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**State of Colorado**

**50th Vietnam War Anniversary Commemoration Ceremony**

***Tuesday 29 March 2016 @ 1300L Fort Logan National Cemetery***

**1030-1100** Ceremony Participants/Static Displays Arrive (Shelter A)

**1130-1200** Ceremony Rehearsal (Shelter A)

**1200**  Static Displays available

**1215** Public begins to arrive

**1230** Cannon Fires (2 Practice Rounds), 101st Army Band Plays

**1259** Navy Bell Tolls 5 times (1 each Branch of Service)

 Army/Marine Corps/Navy/Air Force/Coast Guard

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**1300 MC:**

“Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Lieutenant Colonel (ret) Mitch Utterback, and on behalf of Governor John Hickenlooper of the Great State of Colorado, Major General H. Michael Edwards, The Adjutant General of Colorado and Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Director Renaye Murphy from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs-Denver Regional Office, Director Joseph Turnbach from Fort Logan National Cemetery, and the over 450,000 Military Veterans who call Colorado home, we welcome you and thank you for joining us today for the State of Colorado 50th Vietnam War Anniversary Commemoration Ceremony.

We are honored to have many distinguished visitors and community dignitaries attend today’s ceremony, however, there are no other honored guests than those we are here today to recognize. The generation of United States Military Service Veterans who served during the Vietnam War Era, November 1, 1955 – May 15, 1975. May we please ask you to stand at this time if you served during the Vietnam Era. Let’s give these veterans a round of applause for being with us today.

***Pause, wait for round of applause***

Ladies and Gentlemen, please stand for the Posting of the Colors, by the Colorado Army National Guard Honor Guard, the National Anthem performed by our “Governor’s Own” Colorado Army National Guard 101st Army Band, and remain standing for the Invocation provided by Chaplain Dave Nagel, Fulltime Support Chaplain, Colorado National Guard, and the Pledge of Allegiance provided by Director Joseph Turnbach, Fort Logan National Cemetery.”

***Present Colors / National Anthem / Post Colors / Invocation / Pledge of Allegiance***

**1305 MC:**

“Thank you Mr. Turnbach. Ladies and Gentlemen please be seated.

The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act authorized the Secretary of Defense to conduct a program to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War and "in conducting the commemorative program, the Secretary shall coordinate, support, and facilitate other programs and activities of the Federal Government, State and local governments, and other persons and organizations in commemoration of the Vietnam War."

The primary objective of these Commemoration activities were “To thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war or listed as missing in action, for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans” and that is what we hope to accomplish is some small way here today.

Perhaps there is no such thing as a brief history of the Vietnam War and its associated statistics. A quick snapshot of the official record will assure us that nine million American served on Active Duty during the Vietnam War Era and that more than 58,000 were killed in action; that the war ramped up in 1965 after a decade of limited American involvement. Other statistics reflect that the average age of a service member fighting in Vietnam was 22 years old; that 74% of Vietnam veterans after leaving military service would serve again if given the chance.

But these statistics are only that. They do not tell us the true story of Vietnam: your story.

Whether a volunteer or draftee, 20-something or 40-something, infantryman or logistician, Christian or atheist, Vietnam War Veterans fulfilled their duty as American citizens when the government called. This was not an easy decision. It was one made in the midst of an intense political climate.

 We would now like to explore each branch of service’s Vietnam War narratives as provided by their respective historical branch.”

***Pause***

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“United States Army

If you served in the Unites States Army during the Vietnam Era please stand.

The Communists’ victory at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954 marked the end of French involvement in Indochina. The Geneva Accords of July 1954 divided Vietnam into a Communist state in the North and an anti-Communist state in the South.

The United States had supported the French army in Indochina through the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), and U.S. advisers continued to train and organize the South Vietnamese Army to repel an invasion from the North. In 1955, MAAG numbered 342 officers and men--most of them Army personnel—rising to around 700 by 1960. In February 1962, the Joint Chiefs of Staff established the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), appointing General Paul D. Harkins as the first commander. General William C. Westmoreland succeeded Harkins in June 1964. As MACV’s responsibilities expanded, U.S. military strength in South Vietnam increased to 23,000 by the end of 1964. Of these, about 15,000 were Army personnel.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson began sending U.S. ground troops to stave off the defeat of the South Vietnamese Army. At first, Army combat units played a defensive role, protecting Saigon, the South Vietnamese capital, and other important cities and bases. The president authorized the Army to send 20,000 support troops to establish a supply network that had to be built from the ground up. The newly formed U.S. Army, Vietnam managed the logistical effort.

