

# Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

*In Service to America*

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## Chapter Officers

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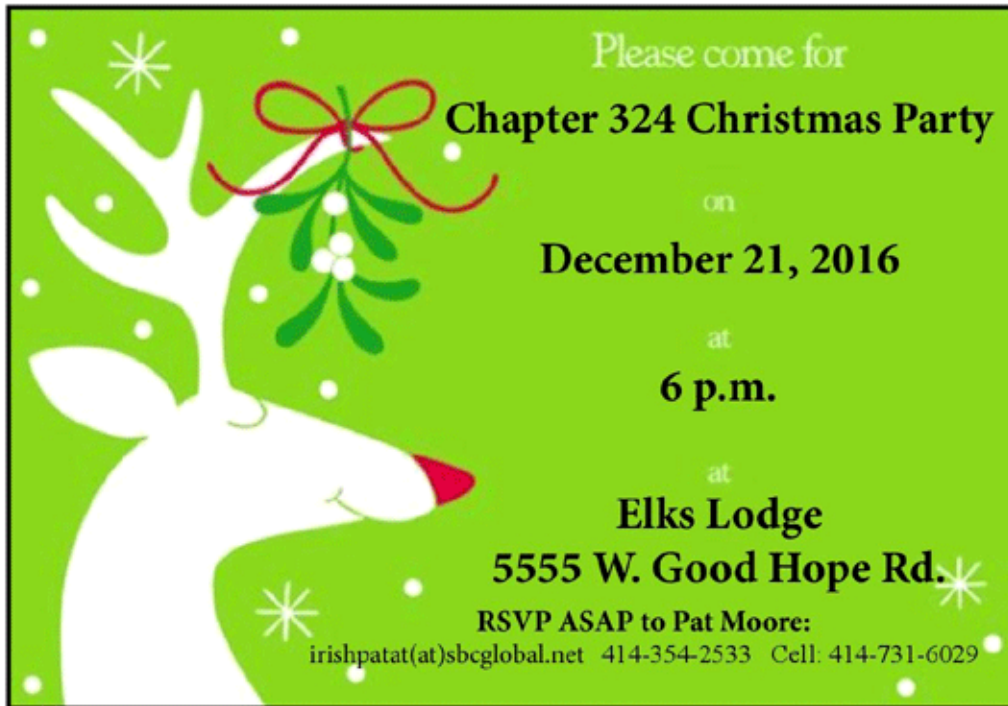
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**Membership:** Joe Herbert Joe's a Luddite

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**Newsletter:** John Zutz john(at)zutz.org

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



Please come for  
**Chapter 324 Christmas Party**  
on  
**December 21, 2016**  
at  
**6 p.m.**  
at  
**Elks Lodge**  
**5555 W. Good Hope Rd.**  
RSVP ASAP to Pat Moore:  
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## VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

Milwaukee Chapter 324

November 16, 2016

### Meeting Called to Order at 7:00 pm by President Pat Ciofani

A Moment of Silence was observed for our brothers and sisters no longer with us, for all POW/MIA's and their families and for all serving our country

### Pledge of Allegiance

Attendance – Dennis Szymanski, Pat Moore, Oliver Williams, Pat Ciofani, John Zutz, John Morgan, David Titter, Ron Gerard, Paul Balge, Joe Herbert

### Minutes of October 19, 2016 meeting reviewed and accepted

Treasurer's Report – Pat Moore - \$3777.34 balance in our checking account

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

VVA Membership Update – Joe Herbert – We welcome new life member Ron Gerard to our chapter

Allied Veterans Meeting Update – Pat Ciofani

Volunteering & Activity at the VA – Reported over 80,000 calls to the suicide hot line last year – New parking structure is now open easing recent parking problems

Website – Contact Pat Moore to post items of interest

### OLD BUSINESS

Veterans Day Parade – Thanks to all who participated on a beautiful day

### NEW BUSINESS

Candy Cane Lane – December 9<sup>th</sup> – 6 – 8 pm

### For the Good of the Chapter

Christmas Party – Moved and passed to approve up to \$700 for our December 21<sup>st</sup> family Christmas party

Chapter Raffle – David Titter won the book "Letters From the Front" that was raffled at our meeting

Adjournment – 7:30 pm

## New Ken Burns Documentary On The Vietnam War

By JAMES CLARK, December 12, 2016

[http://taskandpurpose.com/ken-burns-finally-making-documentary-vietnam-war/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=tp-today](http://taskandpurpose.com/ken-burns-finally-making-documentary-vietnam-war/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tp-today)

Ken Burns, the acclaimed filmmaker behind "The Civil War," sets his sights on another divisive conflict: Vietnam.

A new PBS documentary film series is looking at one of the most divisive wars in American history. "The Vietnam War" is a 10-part documentary series that tells the story of the era-defining conflict over 18 hours. Filmmaker Ken Burns and director Lynn Novick spent six years working on the upcoming series, with accounts from more than 100 witnesses.

"The Vietnam War was a decade of agony that took the lives of more than 58,000 Americans," Burns said in a press release. "There wasn't an American alive then who wasn't affected in some way — from those who fought and sacrificed in the war, to families of service members and POWs, to those who protested the war in open conflict with their government and fellow citizens. More than 40 years after it ended, we can't forget Vietnam, and we are still arguing about why it went wrong, who was to blame and whether it was all worth it."

Burns' upcoming documentary draws extensively from historical footage and images.

"The Vietnam War" features interviews from those on both sides of the conflict, as well as civilians caught in the middle of the war.

"We are all searching for some meaning in this terrible tragedy. Ken tried to shed new light on the human dimensions of the war by looking at it from the bottom up, the top down and from all sides," Novick said in the release. "In addition to dozens of 'ordinary' Americans who shared their stories, we interviewed many 'ordinary' Vietnamese soldiers and noncombatants in the North and South, and we were surprised to learn that the war remains as painful and unresolved for them as it is for us."

"The Vietnam War" will air on PBS in September 2017. The documentary series will also feature additional content on the series' homepage.

Watch the trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ex9MdsQzazs&feature=youtu.be>

## New study could pressure VA to expand Agent Orange benefits

By Charles Omstein and Mike Hixenbaugh, November 21, 2016, News Investigation

<http://www.nationofchange.org/2016/11/21/new-study-pressure-va-expand-agent-orange-benefits/>

A new study has found a close relationship between Agent Orange exposure during the Vietnam War and high blood pressure, a conclusion that could lead the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to dramatically expand the number of veterans eligible for compensation.

The study, published last week by VA researchers in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, found a higher rate of hypertension among members of the Army Chemical Corps who handled Agent Orange during the war compared to those who didn't. Corps members who served in Vietnam but did not spray the chemicals also had a higher rate of hypertension than their peers who served outside Vietnam.

Both results were statistically significant and add to a body of evidence linking Agent Orange exposure and hypertension.

The findings come 41 years after the close of the Vietnam War and decades since the last supplies of Agent Orange were incinerated. Since then, veterans have become increasingly distrustful of the VA. They maintain that their exposure to Agent Orange, which contained the toxic chemical dioxin, has harmed their own health and has been passed on to their children.

A VA working group has been studying the latest scientific literature since March to determine if any illnesses should be added to the agency's list of diseases for which vets are automatically entitled to compensation if they served in Vietnam. The group has been looking at evidence linking bladder cancer, under-active thyroid, Parkinson's-like symptoms and hypertension to Agent Orange exposure.

The VA had been expected to announce its decision this year, but officials now say that will be left to the administration of President-elect Donald Trump.

"For this administration, the deadline for proposing new rules for potential new presumptions [of service connection to herbicide] has passed, and this will become work for the new administration to take to completion," VA officials said in a written statement first reported last week in the newspaper *Stars and Stripes*.

Hypertension is the most common ailment among veterans seeking health care at the VA—indeed it is one of the most common ailments among older

adults generally.

The study released last week found the prevalence of hypertension among members of the Army Chemical Corps to be higher than among other aging veterans. Although most of the Agent Orange used in Vietnam was sprayed from Air Force planes, the Army Chemical Corps also sprayed the herbicide from hand sprayers and helicopters.

Researchers analyzed responses from about 3,000 members of the Army Chemical Corps who participated in a 2013 survey. The research team then verified their self-reported exposure to Agent Orange by using dioxin levels in their blood and checked their self-reported blood pressure against medical records and in-home testing.

Among Chemical Corps members who sprayed herbicides in Vietnam, 81.6 percent said they had high blood pressure. That compares to 64.6 percent among Corps members who did not serve in Vietnam and did not spray herbicides. Researchers said that difference could not be explained away by other characteristics they analyzed, including age, race, weight, alcohol use and tobacco use.

It's unclear if the results from the Army Chemical Corps apply to other Vietnam veterans, the researchers said.

For years, the VA has been weighing whether to provide Agent Orange benefits to vets with high blood pressure, which could potentially cost billions.

In 2009, a federal advisory panel said there was evidence suggesting a connection between Agent Orange exposure and several conditions, including Parkinson's disease, ischemic heart disease and hypertension.

A VA internal working group of scientific experts wanted to recommend the department grant benefits to veterans with all of those conditions, according to Dr. Victoria Cassano, a member of the group who at the time was acting chief consultant for the VA's Environmental Health Strategic Healthcare Group. But the group's superiors at the VA told the panel to change its position and instead recommend against providing benefits for heart disease and hypertension, Cassano said. It recommended in favor of Parkinson's disease.

continued on next page

### Study continued

In late 2009, then-VA Secretary Eric Shinseki said he would add ischemic heart disease and Parkinson's disease to the VA's list, but not hypertension. According to Shinseki's testimony to Congress in 2010, "the evidence regarding hypertension was less compelling."

Instead, Shinseki called for the VA study completed last week.

"I wasn't really surprised by these findings," said Yasmin S. Cypel, the study's principal investigator and a health science specialist at VA. "I just felt that based upon the research that there was evidence to indicate that there might be an association."

Rick Weidman, legislative director of Vietnam Veterans of America, said the new report should add pressure to the VA to compensate vets for hypertension. His group has been pressing the VA to add the condition to its list of Agent Orange-connected diseases ever since the advisory panel first noted evidence of a link.

He can think of only one reason to explain the agency's reluctance: "Money."

"Simple as that," said Weidman, himself a Vietnam vet. "There are so many people who use the VA who have hypertension, it's going to cost."

An estimate of the cost of compensating Vietnam vets with hypertension was not available.

Cassano, the former VA official who thought VA should have agreed to provide hypertension benefits in 2009, said the new research by Cypel and colleagues was "really well designed."

"It's a very definitive study," Cassano said. "It's showing that just being in Vietnam gives you a higher relative risk of developing hypertension."

While hypertension affects many veterans, it is not as debilitating as other conditions and generally can be treated inexpensively with medications. Therefore, she said, the costs may not be as high as some have predicted. Waiting for vets to develop ischemic heart disease or suffer a stroke is "a pennywise pound foolish decision."

Since last year, ProPublica and The Virginian-Pilot have compiled more than 6,000 stories from veterans and their

families about how Agent Orange has affected them. We also have reported how the military and VA have turned to an herbicide expert who defends Agent Orange for guidance on handling vets' claims.

Several veterans said that if the VA begins offering Agent Orange benefits for high blood pressure, they would apply for them.

"It has never been anything I considered," said Ron Bass, 67, who served as an Air Force crew chief in Vietnam from 1969 to 1971 and takes medication for his condition.

"I would definitely file a claim for it," said Ron Zatawski, 66, who served in the Army in Vietnam from 1970 to 1971. "We went through areas that they had sprayed Agent Orange. ... We didn't know how toxic this stuff was."

Victoria Davey, another researcher on the hypertension study, said there's still much to learn about the effects of Agent Orange on vets. She is leading a new study comparing the health of Vietnam vets with similarly aged U.S. residents who never served in the military.

"This doesn't close the book on long-term health consequences of service in Vietnam," Davey said of the hypertension study.

