

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America



Meeting Notice

16 November, 2022

5555 W. Good Hope Rd.
Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.
Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.
16 November

Future Meetings

21 December, 18 January, 15 February, 15
March, 19 April, 17 May, 21 June, 19 July
Chapter web page: www.vietnamvetschapter324.com
National web page: www.vva.org

Chapter Officers

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John is listed in the phone book - good luck finding one

No Newsletter in December

Reserve your place at the Christmas Party Now

324 Christmas Party 7pm, December 21

Elks Club
5555 W. Good Hope Rd.

Members, family, and friends invited
Food and refreshments provided

RSVP to Pat Moore -
Contact info above



**VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
Milwaukee Chapter 324
October 19, 2022**

NEW BUSINESS

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm by President Pat Ciofani
Minutes of Sept. 21, 2022 meeting reviewed and accepted
Treasurer's Report – Pat Moore - \$5058.19 in our checking account

State Council Meeting Update – Pat Ciofani – Donations were made to Florida and Puerto Rico for hurricane relief
VVA Anniversary Certificate – We were awarded a certificate from National for 35 years
Christmas Party – December 21st instead of our regular meeting – Contact Pat Moore if you are planning to attend
Veterans Day Parade November 5th – A new organization has taken over the parade – We were not contacted to participate

COMMITTEE REPORTS

VVA Membership Update – 75 VVA members
Allied Veterans Meeting Update – Pat Ciofani
Website – Contact Pat Moore to post items of interest

Adjournment – 7:30

New Disability Schedule 30 - 60% Disability

Dependent Status	30%	40%	50%	60%
Veteran Alone	\$508.05	\$731.86	\$1,041.82	\$1,319.65
Veteran with Spouse	\$567.05	\$812.86	\$1,141.82	\$1,440.65
Veteran with Spouse and Child	\$612.05	\$870.86	\$1,215.82	\$1,529.65
Veteran with Child	\$548.05	\$785.86	\$1,109.82	\$1,400.65
Each Additional Child Under 18	\$29.00	\$39.00	\$50.00	\$59.00
Each Additional Schoolchild Over Age 18	\$96.00	\$129.00	\$161.00	\$193.00
Additional for Disabled spouse	\$55.00	\$73.00	\$93.00	\$110.00

70 - 100% Disability

Dependent Status	70%	80%	90%	100%
Veteran Alone	\$1,663.06	\$1,933.15	\$2,172.39	\$3,621.95
Veteran with Spouse	\$1,804.06	\$2,094.15	\$2,353.39	\$3,823.89
Veteran with Spouse and Child	\$1,907.06	\$2,212.15	\$2,486.39	\$3,971.78
Veteran with Child	\$1,765.06	\$2,040.15	\$2,293.39	\$3,971.78
Each Additional Child Under 18	\$69.00	\$79.00	\$90.00	\$100.34
Each Additional Schoolchild Over 18	\$226.00	\$258.00	\$291.00	\$324.12
Additional for A/A spouse	\$129.00	\$147.00	\$166.00	\$185.20

Preserving the history of America's 'secret war' in Laos

A new online library documents the CIA-led campaign that made it the most bombed nation in history, the effects of which are still felt by Laotian Americans today.

By Saqib Rahim, NBC News, May 16, 2022

A new initiative is aimed at raising awareness about a dark and often forgotten chapter of U.S. history: the secret bombing of Laos during the Vietnam War.

Nearly half a century later, most Americans — and even many young Laotian Americans — know little about the clandestine, nine-year, CIA-led military campaign informally called the “secret war.”

Unlike the Vietnam War, the secret war is seldom taught in U.S. schools. For Laotian elders, most of whom came to the U.S. as refugees during and after the war, the memories can be too traumatic to revisit. Some take them to the grave.

The mission of the Legacies Library, a project of the Washington, D.C.-based group Legacies of War, is to keep the secret war from being lost to time.

A small team of volunteers has begun compiling educational materials about the war, including documentaries, scholarly research and government documents, and uploading free digital versions online. They're just getting started, said Sera Koulabdara, executive director of Legacies of War.

“We're trying to preserve this history so we can protect the future,” said Koulabdara, who was born in Laos but largely grew up in Ohio. “We wanted to encourage more people to write about it and take interest in their history, including the American public.”