As the U.S. troop presence increased, Army combat units operated farther afield. In the fall of 1965, Westmoreland sent the 1st Cavalry Division—the Army’s first airmobile unit—to the rugged Central Highlands, where it defeated North Vietnamese regulars in the month-long Battle of the Ia Drang.

By the fall of 1966, Westmoreland had enough forces, including 240,000 soldiers, to mount sustained offensives. For over a year, Army combat units conducted search and destroy operations against an elusive enemy. Whenever the Army could bring its superior firepower to bear, the results were often devastating. On 10 March 1967, a Viet Cong regiment mounted a night assault on Firebase Prek Klok, defended by a battalion of the 1st Infantry Division, resulting in 200 enemy dead at a cost of 3 U.S. fatalities.

On 31 January 1968, the Communists launched a major assault known as the Tet Offensive. U.S. Army units helped to repel Viet Cong attacks at Saigon and other South Vietnamese cities. The fiercest battle occurred around Hue, where soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 101st Airborne Division helped U.S. marines and South Vietnamese forces defeat North Vietnamese regulars. Although a tactical victory, Tet signaled a change in U.S. policy in Vietnam; henceforth, peace negotiations would play a pivotal role in ending the war.

In 1969, President Richard M. Nixon introduced a program called Vietnamization, in which the South Vietnamese Army assumed an ever-larger combat role, as MACV began a phased withdrawal of over half a million U.S. soldiers and marines. Westmoreland’s successor, General Creighton W. Abrams, continued search and destroy operations, gradually reducing their frequency as the drawdown progressed. Notwithstanding their diminishing numbers, Army units and advisers supported South Vietnamese forces in the Cambodian Campaign (1970), Operation LAM SON 719 (1971) in Laos, and in the repulse of the enemy’s Easter Offensive (1972). The Army’s role in the Vietnam War officially ended on 29 March 1973, with a ceremony marking the deactivation of MACV.

Source: U.S. Army Center for Military History

For those who served in the Unites States Army during the Vietnam Era, on behalf of the citizens of the Great state of Colorado - Thank you for your service.”

***Pause***

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“United States Marine Corps

If you served in the Unites States Marine Corps during the Vietnam Era please stand.

The U.S. Marine Corps provided ground, air, supply, and logistic support in the Vietnam War for over two decades as part of III Marine Amphibious Force. Initially in Vietnam as advisors, the Marines forces grew with the need to protect the key airbase at Da Nang. After the Gulf of Tonkin incident, more troops arrived and the Marines began to engage in the counterinsurgency effort with small-scale pacification units. Combined Action Platoons – comprised of U.S. Marines and Vietnamese soldiers – were a novel concept that the Marines brought.

By 1966, there were nearly 70,000 Marines in Vietnam carrying out large scale ground operations against the Viet Cong. In addition to ground combat, the Marines Corps provided air support from helicopter squadrons and fixed-wing aircrafts striking targets in South and North Vietnam. In 1967, the Army leadership in Saigon advocated that the Marines concentrate their efforts on large unit search and destroy operations. The Marines’ mission was split, with fighting against the North Vietnamese Army along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) toward the north, and a counterinsurgency operation waged against the Viet Cong in the villages in the south.

In the north, the Marines engaged in heavy fighting between Khe Sanh in the West and Leatherneck Square in the Eastern DMZ. They also began to create the McNamara line, a series of strong points, sensors and obstacles meant to detect communist forces crossing the DMZ. The North Vietnamese focused much of their firepower on destroying the McNamara line in its early stages, resulting in many conflicts, most notably Con Thien. The McNamara line ultimately failed to materialize, but the Marines were largely successful in stemming the flow of communist forces across the DMZ, although at a large price. 3,461 Marines were killed in action in 1967 and another 25,525 were wounded. Despite the fewer numbers, it was clear that more troops would not guarantee more success.

