

# SOBERING STATISTICS FOR THE VIETNAM WAR

Sent in by Jim McQuillen, HHC/B 2-35, 1963-66

**In** case you haven't been paying attention these past few decades after you returned from Vietnam, the clock has been ticking. The following are some statistics that are at once depressing yet in a larger sense should give you a HUGE SENSE OF PRIDE.

"Of the 2,709,918 Americans who served on the ground in Vietnam, Less than 850,000 are estimated to be alive today, with the youngest Vietnam veteran's age approximated to be 68 years old."

So, if you're alive and reading this, how does it feel to be among the last 1/3rd of all the U.S. Vets who served in Vietnam? I don't know about you guys, but it kind of gives me the chills, considering this is the kind of information I'm used to reading about WWII and Korean War vets.

The last 14 years we are dying too fast, only a few will survive by 2028...if any. If true, in 6-10 years you'll be lucky to be a living Vietnam veteran!

These statistics were taken from a variety of sources to include: The VFW Magazine, the Public Information Office, and the HQ CP Forward Observer - 1st Recon .

## \*STATISTICS FOR INDIVIDUALS IN UNIFORM AND IN COUNTRY VIETNAM VETERANS: \*

9,087,000 military personnel served "on active duty" during the Vietnam Era (August 5, 1964 - May 7, 1975).

8,744,000 GIs were "on active duty" during the war (Aug 5, 1964-March 28, 1973).

**2,709,918 Americans served on the ground in Vietnam**, this number represents 9.7% of their generation.

3,403,100 (Including 514,300 offshore) personnel served in the broader Southeast Asia Theater (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, flight crews based in Thailand, and sailors in adjacent South China Sea waters).

**2,594,000** personnel served **within the borders** of Vietnam (Jan.1, 1965 - March 28, 1973). Another 50,000 men served in Vietnam between 1960 and 1964.

Of the 2.6 million, between 1-1.6 million (40-60%) either fought in combat, provided close support or were at least fairly regularly exposed to enemy attack.

7,484 **women** (6,250 or **83.5%** were nurses) served in Vietnam.

Peak troop strength in Vietnam: 543,482 (April 30, 1968).

**Agent Orange** is taking a huge toll on Vietnam Veterans with most deaths somehow related to Agent Orange exposure. No one officially dies of Agent Orange, they die from the exposure which causes ischemic Heart Disease and failure, Lung Cancer, Kidney failure or COPD related disorders.

## CASUALTIES:

The first man to die in Vietnam was James Davis, in 1958. He was with the 509th Radio Research Station. Davis Station in Saigon was named for him.

**Hostile deaths:** 47,378

**Non-hostile deaths:** 10,800

Total: 58,202 (Includes men formerly classified as MIA and Mayaguez casualties). Men who have subsequently died of wounds account for the changing total.

8 nurses died -- 1 was KIA.

61% of the men killed were 21 or younger.

11,465 of those killed were younger than 20 years old.

Of those killed, 17,539 were married.

Average age of men killed: 23.1 years

Average Age of total Deaths: 23.11 years

Enlisted: 50,274; 22.37 years

Officers: 6,598; 28.43 years

Warrants: 1,276; 24.73 years

E1: 525; 20.34 years

Five men killed in Vietnam were only 16 years old.

The oldest man killed was 62 years old.

Highest state death rate: West Virginia - 84.1 per 100,000 male population (national average 58.9 for every 100,000 males in 1970).

Wounded: 303,704 -- 153,329 hospitalized + 150,375 injured requiring no hospital care.

Severely disabled: 75,000, -- 23,214: 100% disabled; 5,283 lost limbs; 1,081 sustained multiple amputations.

**Amputation or crippling wounds to the lower extremities were 300% higher than in WWII and 70% higher than Korea.**

Multiple amputations occurred at the rate of 18.4% compared to 5.7% in WWII

Missing in Action: 2,338

POWs: 766 (114 died in captivity)

As of January 15, 2014, there are 1,875 Americans still unaccounted for, from the Vietnam War.

## DRAFTEES VS. VOLUNTEERS:

**25%** (648,500) of total forces in country were **draftees**. (**66%** of U.S. armed forces members were drafted during WWII).

**Draftees** accounted for **30.4%** (17,725) of combat deaths in Vietnam.

**Reservists** killed: 5,977

**National Guard:** 6,140 served: 101 died.

**Total draftees** (1965 - 73): 1,728,344.

**Draftees who actually served in Vietnam:** 38% Marine Corps Draft: 42,633.

Last man drafted: June 30, 1973.

## RACE AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND:

**88.4%** of the men who actually served in Vietnam were **Caucasian**; **10.6%** (275,000) were **black**; 1% belonged to other races

**86.3%** of the men who died in Vietnam were **Caucasian** (includes Hispanics);

**12.5%** (7,241) were **black**; 1.2% belonged to other races.

170,000 **Hispanics** served in Vietnam; 3,070 (5.2% of total) died there.

**70% of enlisted men killed** were of North-west European descent.

86.8% of the men who were killed as a result of hostile action were Caucasian; 12.1% (5,711) were black; 1.1% belonged to other races. **14.6%** (1,530) of **non-combat deaths** were among blacks.

