of this 1988 Soviet procession, an observer might get the impression they were taking a victory lap instead of withdrawing from Afghanistan in defeat. (Liu Heung-Shing (Associated Press))

To be fair, the Mujahideen were also wracked with intelligence failures. Their spies had failed to identify the DRA-Soviet buildup for the second battle. Then, at the height of combat, Haqqani's rumored death exposed weaknesses in the rebel command-and-control structure, costing the Mujahideen their supply base, albeit only briefly.

In the end, the seesaw struggle for Zhawar accomplished little, though the battles did reaffirm for the Afghan people and the international community that the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, or any such puppet government, could not defeat the Mujahideen without the direct military intervention of its

backers. The Soviet Union could have taken that lesson from history. Instead, they learned by hard experience. By then the communist superpower had had enough of the “graveyard of empires.”

*Michigan-based Michael G. Stroud is a frequent contributor to military history publications and websites in both the United States and Britain. For further reading he recommends The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War, by Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester W. Grau, and The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost, by the Russian General Staff, edited and translated by Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress.*

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Grass Valley, CA 95945

Revised: January 2022

# June

# 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4 All Vets Day at State Capital	5	6 NCCVC VVA-535 Board & General Meeting	7	8
9	10	11	12 Women Veterans Day	13	14 Flag Day 249th U.S. Army Birthday	15
16 Father's Day	17	18	19 Juneteenth	20 First Day of Summer	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 PTSD Awareness Day	28	29
30						

# July

# 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Canada Day	2	3	4 Independence Day  NCCVC VVA-535 Board & General Meeting <b>CANCELED</b>	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



# August

# 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 NCCVC VVA-535 Board & General Meeting  Gold Star Children's Day	2 Gulf of Tonkin Incident  (1964)	3
4 234 <sup>th</sup> U.S. Coast Guard Birthday	5	6	7	8	9	10 Agent Orange Awareness Day
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

# September

# 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Labor Day	3	4	5 NCCVC VVA-535 Board & General Meeting	6	7
8	9	10	11 Patriot Day	12	13	14
15	16	17	18 77 <sup>th</sup> U.S. Air Force Birthday	19	20 National POW/MIA Recognition Day	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29 Gold Star Mothers and Family Day	30					

# Yuba-Sutter Stand Down 2024 Veteran's Resource Fair

This annual event plays a critical role in helping veterans, active duty personnel, & their families obtain necessary goods and service



## August 15, 16, 17

Opening Ceremonies Fri. 1200 Noon

Gates Open/Close

Thurs. & Fri. 0900 - 1600

Saturday 0900 - 1500

*No Overnights*

## Registration

You may register by going online to [www.YubaSutterVeteransStandDown.org](http://www.YubaSutterVeteransStandDown.org) or at VA Clinic, 425 Plumas St, Yuba City, Yuba-Sutter Veterans Stand Down, 604 D. St Marysville 530-749-1036

*Proof you are a Veteran is needed:  
DD-214, VA Medical Card or Veteran's ID  
Only certified service dogs are allowed.*

## Services Include

- ❖ Food
  - Daily Snacks
  - Breakfast & Lunch
- ❖ Military Clothing Supply
  - Fri., 1pm & Sat.
- ❖ Vision & Dental Services
  - Fri. & Sat.
- ❖ Hearing Services
  - Thurs. & Fri.
- ❖ Education Advice
- ❖ Social Security
- ❖ Veteran's Benefits
  - VA Claim Officers
  - Veterans Services Officers
  - Vet Center Van
  - VA Clinic
  - Cal Vet Services
- ❖ Veterans Service Organizations
- ❖ Employment/Public Assistance
- ❖ Drug, Alcohol, & Mental Health Counseling
- ❖ DMV Services
- ❖ Women's health & Service Area

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