The year 1968 proved to be a watershed for the Marines in Vietnam. The January 31 Tet Offensive – the massive offensive the North Vietnamese launched against South Vietnam in 105 cities on the Tet Lunar Year – was largely repulsed by U.S. Marines and South Vietnamese forces. This was not the case at Hue, a city where Marines fought for 26 days before expelling the North Vietnamese. The Marines also defended Khe Sanh in a 77 day siege, under fire by as many as 1000 shells per day, until the U.S. Army’s 1st Cavalry Division broke the siege.

After footage of these bloody battles was aired on television and with no clear end in sight by 1969, much of the American public support for the war eroded. President Nixon began to bring troops home. Few Marines units were involved in the U.S. military actions in Cambodia or Laos, and while 1st Marine Division fought in major engagements around Da Nang, 3d Marine Division was heading back to base at Okinawa. By 1971, the 1st Division and 3d Marine Aircraft Wing departed for the United States and Japan.

Marine advisors, fire support personnel, and air units fought during the 1972 Easter Offensive supporting the Vietnamese Marine Corps. A peace treaty was signed in Paris in January 1973. The U.S. agreed to withdraw all of its forces from Vietnam and in turn the North Vietnamese returned its U.S. prisoners of war, 26 of whom were Marines. In 1975, Marines led Operations Eagle Pull and Frequent Wind to evacuate the American embassies in Phnom Penh and Saigon. Immediately after saving hundreds of American lives in the embassy evacuations, President Ford ordered the Marines to rescue the crew of the *USS Mayaguez,* which had been taken by the Khmer Rouge. A joint task force completed the mission and recaptured the ship, but not without Marine and U.S. Air Force casualties.

The Vietnam War was costly to the U.S. Marine Corps. From 1965 to 1975, nearly 500,000 Marines served in Southeast Asia. Of these, more than 13,000 were killed and 88,000 wounded, nearly a third of all American causalities sustained during the war.

Source: United States Marine Corps History Division

For those who served in the Unites States Marine Corps during the Vietnam Era, on behalf of the citizens of the Great state of Colorado - Thank you for your service.”

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“United States Navy

If you served in the Unites States Navy during the Vietnam Era please stand.

The U.S. Navy performed a wide array of missions in the Vietnam War. In the air, it was a key partner with the U.S. Air Force during the Rolling Thunder and Linebacker air campaigns against North Vietnam, and in other air operations in Laos and Cambodia. On the coast, it developed a highly effective blockade to prevent the resupply of enemy forces by sea, engaged in naval gunfire support missions against enemy targets in the littoral areas of Vietnam, and provided amphibious transport for Marines operating in I Corps. On the rivers, it stood up several task forces designed to protect commercial traffic, assist allied ground forces in pacifying these areas, and interdict enemy troops and supplies moving on these inland waterways. The U.S. Navy also supported the war effort with a massive sea and riverine logistics operation, built and managed shore facilities throughout South Vietnam, and provided extensive medical support for the allied military operation.

U.S. Navy advisors first arrived in South Vietnam in the fall of 1950, and by 1969 numbered 564. These advisors assisted the Republic of Vietnam in developing the Vietnam Navy (VNN) that grew from 5,000 sailors and 122 vessels in 1959 to over 42,000 men and 1,500 vessels in 1972, making it the fifth largest navy in the world. Naval advisors worked throughout the war to train this indigenous navy, and experienced many hardships and much danger serving on VNN ships and craft.

The U.S. response to the North Vietnamese attack on USS *Maddox* (DD 731) in the Gulf of Tonkin in August 1964 marked the beginning of the Navy’s air and surface bombardment against North Vietnam. During the course of the war, Seventh Fleet aircraft carriers supported allied air campaigns by bombing fuel and supply facilities, power plants, bridges, and railroads in Laos and North Vietnam, and after 1970, in Cambodia. Navy surface vessels steamed up and down the coasts of both North and South Vietnam, raining down shells on a variety of targets. Rolling Thunder air and naval gunfire attacks, however, did not prove decisive. The 1965–68 interdiction campaign neither resulted in a peace treaty nor altered significantly the ground situation in the South. Linebacker attacks in 1972, by comparison, were more effective, especially in blunting the Communist Easter Offensive. During Linebacker I, the Navy flew an average of 4,000 sorties a month, which represented 60 percent of the air effort; Navy surface ships fired over 111,000 rounds at targets on the North Vietnamese coast. Navy aircraft also closed North Vietnam’s major ports in a highly successful mining operation, code-named Pocket Money. In December 1972, peace negotiations with North Vietnam stalled, compelling President Nixon to resume the air offensive. Linebacker II was a maximum effort air campaign, focusing heavily on strategic military targets in Hanoi and Haiphong. Air Force B-52s performed the brunt of the bombing missions during the operation, but Navy aircraft played a vital role in air defense suppression missions and also reseeded North Vietnam’s major ports with mines.

