

**CONCURRENT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE 50TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIETNAM WAR**

2013 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

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32

33 **LONG TITLE**

34 **General Description:**

35 This concurrent resolution of the Legislature and the Governor recognizes the 50th
36 Anniversary of the Vietnam War.

37 **Highlighted Provisions:**

38 This resolution:

- 39 ▶ recognizes the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War and those who fought,
40 suffered, and died in the conflict; and
- 41 ▶ urges the citizens of Utah to reflect on the service and sacrifice of many during the
42 Vietnam War.

43 **Special Clauses:**

44 None

45

46 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

47 WHEREAS, in the late 1950s, the United States began sending advisors to help train
48 the South Vietnamese Army and Air Force to withstand the onslaught from Communist North
49 Vietnam;

50 WHEREAS, the Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG), along with 700
51 other U.S. military advisors, worked for eight years to train the South Vietnamese for
52 conventional warfare;

53 WHEREAS, on October 11, 1961, President John F. Kennedy authorized a detachment
54 from the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron to deploy to South Vietnam as Project Farm
55 Gate;

56 WHEREAS, Operation Mule Train, begun in January 1962, was designed to drop

57 supplies to isolated outposts and transport parachutists into areas controlled by the Vietcong;

58 WHEREAS, at the request of South Vietnam's President, the United States Air Force
59 was directed to spray the Vietnamese countryside with an aerial herbicide that would strip the
60 jungles of all foliage and eliminate the cover and available food for the North Vietnamese;

61 WHEREAS, this action, named Operation Ranch Hand, began in 1962;

62 WHEREAS, arguments in Washington erupted on whether the spraying actually did
63 any good, or whether the Americans and the South Vietnamese governments were risking the
64 loyalty of the South Vietnamese people whose livelihoods were also at risk;

65 WHEREAS, President Kennedy allowed the spraying, but only under limited conditions
66 and as long as crops were not damaged;

67 WHEREAS, the planes that dropped the herbicide were modified to carry and spray the
68 defoliant to only attack areas of the jungle where combatants could hide, but by 1971 the
69 policy had changed and even crops were sprayed;

70 WHEREAS, the operation continued for nine years and affected 36% of the mangrove
71 forest and 20% of the jungles of South Vietnam;

72 WHEREAS, this operation began the controversy over the effects of the defoliant
73 Agent Orange on humans, which continues today;

74 WHEREAS, in August 1964, two U.S. destroyers, the USS Turner Joy and the USS
75 Maddox, were performing surveillance patrols in conjunction with the South Vietnamese Navy
76 along the North Vietnamese coast in the Gulf of Tonkin;

77 WHEREAS, North Vietnam claimed a 12-mile territorial zone off its coastline, but the
78 United States only recognized a 3-mile border and allowed its ships to sail within 11 miles of
79 the coast;

80 WHEREAS, when ships would come into range, the North Vietnamese radar sites on
81 shore would activate and the South Vietnamese Navy would then harass the installations with
82 gunfire;

83 WHEREAS, in retaliation, the North Vietnamese Navy sent out several torpedo boats
84 on an attack, which proved unsuccessful;

85 WHEREAS, when President Lyndon B. Johnson received notification of the incident,
86 he ordered the first American air strikes against North Vietnamese naval bases;

87 WHEREAS, a few days later, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which
88 gave President Johnson the authority to increase America's involvement in Vietnam;

89 WHEREAS, in February 1965, President Johnson ordered a series of reprisal air strikes
90 after several attacks on U.S. bases by Vietcong units;

91 WHEREAS, a series of paved and unpaved roads, rivers, and sometimes narrow
92 footpaths through dense jungle, commonly referred to as the Ho Chi Minh Trail, were being
93 utilized by the North Vietnamese and Vietcong armies to smuggle supplies and troops back and
94 forth from North and South Vietnam;

95 WHEREAS, this intricate transportation system stretched throughout the mountains
96 along the Vietnamese-Laos-Cambodia borders and was a large problem for the South
97 Vietnamese and U.S. forces;

98 WHEREAS, cutting off the Ho Chi Minh Trail, often called the "Secret War," was
99 controversial because it often entailed constant air strikes to areas in Laos and Cambodia,
100 which were neutral countries, and these tactics were not known to most Americans;

101 WHEREAS, after several attacks upon United States Air Force bases, 3,500 United
102 States Marines were dispatched to South Vietnam on March 8, 1965;

103 WHEREAS, this marked the beginning of the American ground war, and public
104 opinion at the time overwhelmingly supported the deployment;

105 WHEREAS, the initial deployment of 3,500 Marines increased to nearly 200,000
106 American military personnel by December of 1965;

107 WHEREAS, that same month, South Vietnamese forces suffered heavy losses in a
108 battle that both sides viewed as a watershed, and American leaders responded by developing
109 plans for U.S. troops to move from a defensive strategy to an offensive approach to the
110 escalating war;

