

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

2013 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Curtis Oda

Senate Sponsor: Scott K. Jenkins

LONG TITLE

General Description:

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

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

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

Special Clauses:

None

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

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

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



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

31 WHEREAS, Operation Mule Train, begun in January 1962, was designed to drop
32 supplies to isolated outposts and transport parachutists into areas controlled by the Vietcong;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

58 WHEREAS, in retaliation, the North Vietnamese Navy sent out several torpedo boats

59 on an attack, which proved unsuccessful;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

86 WHEREAS, the bombing campaigns that began in 1964, which were intended to force
87 North Vietnam to cease its support for the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam,
88 escalated significantly by the end of 1966;

89 WHEREAS, where ground combat was sometimes made complicated by

90 unconventional military opposition and difficult terrain, U.S. air superiority remained constant,
91 and throughout the Vietnam War, various policies and strategies were put in place by the U.S.
92 military to take advantage of that strength;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

171 WHEREAS, on January 15, 1973, President Richard Nixon announced the suspension
172 of offensive action against North Vietnam;

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

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

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

182 WHEREAS, little more than two months after the peace agreement, U.S. combat troops

183 left Vietnam;

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

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

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

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

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

197 WHEREAS, Communist leaders in the North had expected that the cease-fire terms
198 would favor their side, but even before the last American combat troops departed on March 29,
199 1973, the Communists violated the cease-fire;

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

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

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

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

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

212 WHEREAS, South Vietnamese forces fell back in disorder and panic, abandoning air
213 bases, weapons, aircraft, fuel, and ammunition, and on April 29, 1975, Communist forces

214 reached Saigon, the South Vietnamese capital, and quickly overran the city;
215 WHEREAS, South Vietnam formally surrendered the next day;
216 WHEREAS, April 30, 1975, also saw the last American civilians and military
217 personnel still in South Vietnam airlifted out of Saigon by U.S. support forces;
218 WHEREAS, statistics from the 1970 census indicate that 27,910 Utahns served in
219 Vietnam;
220 WHEREAS, 388 Utahns were killed, 14 are still listed as missing in action, and many
221 more were wounded during their service;
222 WHEREAS, a new exhibit, which honors and pays tribute to the sacrifices of POWs
223 during the Vietnam War, opened September 12, 2012, at the Hill Air Force Base museum; and
224 WHEREAS, it is fitting that in the 50th year since the beginning of the conflict Utahns
225 reflect on the Vietnam War and its legacy:
226 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
227 Governor concurring therein, recognize the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War and those
228 who fought, suffered, and died in the conflict.
229 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge the citizens
230 of Utah to reflect on the service and sacrifice of many during the Vietnam War.
231 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Veterans of
232 Foreign Wars USA, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Utah Department of
233 Veterans' Affairs, the Hill Air Force Base museum, and the members of Utah's congressional
234 delegation.

Legislative Review Note
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Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel