

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America



Meeting Notice

21 September, 2022

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

21 September

Future Meetings

,21 September, 19 October,

16 November

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National web page: www.vva.org

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

No August Meeting

Have a good summer

The Vietnamese Tradition of Ao Dai

GABRIELLE LAWRENCE, JUNE 23, 2022, <https://www.thisiscolossal.com/2022/06/>

Softness is often mistaken for weakness, and simplicity for lack, but Chiron Duong's 365 Days of Ao Dai series holds the history of this Vietnamese tradition in full texture.

According to Duong, "Vietnamese Ao Dai is not only a kind of national costume but also contains a rich history, cultural traditions, aesthetic conceptions, national consciousness, and spirit of the Vietnamese people." The garment's capacity to "contain many memories" is most obviously captured by multi-bodied portraits, such as photos from days 183 and 208 that indicate unfolding stories. There's also a ghost-like vapor resting upon each of these works that not only captures the grace of the gown but also how it embraces the body. In each photo, there is a presence that lingers.

Duong writes, "Through many changes of society and times, the Ao Dai has always been a beautiful symbol of the national culture, the pride of Vietnamese people." In images from days 190 and 192, in which the figures are seemingly still but their

arms and objects flutter, it is unclear whether the movement itself is fast or slow. It is clear, however, that these multi-realm beings capture the discreet and secret elements of time language. Earthy and ethereal colored portraits evoke feelings of land here long before this moment and lasting long after it shall part.

Most of Duong's portraits are also characterized by mystery. Subjects, similar to those in photos 198 and 185, are hidden behind another image, a fabric, or an object. Viewers are not privileged to her gaze, only visual suggestions and the relationship of bodies to one another as seen on day 184. In many traditions throughout history, to be hidden or veiled is an act of reverence or a sign of great beauty. This has proven problematic as a trope when pertaining to women and femmes, but Duong's obscurations arouse a hint of magic in the peek of color beneath the gown, the outline of distinct facial features, or the strong posture of a subject gliding through a scene.

To follow Duong's daily practice, visit her [Behance](#) and [Instagram](#).

Why Did American Soldiers Kill Their Own Officers in Vietnam?

Calin Aneculaesei

<https://historyofyesterday.com/why-did-american-soldiers-kill-their-own-officers-in-vietnam-7b619c6d81c7>

For the United States and its troops, the Vietnam War was a particularly cruel conflict. Because of the Vietcong's guerilla methods, many faced the prospect of a brutal death. The deep jungle was riddled with traps and the prospect of an ambush was always at the forefront of any soldier's mind. Every step they took into the thick foliage could be their last.

You'd assume that under such circumstances, US Army personnel would band together to try to aid each other as much as possible, especially given the extremely difficult conditions they experienced while on the battlefield.

As it turned out, this was far from the truth.

Dissent against authority is prevalent in society. This becomes even more obvious in a military setting. Nobody likes being told what to do, especially if the orders you're given could lead to your untimely death. In the military, your superiors are frequently the second most despised group of individuals behind the people you are fighting.

This didn't change during the US participation in Vietnam (1 November 1955–30 April 1975). Their leader or NCO was viewed by the typical soldier as the shepherd leading them to the slaughter. Forcing soldiers to patrol the vast jungles of Vietnam, which were virtually always booby-trapped with deadly contraptions, would make anyone despised by the troops they were in charge of.

Because many of the soldiers who served in Vietnam were conscripts rather than volunteers, this hatred was exacerbated. Being forced to face certain death would surely produce some resistance among those who felt disloyal to the cause or had an indifferent attitude toward the war. These factors led to the advent of 'fragging'.

Fragging is a phrase coined during the Vietnam War to indicate the intentional death of a friendly, usually a higher-ranking officer, often with the use of a fragmentation grenade to make the killing appear accidental. Although similar incidents occurred prior to the 1960s, the Vietnam War popularized the phrase due to the prevalence of the practice among US Army ranks and the resulting backlash.

Growing in prominence after 1966 and increasing in popularity thereafter, this practice was seen by many soldiers as a way to "effective[ly] discourage their superiors from showing enthusiasm

for combat." As the war's popularity dwindled, so did the soldiers' willingness to risk their lives for what many saw as a losing cause. To preserve their own lives, several resorted to either threatening or actually performing 'fragging' to get their message across to their superiors.

Due to the prospect of fragging, many officers tolerated drug use, laziness, and general insubordination among their ranks. This was a major factor in the development of opium addiction among American soldiers. There were no restrictions in place to prevent people from using narcotics, and the drug was freely and inexpensively available throughout the region, resulting in a real crisis developing.

The death toll from 'fragging' is estimated to be over 90 people, with over 900 total injuries across all branches of the US military, a figure that doesn't begin to capture the magnitude of its impact on the troops in Vietnam. This was one of several factors contributing to the continuous decline in morale in the early to mid-1970s. The United States was unable to continue fighting, and the campaign was called off in April 1975.