It wasn't called the secret war for nothing.

The Johnson and Nixon administrations each oversaw U.S. military operations in Laos — technically a neutral country — without informing Congress of the full scale of the American involvement. U.S. bombers were pummeling communist supply lines on both sides of the Vietnam-Laos border, often with little regard for civilian casualties. They dropped an estimated 2 million tons of ordnance during the conflict, making Laos, on a per-person basis, the most bombed nation in history.

Congressional hearings in 1971 made the campaign known to the public. But by 1975, the U.S. had withdrawn from Vietnam and a weary nation was ready to move on. In Laos, the communist Lao People's Revolutionary Party took power, which it has held ever since.

The impact of the secret war continues to

be felt today, including the danger of unexploded ordnance.

About a third of the American bombs failed to explode on impact. Leftover explosives still saturate the Lao countryside, posing a threat to farmers and children. Some 50,000 people have been killed or injured by unexploded ordnance since 1964, according to AUSLAO-UXO, a company with Lao and Australian owners that provides clearance services.

As the war wound down, thousands of refugees left Laos, with a large share settling in the U.S.

According to U.S. government data, there are about 200,000 Laotian Americans, nearly all of whom trace their heritage to this time, while the Hmong American community, which also includes many refugees from Laos, numbers around 300,000. The Hmong are a separate ethnic group — with a language and cultural traditions distinct from Lao — who have over the last two centuries migrated from China into parts of Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asian immigrants from this era often bury war memories in a “culture of silence,” mental health advocates say. Some research suggests this trauma can be passed down through generations, manifesting in a sense of rootlessness or a lack of Lao identity among descendants.

Legacies of War, formed in 2004, spent years pushing Congress to increase funding for bomb clearance in Laos. Its efforts paid off in 2016, when then-President Barack Obama became the first sitting U.S. president to visit the country. He doubled annual support for ordnance clearance efforts to \$30 million.

That started to address one legacy of the secret war, but another one loomed: Americans' continuing lack of awareness about it. The idea for the Legacies Library came in 2020, after Koulabdara found herself sharing memories with Jessica Pearce Rotondi, a journalist and author in New York she met through social media. Both had spent years rifling through musty boxes, trying to make sense of the family histories their loved ones could never tell.

After her father died in 2017, Koulabdara found photos from his childhood, old journals and notes from his career as a surgeon in Laos. Rotondi had been researching her memoir “What We Inherit,” about her family's search for answers about her uncle,

Continued next page

History Continued

an American pilot during the Vietnam War who never came home.

Searching her childhood home, she found boxes of heavily redacted, declassified CIA documents concerning his service, as well as stacks of letters that chronicled the family's quest to find him.

Their exchanges convinced them of the need for more transparency about the bombing campaign in Laos. "Those bars separated families and continue to keep Americans from knowing their history," Rotondi said in an email, referring to the blacked-out portions

One area where the library is lacking, Rotondi said, is its resources about the Hmong people, many of whom were key U.S. partners during the war. A museum in Minnesota, a state that nearly a third of Hmong Americans call home, commemorates that part of the story.

As for government materials, Sens. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., and Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., are supporting efforts to declassify more CIA documents. Another prospect is to add oral histories. As they become grandparents, some immigrants from Laos have started to open up about their war experiences.

It's the curiosity of younger generations, though, that may make a fuller reconciliation possible.

In February, Laotian Ambassador to the U.S. Khamphan Anlavan gave an award to siblings Hyleigh and Prinston Pan, high schoolers in California, for their work to commemorate the secret war.

Hyleigh Pan has gathered



of the documents. "Our goal with Legacies Library is to stop the silence around the Secret War."

Two years later, the Legacies Library is taking shape.

Fact sheets and congressional testimonies offer a crash course on the continuing problem of unexploded ordnance in Laos. There are also links to books and documentaries selected by a Legacies of War review committee.

One of the library's crown jewels is a group of 32 drawings by Lao villagers. Collected by an American volunteer, Fred Branfman, in the 1970s, they depict what the U.S. air war looked like from below. They represent one of the only forms of direct testimony about the war by the Lao people.

