

**The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration
Speech Template (~10:00) – Commemorative Partners**

Plus

Video Option A - Moment of Truth: “Thank You For Your Service” (2:30)

Video Option B - Moment of Truth: “Not Forgotten” (3:50)

Good afternoon (evening), everyone. I am

(name) with (Commemorative Partner)

**and on behalf of our nation and The United States of
America Vietnam War Commemoration, I want to thank all
of you for coming today (tonight) to join us in thanking and
honoring our Vietnam veterans and their families.**

**(Option - additional bonafides, if necessary) Our
organization (optional statement on commitment as
VWC Commemorative Partner).**

**While this Commemoration is focused on specifically
thanking and honoring our 7.2 million living Vietnam
veterans and the 9 million families of those who served
during the Vietnam War period, I’d like to take a moment to**

address all our veterans and their families in attendance today. Since the birth of the United States, no single generation of Americans has been spared the responsibility of defending freedom by force of arms. More than forty-four million American men and women have sacrificed and served in time of war – many here counted among them. Your collective service and individual sacrifices have safeguarded the cherished concepts embodied in our Constitution. Whether deployed in harm's way, all the while watching over your buddies as they watched over you, or training and serving at home station ... you sacrificed. Our country, (our community or the city/town/state of ...), our families and our children owe you a debt of gratitude. If you are able, please rise and allow us to thank you! Ladies & gentlemen ... our heroes! *[lead applause]*

In 2008, the Secretary of Defense was authorized by law to conduct a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. The inaugural event occurred at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, commonly known as “The Wall,” in Washington, D.C. on Memorial Day, 2012. The President was the keynote speaker, and this groundbreaking event was attended by the most senior military and civilian leaders, but most importantly ... thousands of Vietnam veterans and their families ... the true VIPs.

The President’s words were powerful. He stated, and I quote, “And one of the most painful chapters in our history was Vietnam -- most particularly, how we treated our troops who served there. You were often blamed for a war you didn't start, when you should have been commended for serving your country with valor. You were sometimes blamed for misdeeds of a few, when the honorable service of

the many should have been praised. You came home and sometimes were denigrated, when you should have been celebrated. It was a national shame, a disgrace that should have never happened. And that's why here today we resolve that it will not happen again.” Unquote.

(Video Option A) In support of our Vietnam veterans, INSP Cable Network, a Commemorative Partner like us, produced and aired this powerful, dramatic tribute ...

Moment of Truth: “Thank You For Your Service” (2:30)

http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/videos/thank_you_for_your_service/

That was entitled “Thank You, For Your Service” and it can be seen on the Commemoration website at [vietnamwar50th.com/videos](http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/videos).

Now, all military families endure the hardship of separation, uncertainty and fear, but the families of our Vietnam veterans also witnessed their husbands and wives,

sons and daughters, and fathers and mothers returning home to a nation in turmoil. They watched as the vast majority received no formal recognition for their service, or welcome home ceremonies hosted by their communities.

These service members, who had chosen to honor our nation's call, were encouraged to travel home, not in uniform, but in civilian clothes. Those who were able quietly slipped back into the lives they had left ... although they were profoundly impacted by their experiences.

Like veterans returning from today's battlefields, those who served in Vietnam came home with both physical and unseen injuries of war. Sadly, many of the unseen injuries suffered by our Vietnam veterans went undiagnosed and weren't understood by our medical community, or citizenry, as they are now. Veterans were left to meet these challenges without the outpouring of assistance available today.

However, too many who fought in Vietnam never experienced that return home or the chance to marry and have children or grandchildren. Their future was cut short; their hopes and dreams along with it. And the families of those who didn't return ... whose names are etched on the Wall ... experienced the painful loss of a loved one without the collective support of their nation.

Yes, history makes crystal clear the importance of this Commemoration. Vietnam was a long war, and accordingly a long commemoration period is planned. By presidential proclamation, the Commemoration extends from Memorial Day 2012 through Veterans Day 2025.

Through this Commemoration, we intend to offer the thanks of our nation to as many as possible of the 7.2 million living Vietnam veterans and the 9 million families of those who served from November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975.