Few soldiers were caught and even fewer were convicted for their crimes. Due to the army's lower ranks' unity, identifying the culprit of these crimes was often difficult. Even those who were convicted had very light sentences, ranging from 10 months to a maximum of 30 years in jail, which is a rather lenient punishment considering that murder may result in life imprisonment in many parts of the United States.

This incident exemplifies the depravity of war and the lengths to which many people would go for self-preservation. Many people would be terrified at the prospect of having to take down an opponent they couldn't see. This possibility grew more grim as the war progressed and the American forces made little progress.

In order to truly quantify these behaviors, we must first place them in context. Many troops considered fragging as a sensible response and moral transaction because one's life in battle is generally perceived to be worth far less than in civilian life. To preserve their own lives, they killed their officer. One of the most basic human instincts is self-preservation. When we judge the acts of these conscripts, we must bear that in mind.

Beer Barons Bought a Round for Freedom

When the Army Stopped Serving Beer

Military.com | By [Blake Stilwell](#)

When North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950, the U.S. military was doing everything it could to stop the communists from pushing the defenders into the Sea of Japan. They formed a defensive perimeter around Pusan (called Busan today), and made a desperate stand against the North Korean offensive.

The Americans and South Koreans did not fare well in the first months of the war, but the tide turned in September of that year when the United States launched a daring, surprise landing behind enemy lines at Incheon. The North Koreans were caught completely off-guard. The communist front fell apart as American and South Korean troops broke out of Pusan and began to push the invaders north.

Then, even more devastating news: the U.S. military announced it would not provide beer rations for the men fighting the war in Korea.

Beer brewing during World War II saved the beer industry. During World War I, anti-alcohol crusaders launched a campaign to label beer makers in America, many of whom were German immigrants, as anti-American and wasters of U.S. resources. It helped the passage of the 18th Amendment, which banned the manufacture and import of alcoholic beverages.

After Prohibition was repealed, breweries went right back to doing what they knew best, but the industry was still on shaky ground. Then World War II broke out, and the U.S. government saw beer as what we would today call a “force multiplier.” It declared beer production an essential wartime industry, with 15% of its output reserved for the military.

When the Korean War started, some of the old “dry” politicians and activists were still around, fighting against the evils of alcohol. The teetotalers

somehow managed to convince the Department of Defense that troops could do without the two-beer ration. When the news hit headlines, it sparked a nationwide debate.

A U.S. representative, Democrat Andrew J. Biemiller, who represented Milwaukee, demanded on the House floor that the Army explain its rationale for cutting off its soldiers’ taps. He argued that beer could be used in place of water when necessary and had “as much alcohol as a good pudding.”

While the war raged in Korea, the war at home between beer lovers and anti-alcohol groups like the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union was fought to keep beer out of the hands of the GIs. Then, a couple of brewing heavyweights escalated the conflict.

Milwaukee’s own Jos. Schlitz Brewing Company and Blatz Brewing Company offered to buy the troops a round and see what might happen. The companies volunteered 600,000 cans or bottles (apiece) of their products to be sent to the Korean Peninsula and handed out to the Americans fighting there.

It’s hard to argue with American companies offering to get 1.2 million beers to a fight without using taxpayer money. The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union would have a hard time competing with that offer. Army Secretary Frank Pace agreed to the donation, so long as the beer was less than 3.2% alcohol by volume.

The first cans of Schlitz, which was America’s top beer at the time, rolled away from Milwaukee on Sept. 28, 1950. Blatz wasn’t far behind, shipping theirs out on Oct. 4, 1950. The beer made it to the troops in time for Christmas.



Implementing the PACT Act is veterans' next battle

BY JORDAN WILLIAMS, The Hill, 08/07/22

Veterans clinched a victory after the Senate passed a bill that would expand medical coverage for former service members with toxic exposures. But after a long fought battle with no shortage of last-minute drama, their work is far from over.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) must now implement the legislation efficiently amid concerns of the department's poor track record and existing backlogs.

President Biden is expected to sign into law the Sgt. First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act on Wednesday, which will expand access to VA health care and benefits for veterans who were exposed to toxins during war.

The VA is already encouraging veterans to apply for benefits. But moving forward, veterans service organizations and other experts say the department will have to buckle down if it wants to implement the legislation as smoothly as possible.

"What this bill is authorizing is the core mission of what the Department of Veteran Affairs is there for and should be doing," said David Shulkin, who served as VA secretary from March 2017 through February 2018. That means that the VA should be prioritizing taking care of these particular veterans. And when the agency or any organization has finite resources — which every organization has, even the US government — it requires that you prioritize what you're working on," he continued.

