

Recognizing Vietnam War Service

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recognizes all men and women who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during the U.S. involvement in Vietnam—November 1, 1955, to May 15, 1975.

Nine million Americans--approximately 7.2 million living today--served during that period. VA has designated March 29, 2016, as the day to express gratitude to this generation of Americans who have “borne the battle,” and pays respects to those now interred in national cemeteries.

The Department of Defense--with federal, state, and local government partners—are coordinating programs and activities as part of the United States of American Vietnam War Commemoration. By presidential proclamation, the commemoration began in 2012 and continues through Veterans Day 2025. Memorialization of veterans helped provide the recognition deserved. In the national cemeteries overseen by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), Vietnam veterans are memorialized as individuals and as participants of this divisive and difficult conflict as a means of healing the nation’s wounds.

NCA national cemeteries contain twenty-seven monuments honoring Vietnam War service. Additional monuments that offer tribute to the fallen, those held as prisoners of war (POW), and those missing in action (MIA) include veterans of this conflict.

All veterans are remembered, regardless of rank, as casualties swept the ranks. The first U.S. soldier killed in action was Pvt. Duncan F. Krueger (d. 1965), whose remains are interred in [Wood National Cemetery](#). Maj.Gen. Bruno A. Hochmuth, the first general killed, is interred in [Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery](#).

The number of service members whose deaths were classified as MIA magnified the grief associated with this war, and lasted decades afterward. Among those formerly classified as MIA is Capt. Daniel Carrier, who was shot down near Da Nang in June 1967. His remains were interred in [Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery](#) in 1987. Warrant Officer John W. Frink went missing in April 1972, and it was not until 1993 that his remains were repatriated and buried in [Santa Fe National Cemetery](#). These are two of many belated closures for friends and family.

Cooperation among governments and advances in science has promoted the identification of unknowns. One of the most well-known accounts is that of Lt. Michael J. Blassie, whose aircraft went down in May 1972. In 1984, the remains of an unidentified airman were placed in Arlington National Cemetery’s Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Later, crash-site evidence and DNA

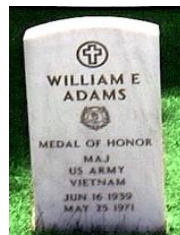


Monuments to Vietnam-era service at Calverton National Cemetery, NY, (top) and Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery, TX (below).

forensics identified the unknown as Blassie, and in 1998 his remains were removed from the Tomb of the Unknown and reinterred with full honors in [Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery](#).

Many Vietnam veterans returned home to serve the country in new capacities. PFC Oliver W. Sipple ([Golden Gate National Cemetery](#)) thwarted an assassination attempt on President Gerald Ford. Cpl. John D. McKeel ([Riverside National Cemetery](#)) was held hostage in the U.S. Embassy, Tehran, 1979 to 1981, during the Iranian revolution. Two became astronauts for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration--Ellison Onizuka and Lacy Veach. Sgt. William D. Napton ([Fort Snelling National Cemetery](#)) and SP4 Ronald Frank Houska ([Black Hills National Cemetery](#)) again took care of fellow veterans in civilian careers as national cemetery directors.

The month of March also marks the inauguration of the [Medal of Honor](#) (MOH), the highest honor paid to service members for acts of bravery above and beyond the call of duty. Vietnam veterans are among those recognized, and [thirty-eight are interred in VA national cemeteries](#). Here are just some of the MOH recipients who served in Vietnam and are interred in NCA properties.



William E. Adams
1939-1971

Hometown: Fort Collins, Colorado

Military Branch: U.S. Army

Summary of MOH Citation: The 31-year-old Army major was killed in action while attempting to rescue three seriously wounded soldiers in the Kontum Province.

Read the full citation [here](#).

Place of Burial: [Fort Logan National Cemetery](#) (Section P, Grave 3831)

Photo: http://www.fold3.com/page/111347785_william_edward_adams/



William M. Bryant
1933-1969

Hometown: Detroit, Michigan

Military Branch: U.S. Army

Summary of MOH Citation: SFC Bryant, who was 36 years old, displayed inspirational leadership and self-sacrifice during a continuous 34-hour enemy attack in the Long Khanh Province, Vietnam. He was killed in action. *Read the full citation [here](#).*

Place of Burial: [Raleigh National Cemetery](#) (Section 15, Site 1227)

Photo: <http://www.vvmf.org/>



George E. Day
1925-2013

Hometown: Sioux City, Iowa

Military Branch: U.S. Air Force

Summary of MOH Citation: At age 42, Col. Day, was shot down by enemy forces over North Vietnam and maintained unceasing resistance during five years as a prisoner of war. *Read the full citation [here](#).*

Place of Burial: [Barrancas National Cemetery](#) (Section 51, Site 30)

Photo: <http://www.history.army.mil/html/moh/vietnam-a-l.html#DAY>



Michael J. Estocin
1931-1967

Hometown: Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania

Military Branch: U.S. Navy

Summary of MOH Citation: Capt. Estocin, who was 35 years old, flew a series of coordinated strikes as part of intense aerial assaults on enemy forces near Haiphong, North Vietnam. He was killed in action. *Read the full citation [here](#).*

Place of Burial: [Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery](#) (Section MA, Site 112)

Photo: <http://www.vvmf.org/>



Candelario Garcia
1944-2013

Hometown: Corsicana, Texas

Military Branch: U.S. Army

Summary of MOH Citation: Sgt. Garcia, who was 19 years old, eliminated enemy machine-gun positions to assist wounded comrades near Lai Khe, Vietnam. *Read the full citation [here](#).*

Place of Burial: [Dallas- Ft. Worth National Cemetery](#) (Section 107, Site 209)

Photo: <http://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/valor24/recipients/garcia/>



Ralph H. Johnson
1949-1968

Hometown: Charleston, South Carolina

Military Branch: U.S. Marine Corps

Summary of MOH Citation: PFC Johnson, who was 19 years old, threw himself on a grenade to save his comrades and slow the enemy's advance. He was killed in action. *Read the full citation [here](#).*

Place of Burial: [Beaufort National Cemetery](#) (Section 3, Site 21)

Photo: <http://www.charleston.va.gov/about/history.asp>