111 WHEREAS, the bombing campaigns that began in 1964, which were intended to force
112 North Vietnam to cease its support for the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam,

113 escalated significantly by the end of 1966;

114 WHEREAS, where ground combat was sometimes made complicated by
115 unconventional military opposition and difficult terrain, U.S. air superiority remained constant,
116 and throughout the Vietnam War, various policies and strategies were put in place by the U.S.
117 military to take advantage of that strength;

118 WHEREAS, over the course of the conflict, U.S. forces dropped over 7 million tons of
119 bombs through Southeast Asia, compared to only about 2 million tons dropped during all of
120 World War II;

121 WHEREAS, geared towards suppressing the Pathet Lao's Communist guerrillas in
122 Northern Laos, Operation Barrel Roll, a heavily covert operation, was initiated to provide air
123 support for the Royal Laotian Army, and included the first bombings in Laos in support of the
124 war against North Vietnam;

125 WHEREAS, another interdiction effort, Operation Steel Tiger, was aimed at destroying
126 the North Vietnamese flow of supplies and troops along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and involved
127 heavy covert bombing in Southeastern Laos;

128 WHEREAS, Operation Tiger Hound, initiated in support of both Barrel Roll and Steel
129 Tiger, focused solely on disrupting movement along the Ho Chi Minh Trail on the lower
130 portion of the Laotian panhandle and was initiated by the South Vietnamese Air Force and by
131 United States Air Force units based in South Vietnam;

132 WHEREAS, what was expected to be the usual two-day cease-fire in observance of Tet
133 Nguyên Dan, the lunar New Year and the most important Vietnamese holiday, became an
134 opportunity for the North Vietnamese Army and Vietcong to strike;

135 WHEREAS, this large, well-coordinated surprise campaign on cities and U.S. targets
136 throughout South Vietnam, named the Tet Offensive, was North Vietnam's attempt to end the
137 war in one swift blow;

138 WHEREAS, the morning of January 31, 1968, saw many provincial capitals and cities
139 such as Saigon and Hue under siege from large numbers of Communist fighters who had
140 apparently infiltrated the South in the months and weeks leading up to the planned offensive;

141 WHEREAS, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces, initially unprepared and overwhelmed,
142 countered many of the attacks, and eventually gained back control by early March of all areas
143 where the Vietcong were entrenched;

144 WHEREAS, in the aftermath, many cities and towns in South Vietnam were
145 devastated, with thousands of casualties sustained by forces and civilians in the South;

146 WHEREAS, the Tet Offensive was evidence of North Vietnam's ability to stage a
147 large-scale attack;

148 WHEREAS, this turning point in the war would lead to a change in approach by
149 political and military leadership, and change the way many in the United States viewed the war
150 from home;

151 WHEREAS, the first major bombing campaign on North Vietnamese territory,
152 Operation Rolling Thunder was intended to place heavy military pressure on the North
153 Vietnamese leaders and reduce their ability and desire to wage war against the U.S.-supported
154 South Vietnamese government;

155 WHEREAS, from 1965 to 1968, about 643,000 tons of bombs were dropped on North
156 Vietnam;

157 WHEREAS, leading up to the Tet Offensive, widespread protests and demonstrations
158 against U.S. involvement and the continued loss of American lives were already taking place in
159 the United States;

160 WHEREAS, beginning in 1964, these protests and demonstrations led to a polarization
161 of Americans, with one side continuing to support America's role in Southeast Asia and the
162 other preaching peace and the end to U.S. operations in the region;

163 WHEREAS, although most demonstrations were peaceful, some were highlighted by
164 violence and, whether instigated by protestors or police, these confrontational events often
165 received more attention than the war itself;

166 WHEREAS, the North Vietnamese-led Tet Offensive in early 1968 brought a new wave
167 of criticism from the American public as images of those events shocked many across the
168 nation;

169 WHEREAS, with many news outlets publicizing the horrors encountered in South
170 Vietnam during that period, as well as the depiction of the attack on the American Embassy in
171 Saigon, many Americans questioned the ability of the United States to resolve the conflict by
172 use of military intervention and the validity of previous reports of successful operations in the
173 region;

174 WHEREAS, Operation Menu was a highly secretive bombing campaign of
175 Communist-supported supply bases in Cambodia that the North Vietnamese used in aiding
176 attacks on South Vietnam;

177 WHEREAS, these controversial B-52 bombing raids in neutral Cambodia, authorized
178 by President Richard Nixon, continued until 1973 when information about those raids was
179 leaked and the devastation to the region was exposed;

180 WHEREAS, public protests increased, and on May 4, 1970, the Ohio National Guard
181 fired on Kent State University students, killing four students, during a protest against President
182 Nixon for sending American troops into Cambodia;

183 WHEREAS, the killings resulted in a nationwide student strike;

184 WHEREAS, the Vietnam War was the central issue of the 1972 presidential election,
185 with President Nixon's opponent, George McGovern, campaigning on a platform of withdrawal
186 from Vietnam;