The discovery of a 100-ton enemy trawler in Vung Ro Bay in February 1965 led to the establishment of a U.S. Navy and Coast Guard patrol force to complement the existing VNN anti-infiltration program along the 1,200-mile coast of South Vietnam. The purpose of this deployment, which became Operation Market Time (Task Force 115), was to halt the seaborne infiltration of supplies to Communist troops. Market Time represented the Navy’s most successful interdiction program during the war, all but eliminating infiltration by North Vietnamese steel-hulled freighters and significantly reducing North Vietnamese resupply by sea.

In December 1965, the U.S. Navy initiated Operation Game Warden to patrol the major rivers and canals in the Mekong Delta and Rung Sat Special Zone. Consisting of a fleet of 31-foot patrol boats augmented by attack helicopters and SEAL units, this naval inshore force (Task Force 116) imposed a curfew in the region, interdicted enemy troop and supply movements, curbed Communist taxation of peasants, and hindered large-scale Viet Cong operations. Minesweeping forces and harbor defense units kept the vital waterways to Saigon and Hue and South Vietnam’s major ports open for allied use. In performing these varied functions, Game Warden helped secure the major rivers in the area for commerce and extended government control to the “breadbasket” of South Vietnam, home to over six million people.

The Mobile Riverine Force was a joint Army-Navy river assault force designed to search out and destroy Viet Cong units operating in the Mekong Delta. In 1967, elements of the U.S. Army’s 9th Infantry Division operating from a flotilla of armored Navy riverine craft (Task Force 117) launched a series of daring amphibious assaults in the region, achieving a 15 to 1 kill ratio against the Viet Cong. During the Tet Offensive, the Mobile Riverine Force, assisted by Task Force 116, saved the Mekong Delta by helping South Vietnamese troops defeat Viet Cong attacks on provincial capitals and other major towns in the Delta. Other riverine units based in I Corps (Task Force Clearwater) proved instrumental in keeping the Perfume and Cua Viet rivers open for supply traffic during the Tet Offensive.

Southeast Asia Lake, Ocean, River, and Delta Strategy (SEALORDS) combined elements of Task Forces 115, 116, and 117 with the VNN to halt the infiltration of enemy troops and supplies into South Vietnam from Cambodia. Beginning in late 1968, riverine forces established new patrol barriers near the border of Cambodia and established a military and South Vietnamese government presence deep in the heart of the Mekong Delta. This campaign reduced overall Viet Cong activity in the Mekong Delta and deterred the enemy from launching a major offensive in the area during the 1972 Easter Offensive.

The merchant ships of the Military Sea Transportation Service delivered 95 percent of the military equipment and supplies consumed by allied forces in Vietnam. Navy Seabee construction units built enormous support bases at Danang and Saigon to supply all Navy and Marine Corps forces in the field as well as some Air Force and Army units. Naval Support Activity Sailors administered these logistical hubs and operated a fleet of supply craft and barges that plied the waters of the Mekong Delta and beyond. The Navy also operated two hospitals at Danang and Saigon and two hospital ships, *Sanctuary* (AH 17) and *Repose* (AH 16), staffed by Navy doctors, corpsmen, and 425 female members of the Nurse Corps.

Amphibious readiness was a unique capability shared by the Navy and Marine Corps team in Vietnam. The Marine Corps took advantage of the fleet’s amphibious assault ships to launch large and small assaults along the coast of South Vietnam. In Operation Starlight of August 1965, U.S. and South Vietnamese units wiped out the 1st Viet Cong Regiment. Subsequently, Viet Cong units generally shied away from combat with amphibious forces, ceding control of much of the coastline to allied forces. The naval command also utilized the amphibious forces as a floating reserve that could rapidly transport reinforcements to any hot spot on the coast. This was especially valuable during several set-piece battles near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) of the 1967–68 period.

