

Proclamation 4647 of March 20, 1979

Vietnam Veterans Week, 1979

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

We are a peace-seeking Nation and we are at peace, but we must not forget the lessons war has taught us, nor the brave men and women who have sacrificed so much for us in all our wars.

The decade now drawing to a close began in the midst of a war that was the longest and most expensive in our history, and the most costly in human lives and suffering. Because it was a divisive and painful period for all Americans, we are tempted to want to put the Vietnam war out of our minds. But it is important that we remember—honestly, realistically, with humility.

It is important, too, that we remember those who answered their Nation's call in that war with the full measure of their valor and loyalty, that we pay full tribute at last to all Americans who served in our Armed Forces in Southeast Asia. Their courage and sacrifices in that tragic conflict were made doubly difficult by the Nation's lack of agreement as to what constituted the highest duty. Instead of glory, they were too often met with our embarrassment or ignored when they returned.

The honor of those who died there is not tarnished by our uncertainty at the moment of their sacrifice. To them we offer our respect and gratitude. To the loved ones they left behind, we offer our concern and understanding and our help to build new lives. To those who still bear the wounds, both physical and psychic, from all our wars, we acknowledge our continuing responsibility.

Of all the millions of Americans who served in Southeast Asia, the majority have successfully rejoined the mainstream of American life.

To them, and to all who served or suffered in that war, we give our solemn pledge to pursue all honorable means to establish a just and lasting peace in the world, that no future generation need suffer in this way again.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JIMMY CARTER, President of the United States of America, call upon all Americans to observe May 28 through June 3, 1979, the week of our traditional Memorial Day, as Vietnam Veterans Week. On this occasion, let us as a Nation express our sincere thanks for the service of all Vietnam era veterans.

I urge my fellow citizens and my fellow veterans, and their groups and organizations, to honor the patriotism of these veterans, and to recognize their civilian contributions to their communities in America today.

I call upon the state and local governments to join with me in proclaiming Vietnam Veterans Week, and to publicly recognize with appropriate ceremonies and activities yesterday's service and today's contributions of Vietnam era veterans.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of March, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and seventy-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and third.

JIMMY CARTER