187 WHEREAS, starting in 1969, President Nixon's National Security Adviser, Henry
188 Kissinger, carried on secret negotiations with North Vietnamese officials;

189 WHEREAS, in October 1972, an agreement was reached, but South Vietnamese
190 President Nguyen Van Thieu demanded massive changes to the peace proposal;

191 WHEREAS, with negotiations deadlocked, President Nixon approved Operation
192 Linebacker II, a massive bombing campaign by B-52 strategic bombers aimed at reassuring the
193 South Vietnamese and forcing the North Vietnamese back to the negotiating table;

194 WHEREAS, in just 11 days, over 49,000 tons of bombs were dropped on North
195 Vietnam, devastating the country and forcing North Vietnam back to the table;

196 WHEREAS, on January 15, 1973, President Richard Nixon announced the suspension

197 of offensive action against North Vietnam;

198 WHEREAS, the Paris Peace Accords, the agreement signed on January 27, 1973,
199 between North Vietnam and the United States and South Vietnam, effectively ended the
200 conflict and began the complete withdrawal of American troops;

201 WHEREAS, the key provisions of the agreement included a cease-fire throughout
202 Vietnam, withdrawal of U.S. combat forces, the release of prisoners of war, and the
203 reunification of North and South Vietnam through peaceful means;

204 WHEREAS, the South Vietnamese government was to remain in place until new
205 elections were held, and North Vietnamese forces in the South were not to advance further or
206 be reinforced;

207 WHEREAS, little more than two months after the peace agreement, U.S. combat troops
208 left Vietnam;

209 WHEREAS, Operation Homecoming, a result of the Paris Peace Accords, made
210 possible the return of nearly 600 American prisoners of war (POWs) held by North Vietnam;

211 WHEREAS, groups of released POWs were selected on the basis of their length of time
212 in prison, with the first group consisting of POWs that had spent six to eight years as prisoners
213 of war;

214 WHEREAS, after Operation Homecoming, about 1,350 Americans were still listed as
215 prisoners of war or missing in action, and another 1,200 Americans were reported killed in
216 action without their bodies being recovered;

217 WHEREAS, these missing personnel would become the subject of an intense search by
218 the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, with many remains of missing
219 personnel located and returned in the decades since;

220 WHEREAS, following the refusal of Congress to fund additional U.S. activity in
221 Vietnam, all American troops and equipment were withdrawn from Vietnam;

222 WHEREAS, Communist leaders in the North had expected that the cease-fire terms
223 would favor their side, but even before the last American combat troops departed on March 29,
224 1973, the Communists violated the cease-fire;

225 WHEREAS, in Saigon, approximately 7,000 United States Department of Defense
226 civilian employees remained behind to aid South Vietnam in conducting what was beginning to
227 look like a fierce and ongoing war with Communist North Vietnam;

228 WHEREAS, Saigon, bolstered by a surge of U.S. aid received just before the cease-fire
229 went into effect, at first started to push back the Vietcong, but by early 1974, full-scale warfare
230 had resumed;

231 WHEREAS, the Vietcong recaptured the territory it lost during the previous dry season,
232 and during the rest of 1974 Communist forces took possession of additional areas in the South;

233 WHEREAS, at the end of 1974, South Vietnamese authorities reported that 80,000
234 soldiers and civilians had been killed, making it the costliest year of the war;

235 WHEREAS, in the spring of 1975, 20 divisions of the North Vietnamese Army invaded
236 South Vietnam;

237 WHEREAS, South Vietnamese forces fell back in disorder and panic, abandoning air
238 bases, weapons, aircraft, fuel, and ammunition, and on April 29, 1975, Communist forces
239 reached Saigon, the South Vietnamese capital, and quickly overran the city;

240 WHEREAS, South Vietnam formally surrendered the next day;

241 WHEREAS, April 30, 1975, also saw the last American civilians and military
242 personnel still in South Vietnam airlifted out of Saigon by U.S. support forces;

243 WHEREAS, statistics from the 1970 census indicate that 27,910 Utahns served in
244 Vietnam;

245 WHEREAS, 388 Utahns were killed, 14 are still listed as missing in action, and many
246 more were wounded during their service;

247 WHEREAS, a new exhibit, which honors and pays tribute to the sacrifices of POWs
248 during the Vietnam War, opened September 12, 2012, at the Hill Air Force Base museum; and

249 WHEREAS, it is fitting that in the 50th year since the beginning of the conflict Utahns
250 reflect on the Vietnam War and its legacy:

251 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
252 Governor concurring therein, recognize the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War and those

253 who fought, suffered, and died in the conflict.

254 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge the citizens
255 of Utah to reflect on the service and sacrifice of many during the Vietnam War.

256 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Veterans of
257 Foreign Wars USA, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Utah Department of
258 Veterans' Affairs, the Hill Air Force Base museum, and the members of Utah's congressional
259 delegation.