A total of 1.842 million Sailors served in Southeast Asia. The Navy provided the allied effort with many unique capabilities, the most significant being the projection of U.S. combat power ashore and control of the seas to support a land war in Asia far from the United States. Overall, the Navy suffered the loss of 1,631 men killed and 4,178 wounded during the course of the war.

Source: Naval History and Heritage Command

For those who served in the Unites States Navy during the Vietnam Era, on behalf of the citizens of the Great state of Colorado - Thank you for your service.”

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“United States Air Force

If you served in the Unites States Air Force during the Vietnam Era please stand.

The United States Air Force provided tremendous and diverse contributions in Vietnam, beginning as advisors in the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group in the 1950s and ending with large bombing operations in the early 1970s.

Initially, the USAF helped train and equip the growing South Vietnamese Air Force, while also building up radar, reconnaissance, air control, and counterinsurgency capacities. After the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, a major military buildup began and many new types of aircraft arrived in country. At this point in the war U.S. leadership emphasized restraint and gradual escalation, so the USAF mission was at first limited, even as forces grew.

During the second half of the 1960s, the USAF gained more flexibility and took on a more active role in the War. Operation Rolling Thunder, ordered by President Johnson in 1965, had two objectives: (1) to smash the North Vietnamese air defense system, industrial base, and supply network; and (2) to erode its support in the South. The campaign targeted rail lines, highways, bridges, and petroleum targets, as well as the supply lines running down the Ho Chi Minh trail to the South. China and the Soviet Union continued to help North Vietnam build up its supplies of antiaircraft artillery and surface-to-air missiles, eventually creating the strongest air-defense system then in existence. USAF losses in the campaign totaled 531 aircraft and 547 airmen. Increasing losses also meant increased numbers of prisoners of war falling into enemy hands. In total, some 800 men – most of them Air Force and Navy aviators – were taken captive by the North Vietnamese and their allies.

The USAF served in close air support operations with modern fighter-bombers like the F-4s and F-100s as well as older A-7 Skyraiders and the AC-47 Spooky, and B-52 bombers from Guam. This close air support proved crucial to the defense of the Marine base at Khe Sanh, which lay under siege for two and a half months during the Tet Offensive that began in January 1968. The effort also included a supply mission, an important but overlooked element of the war, since, along with aeromedical flights, pararescue, and air sea rescue, they proved essential to supporting and maintaining U.S. personnel and activities throughout the entire region. Between 1965 and 1973, the Military Airlift Command evacuated over 400,000 medical patients. To improve the military infrastructure that allowed all these operations, the Air Force also created new construction and engineering teams to construct, improve, and repair airfields, buildings, roads, and wells.

As Rolling Thunder ended and Vietnamization began in late 1968, the USAF continued its bombing campaign, including in southern Laos and Cambodia. As ground troops continued to pull out, air power began a greater offensive. During Operation Linebacker I, from May to October 1972, the USAF dropped over 150,000 tons of bombs over North Vietnam, concentrating mostly on transportation targets, airfields, power plants, and radio stations. The USAF also continued to develop a wider range of weapons suited to the conflict, including specialized bombs to penetrate or defoliate the jungle canopy, nonlethal gas bombs that could provide cover for air rescue missions, and a new arsenal of radar- and laser-guided bombs. These bombs felled several important bridges over the Red River, including the Paul Doumer Bridge, which was one of the longest bridges in Asia and the only bridge to link Hanoi and Haiphong—it was a logistically and symbolically important target that had withstood previous attacks.

In this late period, USAF was withdrawing personnel as the United States, South Vietnam, and North Vietnam were negotiating their way through peace talks. As talks dragged on, President Nixon ordered a second Linebacker operation and in late December 1972, B-52s struck Hanoi and Haiphong at night and A-7s and F-4s struck during the day. One hundred Airmen were shot down during this campaign and 35 lost their lives. The North Vietnamese, now defenseless, returned to negotiations and quickly concluded a settlement. American airpower therefore played a decisive role in ending the long conflict.

