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Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day, 1985

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As President and Commander in Chief, I have been pleased to witness a new and abiding recognition of those brave Americans who answered their country's call and served in the defense of freedom in the Republic of South Vietnam. That recognition, figured in the Memorial the Federal government accepted last November as a permanent sign of our determination to keep faith with those who served in that conflict, is both the result and the cause of a new unity among our people. Ten years after American personnel left Vietnam, we honor and remember the deeds of a group of veterans who served as selflessly and fought as courageously as any in our history.

Together we have come through a decade of disillusionment and doubt and reached a new consensus born of conviction—that, however long the wisdom and merits of U.S. policy in the Vietnam era may be debated, no one can withhold from those who wore our country's uniform in Southeast Asia the homage that is their due. Their cause was our cause, and it is the cause that animates all of our experience as a Nation. Americans have never believed that freedom was the sole prerogative of a few, a grant of governmental power, or a title of wealth or nobility. We have always believed that freedom was the birthright of all peoples, and our Vietnam-era veterans pledged their lives—and almost 60,000 lost them—in pursuit of that ideal, not for themselves, but for a suffering people half a world away.

On this day, we recall these sacrifices and say again to our Vietnam veterans: Your cause is our cause. We have not forgotten you. We will not forget you. To those who were killed in Vietnam we say: Your names are inscribed not only on the walls of black granite on the Mall in our Nation's Capital, but in the hearts of your fellow Americans. To those still listed as missing in action in Southeast Asia: We have raised the fullest possible accounting of your fate to one of highest national priority. To those who returned and resumed their daily lives in our Nation's cities, towns, and farms: We will continue to meet our commitment to compensation and health care programs for the more than 300,000 service-disabled Vietnam veterans and to programs to aid in Vietnam veterans' readjustment.

To all of our Vietnam-era veterans, we rededicate ourselves on this day to offer our continuing praise and thanks for your courage and patriotism. We pledge that our Nation will never forget the men and women who gave so much of themselves on behalf of the highest of human ideals.

The Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 128, has designated May 7, 1985, as "Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation commemorating this important observance.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 7, 1985, as Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day. I urge all citizens, community leaders, interested organizations, and government officials to observe this day with programs, ceremonies, and activities that commemorate the service and sacrifices of the more than 3 million brave men and women who served in Vietnam.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and ninth.

Ronald Reagan