Down the road, organizers hope to find funding for the library — it's now run by volunteers — and add new, unique holdings.

testimonials for Southeast Asia-related legislation and helped produce a documentary about unexploded ordnance in Laos. Prinston Pan has recorded more than a dozen oral histories and organized school fundraisers for bomb cleanup in the country.

He has also written a children's book, "Kong's Adventure," based on the experience of his grandfather, who served as a police chief in Laos under the U.S.-backed government before fleeing the communist takeover with his family and starting a new life in Kansas. All proceeds go to the Legacies Library.

In an interview, Prinston Pan said that talking to the ambassador felt familiar, like talking to his grandfather. The award, he thinks, "comes from a mutual care for the Lao community in general."

"Over time, someone has to take the step forward in healing those wounds from the past."

Troops, veterans less likely to recommend military service

By ROSE L. THAYER, STARS AND STRIPES, July 14, 2022

Service members and veterans are less likely to recommend joining the military to family and friends than they were two years ago, according to survey results released Thursday from the Military Family Advisory Network.

“That, to us, was concerning,” said Shannon Razsadin, executive director of MFAN, a nonprofit advocacy group. “I think it’s the people who are living this life are having a hard time.”

About 63% of respondents said they would recommend the military — a drop from about 75% in the survey completed in 2019. The reason for the decline could be linked to additional survey data that found more than half of military families have a moderate or poor family well-being, she said.

“That’s a really important thing that should get people’s attention and making sure we’re focusing on the whole family,” said Razsadin, the spouse of a Navy officer. “People who do this and live this life, it’s because of a patriotic sense of duty and responsibility to serve. The reality is that this life is hard, and we can’t count on that to be the only thing that helps us get to the maintenance and growth of the all-volunteer force.”

The findings are part of the network’s 2021 Military Family Support Programming Survey, which is conducted every other year to gain insight into an array of support needs for military and veteran families. The survey was fielded online between October and December, with 8,638 people participating, according to the report on its findings.

Respondents, who were either service members, veterans or their spouses, came from all 50 states and Washington, D.C., two U.S. territories, and 22 countries.

This year, researchers introduced a family health scale into the survey, which is a measure of a family unit’s well-being. It uses 10 questions that measure family relationships, health care, finances and housing to create a well-being score. About 59% of families reported moderate or poor health, according to the survey report.

“These findings paint a clear picture; military and veteran family well-being is related to health care satisfaction, family relationships, financial well-being, housing, food insecurity and the military community,” according to the report.

The results come as the military services have

faced a difficult year in meeting their recruiting and retention goals and have been increasing enlistment bonuses and relaxing some regulations such as its tattoo policy to entice new recruits. The Army has been particularly challenged in recruiting, in part because it is the biggest of the military services, said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston.

Negative attention focused on military housing and other quality-of-life concerns also likely is having an impact of people’s willingness to sign up or reenlist, among other factors, he said last month.

In 2018, Reuters reported on the dangerous conditions that military families have faced in base housing, including mold growth, toxic exposure, lead-based paint and asbestos, pest and rodent infestations, and water and sewage issues. Many conditions were exacerbated by poor or slow response to maintenance requests. Congress has since stepped in, issuing reforms to attempt to battle the problems.

The MFAN survey does show more than half of respondents living in privatized military housing were satisfied with their landlord’s responsiveness to repair issues. It also found poor base housing conditions were the most cited reason for choosing to live off base since 2019. People also noted a lack of availability in housing forced them to live outside the base.

Meanwhile, the survey found more than 60% of military and veteran families are paying more than they can comfortably afford for housing. That occurs when housing takes up more than 30% of the household’s income, according to the report.

This divide is seen particularly among officers and the enlisted ranks, Razsadin said.

“The reality is that whether you’re enlisted or an officer, you still need a roof over your head,” she said. “Ultimately, that comes down to finance and compensation.”

Among the five recommendations that MFAN offered to the military in its report was a call for the services to “right-size” the housing allowance paid to service members. When families struggle to pay for housing, it has a ripple effect through other areas. They are more at risk for food insecurity and might lack resources to pay for leisure activities or travel to visit family.

“I think that these things are all connected,” Razsadin said.



Vietnam Veterans of America #324
 PO Box 18631
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