After the war, Air Force transports evacuated hundreds of prisoners of war and thousands of civilians from the region. During Operation Homecoming, in February and March 1973, 591 former POWs were transported to Clark Air Base in the Philippines, where they received medical exams and treatment before resuming their trip back home. In 1975's Operation Babylift, one of the final actions of the US military during the long conflict, Air Force transports and a fleet of chartered civilian aircraft evacuated civilians, many of them infants and children from orphanages in Saigon. Despite tragedies and difficulties during these last weeks, more than 50,000 civilians escaped by land or sea before the enemy reached Saigon.

Source: History Division of the U.S. Air Force

For those who served in the Unites States Air Force during the Vietnam Era, on behalf of the citizens of the Great state of Colorado - Thank you for your service.”

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“United States Coast Guard

If you served in the Unites States Coast Guard during the Vietnam Era please stand.

Early in the Vietnam War, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces obtained their supplies in many ways and the forces allied with the Republic of South Vietnam had great difficulty stopping the enemy’s flow of men, arms and supplies.

In February 1965, U. S. Army helicopter pilot 1LT James Bowers flying a HU-1B Iroquois over Vung Ro Bay near Qui Nhon noticed an "island" moving slowly from one side of the bay to the other. Upon closer observation he saw the island was a carefully camouflaged ship. Air strikes were called in and the vessel was sunk. Intelligence sources determined the ship was North Vietnamese and engaged in supplying enemy forces.

While the U.S. Navy recognized the need for an effective security and surveillance system, it also knew this would be a difficult task with 1,200 miles of coastline to patrol and over 60,000 junks and sampans to control.

In March 1965, the Coastal Surveillance Force was established and began Operation MARKET TIME, so named after the native boats using the waterways for fishing and marketing. This task force provided a single command to integrate sea, air, and land based units and coordinate U.S. Navy, and South Vietnamese naval units.

Soon the Navy recognized the need for Coast Guard units to support this mission and on April 29th, President Lyndon Johnson committed the USCG to service in Vietnam under the Navy Department’s operational control and announced the formation of Coast Guard Squadron One (RON ONE). Initially, 47 officers and 198 enlisted were assigned to the newly formed Squadron and on 16 July, Division 12 of Coast Guard Squadron One departed Subic Bay, Philippines for Da Nang, Republic of Vietnam. It arrived on July 20th and began its security and surveillance patrol mission on July 21st. Throughout the war, OPERATION MARKET TIME units stopped many enemy vessels carrying supplies and men. The largest naval engagement of the Vietnam War was on 29 February 1968. Four trawlers attempted to penetrate the barrier. Of these, three were destroyed and the fourth retreated to the north.

The success of this and other operations forced the enemy to rely on the Ho Chi Minh trail to transport supplies. As many of the trawler kills were in southern Vietnam near the Ca Mau peninsula, the enemy had to carry supplies over an extraordinarily long distance.

Source: United States Coast Guard History Division

For those who served in the Unites States Coast Guard during the Vietnam Era, on behalf of the citizens of the Great state of Colorado - Thank you for your service.”

***Pause***

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“Today, there is an underlying reverence we hold for Vietnam Veterans, partly because you are our fathers and mothers, uncles and aunts, coworkers and neighbors, but also because of the outstanding unwaivering duty you performed during that era and the criticism you faced immediately following.

As we come together today to celebrate your service, we honor you ceremoniously. The reason is twofold: that you receive the honor and exaltation on behalf of a truly grateful nation both to you and the fallen; and that we, as citizens of our Great Nation, may improve and mature in our own understanding of the many sacrifices you made while on serving on duty, during your remaining service, and as a civilian since then.

Now our Colorado Army National Guard will fire a salute in honor of those who served during the Vietnam Era, a total of 20 rounds one for each year of the era.”

***COARNG Howitzer will fire 20 rounds***

**1320 MC:**

“It is my pleasure to introduce The Adjutant General of Colorado, Commander of our Colorado National Guard and Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Major General H. Michael Edwards.

 ***Maj Gen Edwards provides remarks***

**1323 MC:**

““Thank you General Edwards. It is now my distinct honor to introduce the Director of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs-Denver Regional Office, Director Renaye Murphy.

 ***Dir Murphy provides remarks***

**1326 MC:**

“Thank you Director Murphy. It is my pleasure to introduce Director of Fort Logan National Cemetery, Director Joseph Turnbach.