ProPublica and The Virginian-Pilot are interested in hearing from veterans and family members for our ongoing investigation into the effects of Agent Orange on veterans and their children. Share your story now at [propublica.org/agentorange](http://propublica.org/agentorange) or [hamptonroads.com/agentorange](http://hamptonroads.com/agentorange).



## Operation Babylift Had Problems

By Andy Wright SEPTEMBER 21, 2016

<http://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/after-the-vietnam-war-america-flew-planes-full-of-babies-back-to-the-us>

The image is common enough: A passenger plane with human cargo belted snugly into their seats. But look for another second and you'll see that every passenger is a child, and each one has been bundled up inside an identical cardboard box. Most of them are babies, but some are older and their limbs spill over the edges of their makeshift bassinets. They appear marooned without any adults in the shot.

The image is one of many taken during the chaotic end of the Vietnam War when the United States undertook an operation to evacuate thousands of children from Vietnam in April 1975, just weeks before the Fall of Saigon. Supposedly all orphaned, they were slated to be adopted out to waiting U.S. families. Over 2,500 children were brought stateside on flights manned by volunteers outnumbered by infants. Three processing centers were quickly formed at military outposts on the West Coast—two in California and one in Washington—where children were received before being placed with families throughout the country.

Doubts about some of the children's orphanhood would bubble to the surface almost immediately, but before such questions could even be posed, those tasked with manning the operation had to grapple with an incredible logistical problem: quickly transporting and caring for thousands of infants during a time of pandemonium.

A nurse who accompanied a plane load of children to Seattle wrote that she was "overwhelmed" as she saw "the endless flow of little ones pouring into the plane filling every available space." She did not sleep during the 30-hour flight.

Jim Trullinger was doing doctoral research in Vietnam when forced to flee the country. He secured a trip back to the United States with Operation Babylift. "When we got to the airport, I helped carry babies onto the plane, a 747 charter, and strap them into their seats," he wrote. "There were no baby carriers, so we just had to use seat belts tightened around the babies. There were so many babies that there was no place for me to sit. Before take-off, the flight attendant told me that if there was a crash, I was to get off the plane first and she would toss babies to me."

Catastrophe was fresh in everyone's minds, as the first scheduled flight of Operation Babylift flight had crash-landed on April 4th, killing many of the

passengers, including 78 children.

Upon arriving in the United States, planes were met by medical teams that triaged groups of children who were suffering from a range of maladies such as severe dehydration, intestinal illnesses, pneumonia, skin infections and even chicken pox. Ambulances rushed the sickest to hospitals. Around half of the children flowed through San Francisco's Presidio. Now a lush recreation area, the Presidio was an army base at the time and a cavernous football field-sized building called Harmon Hall was transformed into a massive care facility.

The hall was lined with small mattresses for the babies; when mattresses ran short, children were sometimes placed on layers of blankets on the floor. Half of the facility was devoted to support services for the children; part to feeding volunteers who worked long shifts, sometimes sleeping at the facility. The children were sick, and volunteers fell sick as well. In very rare cases, people who felt they had been promised a child for adoption would show up at the Presidio and try to abscond with a baby.

An April 6, 1975 San Francisco Chronicle article reported that there were "7,886 bottles of formula, at least 10,000 disposable diapers, 2,400 cotton tipped swabs and 750 cotton balls, 1,440 aspirin tablets, gallons of baby powder, ointment by the bushel, toothpaste and towels" on hand at the Presidio. The same article described a plane bound for Seattle "crammed with bassinets, diapers, bottles, and food including hot dogs."

As they marshaled the resources to care for thousands of children, volunteers—who were not involved in the decision to receive or adopt out children—quickly began to doubt whether every child was without family.

"There are unquestionably children in the airlift who are true orphans," Jane Barton, a translator from the American Friends Services Committee told the San Francisco Chronicle on April 13, 1975. "But I talked to a number of children who said they are not orphans."

Howe, too, had concerns. "I felt it before we closed out our work," says Howe. "The word 'felt' is important—I had no proof."

Did the U.S. save kids—or steal them? The legacy of Operation Babylift is deeply complicated.