Shulkin said if he were still running the agency, he would personally take responsibility to ensure that it gets implemented smoothly. "In the agency as big as the VA, what I found was that one thing that leadership can do is be clear about its priorities, and when that happens, great things can happen in this organization," he said. Now, there are a lot of competing priorities. But because this is a group of people that for whatever reason, we have been making wait — literally for decades, in many cases — I believe that gives them the right to be prioritized."

The PACT Act seeks to expand VA benefits eligibility to more than 3.5 million veterans who were exposed to toxins during their military service — including illnesses resulting from exposures to toxic burns and Agent Orange.

It also adds 23 conditions to the department's list of presumptive illnesses, meaning that veterans

don't have to prove that their illness was due to military service. But despite passage of the bill, some Republicans raised concerns with how the VA will go about implementing the legislation.

Sen. Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.) tweeted that there were 168,000 veterans "waiting in line" for care, and that the number would spike to one million with the PACT Act.

Patrick Murray, director of national legislative service at Veterans of Foreign Wars, said that while the department is dealing with a backlog of claims, this alone should not be a reason against the legislation. "Veterans would rather stand in line than not have a line at all," Murray said. "And if they don't want to do anything for veterans until we get rid of a backlog? Then we will never do anything for veterans, period."

Cory Titus, director of Veteran Benefits and Guard/Reserve Affairs for the Military Officers Association of America, noted that the measure would increase the VA's workload, but the legislation is written in a way where certain provisions are phased in over time.

"They slowly turn on the faucet and start off with smaller population groups that will allow VA to kind of build into it," Titus said. "And while they're doing that VA has a simultaneous track where they're working on adding people to help with the claims process."

But there are other concerns with how the legislation will be implemented once it is signed into law. Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) said he was concerned the bill would limit access to outside physicians should veterans seek care outside the VA.

John Berry, a veteran's attorney based in Nebraska, said that some are concerned with how quickly claims will be processed. "The VA has done great things over the years to improve that speed. But a veteran will file a claim and sometimes they will not provide sufficient evidence and then they have to appeal the claim. And they can be in a cycle where it takes years to get the benefits that they've earned," Berry said. "And usually that's where we get involved where the veteran gets denied and the veteran doesn't understand why the evidence that they submitted is not good enough," he continued.

The White House on Tuesday boasted that the VA has already granted 25,000 veterans and their survivors benefits for asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis

based on presumptive exposure to particulate matter.

The department has also launched VET-HOME, a network of providers who will conduct patient assessments on military exposures, and expects to have a fully operational call center by January to help veterans concerned about environmental exposures.

The language of the PACT Act also aims to expand the VA's capacity to handle the influx of claims. For instance, it invests in VA claims processing, hiring more personnel to help the agency better handle the load, as well as investing in 31 major clinics and research facilities in 19 states.

Moving forward, advocates say the most important thing the VA can do to implement the legislation smoothly is to communicate with veterans about the benefits they may qualify for and to set expectations. The agency has already established a webpage answering questions about who qualifies for benefits under the legislation.

"There should be an immediate call to action for veterans to file their claims for the VA to process those claims expeditiously, and for the VA hospitals and benefits system to be ready for an influx of patients," said Ret. Army Lt. Col. Beth Kubala, who serves as executive Director of the Betty and Michael D. Wohl Veterans Legal Clinic (VLC) at the Syracuse University College of Law

"The VA is a large federal entity, and it handles medical care, benefits and a whole host of resources for our nation's veterans. And I think implementation of the PACT is going to have to cause the VA to mobilize all the parts of its agency to support a smooth implementation of this," she continued.

Congressional oversight will also be critical to ensuring the bill is implemented as smoothly as possible, advocates say. This could take the form of public hearings and regular reporting.

But Tom Porter, executive vice president of government affairs for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, says that veterans' service organizations also play a role in oversight. "We don't just wash our hands of it. We have a role where we have to partner essentially with the VA and with Congress to be advocates for what we just asked for," Porter said. "When Congress moves too slow, and when the VA moves too slow, then we need to push them."

Could Have

Wisława Szymborska

It could have happened.
It had to happen.
It happened earlier. Later.
Nearer. Farther off.
It happened, but not to you.
You were saved because you were the first.
You were saved because you were the last.
Alone. With others.
On the right. The left.
Because it was raining. Because of the shade.
Because the day was sunny.

You were in luck -- there was a forest.
You were in luck -- there were no trees.
You were in luck -- a rake, a hook, a beam, a brake,
A jamb, a turn, a quarter-inch, an instant . . .

So you're here? Still dizzy from
another dodge, close shave, reprieve?
One hole in the net and you slipped through?
I couldn't be more shocked or
speechless.
Listen,
how your heart pounds inside me.



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- Associate Member - 1 year \$20 • Associate Member 3 year \$50 • Associate Life Member \$250
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