 ***Dir Turnbach provides remarks***

**1329 MC:**

“Thank you Director Turnbach.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our Keynote Speaker for today’s ceremony is a military service member of distinction who was born in Denver, Colorado on 12 April 1944, attended Gilpin & Elmwood Elementary, Baker Junior High School, and graduated from West High School in 1962. He at age 5 along with his older brothers began to work for the Denver Post selling newspapers al the way through High School. He was drafted by the Army at age 21 and served with the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol, 191st Military Intelligence Detachment, 1st Cavalry Division, United States Army. It is now my distinct honor to introduce Sergeant Arthur Lee “Artie” Guerrero.

 ***SGT Guerrero provides remarks***

**1338 MC:**

“Thank you SGT Guerrero.

Ladies and Gentlemen, join us as we recognize the branches of our United States Military as our Governor’s Own-Colorado Army National Guard 101st Army Band plays the United States Armed Forces Medley, if you are a United States Military Veteran or currently serving in the Unites States Armed Forces we ask that you stand as your Military Service Branch song is being played.

 ***101st plays Armed Forces Medley***

**1341 MC:**

Let’s have another round of applause for all of the current United States Military Service Members and Veterans with us today.

 ***Pause***

Will the representatives of the following Vietnam Veterans Service Organizations here with us today please come forward:

Vietnam Veterans of America-Colorado Chapters

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association-Rocky Mountain Chapter

Historic Vietnam Helicopter, Inc.

Gold Star Wives of America of Colorado

Maj Gen Edwards, Director Murphy and Director Turnbach are presenting copies of the 50th Vietnam War Anniversary Commemoration Presidential Proclamation, State of Colorado Governor’s Proclamation, as well Colorado State Flags flown over the State Capitol in honor of the 50th Vietnam War Anniversary Commemoration Ceremony to these organizations for their continued service on behalf of Vietnam Veterans and their families.

Let us give a round of applause for these Veterans Service organizations and their service to our State.”

 ***Pause***

**1344 MC:**

“As we know, the Freedom we enjoy is precious and is never free. Like all things of great value, freedom often comes at a price. Throughout the course of our proud history, the men and women of our United States Armed Forces have sacrificed to defend our nation and advance the cause of freedom around the world.

During the Vietnam War Era 58,253 American Military Service Members, including 623 Coloradoans, gave the ultimate sacrifice in service to their Nation.

 It is now my distinct honor to introduce the former National President of the Gold Star Wives of America, Mrs. Jeanette Early.”

 ***Mrs. Early provides remarks***

**1348 MC:**

The State of Colorado remembers and honors our fellow Americans, and their families, who answered the call of service to our state and nation and gave their last full measure of devotion.

We now ask that Maj Gen Edwards, Director Murphy, Director Turnbach, SGT Guerrero and Mrs. Early to come forward to lay a wreath in honor of those no longer with us.

 ***Wreath Laying, 101st Army Band plays ”Going Home”***

**1351 MC:**

Ladies and Gentlemen please stand. The Vietnam Veterans of America–Colorado Chapters will toll the Navy Bell 5 times in honor of the military service members no longer with us. Following the Liberty Bell Toll we will render Military Honors.

 ***Liberty Bell Tolls 5 times/ Firing Team/ Echo Taps begins with 101st Bugler then proceeds around the lake***

**1356 MC:**

Chaplain (retired) Victor Hoops, Chaplain for the Colorado Air National Guard during the Vietnam Era, will now come forward to provide the Benediction.

  ***CH Hoops provides Benediction***

**1358 MC:**

Thank you Chaplain Hoops.

  ***LTC (ret) Utterback closing remarks***

On behalf of Governor John Hickenlooper of the Great State of Colorado, Major General H. Michael Edwards, The Adjutant General of Colorado and Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Director Renaye Murphy from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs-Denver Regional Office, Director Joseph Turnbach from Fort Logan National Cemetery, and the over 450,000 Military Veterans who call Colorado home, we thank you for joining us today for the State of Colorado 50th Vietnam War Anniversary Commemoration Ceremony. May God Bless the Great State of Colorado and the United States of America. Thank you.

**1400 *Ceremony complete***