These inclusive dates have been selected for this Commemoration in order to maximize the recognition of United States military veterans who served on active duty during the Vietnam War period. No distinction is being made between veterans who served in-country, in-theater or who were stationed elsewhere during the Vietnam War period. All were called to serve and the overwhelming majority served honorably and admirably.

Our military served in Vietnam under six different presidents. President Truman authorized the first U.S. advisors to serve with the French, and President Ford was in office at the conclusion.

- 58,307 names appear on the Wall in Washington, D.C. – their average age ... 23.1 years.**
- Many tens of thousands were disabled.**

- Approximately 7,500 women, the majority of whom were nurses, served in Vietnam; 8 were killed in theater, all of whom were nurses.

- And, 1,627 are still considered missing in action and their families await word of their fate.

(Video Option B) Moment of Truth: “Not Forgotten” (3:50)

http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/videos/not_forgotten/

That was entitled “Not Forgotten,” a powerful, dramatic tribute to our missing personnel and the families who await their return. It was produced and aired by INSP Cable Network, a Commemorative Partner like us, and it can be seen on the Commemoration’s website at [vietnamwar50th.com/videos](http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/videos).

These facts (The facts I shared prior to the video) provide us some context and understanding of the true cost of war. It is not measured in dollars and cents, but in lives

... neighbors, friends and family who come home with seen and unseen scars that need mending and extensive care, or do not come home at all.

These facts also are best understood by those who served ... and their families. Some continued to serve in uniform, while many returned to civilian life, started families and immediately began contributing to their communities. Some took up service as police officers, teachers, doctors and nurses. From town halls and boardrooms to the nation's Capital, others became leaders and elected public servants.

Vietnam veterans also mentored those that followed them in uniform and built the foundations of today's military. Their experience and leadership led to successes in Panama, Desert Storm, Bosnia, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom ... veterans like Army General Colin

Powell, who became the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and later Secretary of State; Air Force General Richard Myers, Marine General Peter Pace and Navy Admiral Mike Mullen, all who rose to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and finally, the late Army General Norman Schwarzkopf, who led our troops victoriously in Operation Desert Storm.

There are so many more whose names you would recognize, but are far too numerous to mention. These leaders established strategies, tactics and standards that would ensure success. The impact they and other Vietnam veterans from every Service had on our current military and its leaders was significant.

As World War II and the Korean War reached their 50th anniversary, our nation commemorated our warriors' service and sacrifice. Now, authorized by Congress and the

president, and on behalf of the nation, we have the opportunity to do what should have been done 50 years ago: welcome our Vietnam veterans home with honor, and thank them and their families for their service and sacrifice.

Across the country, more than 8,000 local, state and federal organizations just like ours have become Commemorative Partners, committed to hosting at least two events each year from 2015 to 2017 to thank and honor our Vietnam veterans and their families. Hundreds of thousands already have been welcomed home in hometown-centric public ceremonies like this one since this program began, and today (tonight) we have the distinct privilege to add to those numbers!

By the way, the Department of Veterans Affairs and U.S. Census Bureau numbers indicate that those 7.2 million Vietnam veterans equal 1 in every 44 Americans, that's all

men, women and children. When you consider just those 65 years and older, that number becomes 1 in every 8 Americans, and when you consider just men that age, it's 1 in every 3!

[Insert your ceremony comments, or ...]

Based on those numbers, I'm certain we have Vietnam veterans and their families in this audience. While this is not the individual, hometown recognition we envision for each of you, I ask that every Vietnam veteran among us please stand, so we might recognize your service and sacrifice, and finally begin the "welcome home" you so richly deserve!

[slight pause for standing] **Ladies & gentlemen ... your Vietnam veterans!** *[lead applause]*

[when applause begins to wane] **And, if their families will stand and join them ... you also are to be commended**

**for the sacrifices you've endured for this country! [*lead
renewed applause*]**

**Once again, I am privileged to be with you today
(tonight); the Commemoration's cause is indeed noble, and
thanking and honoring these veterans and their families is
the right thing to do. I encourage everyone here to please
take a moment before you depart to reach out and shake the
hand of one of those who just stood ... they all deserve our
thanks and admiration. Thank you, and God bless.**