**34%** of blacks who enlisted **volunteered** for the combat arms.

Overall, **blacks suffered 12.5%** of the deaths in Vietnam at a time when the percentage of blacks of military age was **13.5%** of the total population.

**Religion of Dead:** Protestant -- 64.4%; Catholic -- 28.9%; other/none -- 6.7%

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# THE BATTLE OF "ONE-NINER"

(As seen from the eyes of the S-3 nearly forty years later)

By Ben G. Crosby, HHC 2-35, 1966-67

(From the "War Stories" section on the Cacti website:

[http://www.cacti35th.org/regiment/war\\_stories/warstories\\_index.php](http://www.cacti35th.org/regiment/war_stories/warstories_index.php).)

It was just another hot-sweaty day near the Cambodian border far west of Pleiku where we, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry, known as the Cacti Blue were chasing those elusive North Vietnamese Army units. The same ones who fought here from the time the First Cavalry became famous in the Battle of Ia Drang Valley (*We Were Soldiers Once...and Young* by LTG Hal Moore) and did so long after we were returned to the US. The Cacti Blue had only a few days earlier locked horns with them and came away with heroic soldiers and many casualties. It was during this battle when 2<sup>nd</sup> LT **Stephan Karopczyc** earned his Medal of Honor posthumously. And this next engagement was no doubt a continuation of that earlier battle of Plei Djereng but at a slightly different location.

According to the plans the Battalion Commander, **LTC Clint Granger**, and I had worked out, Companies "A" and "C" would leave their night locations and search toward Cambodia for evidence of the enemy. Granger, a West Point graduate from the Class of 1951 was an experienced Korean War combat veteran. He would need to bring all his infantry finesse, if

there is such a thing, to this battle. After all, this was an enemy heaven -- the major infiltration route into the Central Highlands. We knew they were there...but where.

Sometime after 1500 hours (3:00 pm) Company "C" discovered a well-used trail and a couple of enemy soldiers on it without their weapons running away from where Company "C" had only recently searched. Company "C" fired on the enemy who ducked in the thick-as-hell jungle and disappeared. Little did we know, but "C" Company had just alerted an entire enemy battalion of several hundred heavily armed North Vietnamese Regular Army soldiers who were in well defended positions awaiting our arrival. The company commander, **Captain Ron Rykowski**, also an experienced Korean War veteran, was again serving his country in the face of different enemy. He came from the Polish community of Chicago. Rykowski's company had been called upon to help company "A" during the Battle of Plei Djereng when the fighting grew intense only a few days earlier. Now, he maneuvered his rifle platoons to block that same enemy. Unfortunately, the enemy strength was unknown to Rykowski at this time...but he would soon find out.

In the meantime, **MSG David Butters**, the Battalion Operations Sergeant and I along

with several radio telephone operators (RTOs) listened to the radios in the Battalion Tactical Operations Center known to all as the TOC. In this bunkered home away from home sandbagged on all sides hung the color-coded maps that displayed the not-so-secret hieroglyphics used by the Operations Sergeant and RTOs to post the known locations of the several maneuver elements of this combat Infantry battalion. And the enemy locations if known or surmised by the Battalion Intelligence Officer were marked in red. Whenever a radio blurted out the situation and map location (what the military calls coordinates) of one of the rifle companies, Butters, or one of the others, would post on that multicolored poster the location of that company noting the situation in military time and colored grease pencils. This grease pencil wall art became a jumbled mosaic that only an experienced TOC hand could read. It was our brains--no--it was our memory. Sweat dripped from all as the temperatures soared from the heat generated by military radios when transmitting. It was mixed with other forms of perspiration caused by the closeness of men stuffed into a small cubicle of an enclosure suffering from the never-ending fear of death. Air conditioning -- what are you thinking -- this was only a few miles from the Cambodian border deep in the Vietnamese jungle. Electric

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## SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS:

Vietnam veterans have a lower unemployment rate than the same non-vet age groups.

Vietnam veterans' personal income exceeds that of our non-veteran age group by more than 18 percent.

76% of the men sent to Vietnam were from lower middle/working class backgrounds.

Three-fourths had family incomes above the poverty level; 50% were from middle income backgrounds.

Some 23% of Vietnam vets had fathers with professional, managerial or technical occupations.

79% of the men who served in Vietnam had a **high school education or better** when they entered the military service.

63% of **Korean War** vets and only 45% of **WWII** vets had completed high school upon separation.

Deaths **by region** per 100,000 of population: **South** -- 31, **West**--29.9; **Midwest** -- 28.4; **Northeast** -- 23.5.

## DRUG USAGE & CRIME

There is no difference in drug usage between Vietnam Veterans and non-Vietnam Veterans of the same age group. (Source: Veterans Administration Study)

Vietnam Veterans are less likely to be in prison - only one-half of one percent of Vietnam Veterans have been jailed for crimes.

85% of Vietnam Veterans made successful transitions to civilian life.

## WINNING & LOSING:

82% of veterans who saw heavy combat strongly believe the war was lost because of lack of political will.

Nearly 75% of the public agrees it was a failure of political will, not of arms.

## HONORABLE SERVICE:

97% of Vietnam-era veterans were honorably discharged.

91% of actual Vietnam War veterans and 90% of those who saw heavy combat are proud to have served their country.

74% say they would serve again, even knowing the outcome.

87% of the public now holds Vietnam veterans in high esteem.

