

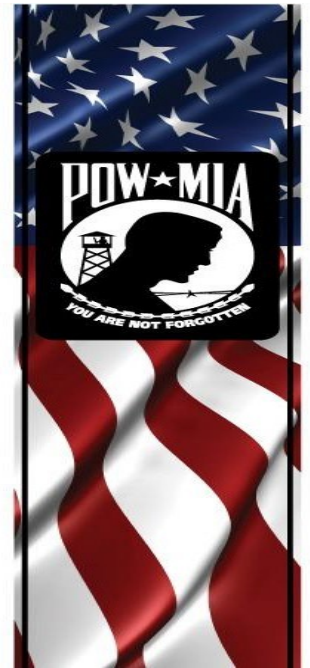


VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

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VFW Post 8555 Newsletter/Calendar



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The Paris Peace Accords: A Moment of Honor for American Service

Fifty-two years ago, on **January 27, 1973**, the world witnessed a historic milestone in the long and painful chapter of the Vietnam War. The **Paris Peace Accords**—formally known as the *Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam*—were signed in Paris, France, marking the official end of direct United States military involvement in the conflict. For the millions of American veterans who served with courage and sacrifice, this agreement represented a hard-fought step toward bringing our troops home, securing the release of our prisoners of war, and upholding the principles of freedom and self-determination that so many fought to defend.

The accords came after more than four years of arduous negotiations, often conducted in secret. Leading the American delegation was National Security Advisor **Henry Kissinger**, whose determined diplomacy played a central role. On the North Vietnamese side, Politburo member **Lê Đức Thọ** was the key negotiator. Their efforts earned both men the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize (though Thọ declined the award). The signing ceremony itself brought together representatives from the United States, the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam.

Here are iconic images from that historic signing on January 27, 1973, capturing the solemn moment at the negotiating table and the handshake between Kissinger and Thọ:



The core provisions of the accords reflected difficult compromises made in pursuit of peace:

- An immediate cease-fire across Vietnam.
- The complete withdrawal of all U.S. troops and military personnel within 60 days.
- The release of American prisoners of war (POWs), with 591 Americans returning home between February and March 1973.
- Recognition of the sovereignty and right of the South Vietnamese people to self-determination.
- The continuation of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) at the 17th parallel as a provisional boundary, with the goal of eventual peaceful reunification.
- The establishment of an International Commission of Control and Supervision (composed of Canada, Hungary, Indonesia, and Poland) to monitor compliance.

These terms allowed North Vietnamese forces to remain in the South—a concession that proved controversial—but they also preserved the existence of the Republic of Vietnam government under President Nguyen Van Thieu and committed the United States to postwar reconstruction aid.

For American veterans, the accords carried profound meaning. They brought an honorable end to our nation's direct combat role, fulfilled the promise to bring every American home, and demonstrated the resilience of our service members who endured years of hardship in defense of freedom and anti-communist ideals. The release of POWs was especially poignant—a moment of joy and relief after years of uncertainty for families across the United States.

These images remind us of veterans and communities reflecting on the legacy of that day, honoring the sacrifices made and the hope for lasting peace:



Sadly, the peace proved fragile. Violations of the cease-fire occurred almost immediately, and full-scale fighting resumed within months. By 1975, North Vietnamese forces overran the South, leading to the fall of Saigon and the reunification of Vietnam under communist control. The accords did not deliver the lasting peace many hoped for, yet they stand as a testament to American determination to seek honorable resolutions and to the unwavering service of those who answered the call during one of our nation's most challenging conflicts.



National Mentoring Month: Veterans Guiding the Next Generation

As we begin this new year, January stands as **National Mentoring Month**—a time dedicated to recognizing the profound power of guidance, wisdom, and shared experience. Observed throughout the month since 2002, this observance encourages all Americans to celebrate mentors, recruit new ones, and support programs that help young people and those in transition build brighter futures. For the veterans of VFW Post 8555, this month holds special meaning: the lessons of leadership, resilience, and service we learned in uniform are exactly what so many need today.

Veterans bring a unique perspective to mentoring. Years of discipline, teamwork under pressure, and commitment to something greater than oneself equip us to inspire others in powerful ways. Whether sharing career advice with a transitioning service member, helping a young student set goals, or simply offering a steady hand and listening ear, our experiences embody the American ideals of perseverance, duty, and opportunity for all.

One of the most respected voices on leadership and guidance came from General Colin Powell, a distinguished Army veteran who rose to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of State. He once wisely advised:

“Learn from the pros, observe them, seek them out as mentors and partners. But remember that even the pros may have leveled out in terms of their learning and skills. Sometimes even the pros can become complacent and lazy. Leadership does not emerge from blind obedience to anyone.”

General Powell's words remind us that true mentorship is active and ongoing—a commitment to lifting others while continuing to grow ourselves. His life of service exemplifies how veterans can pass on the torch of responsibility and excellence to the next generation.

Here are just a few meaningful ways Post 8555 members can get involved this January and beyond:

- **Mentor local youth** starting with your own family. Grandparents should share with their children and grandchildren sharing stories of service that instill patriotism and character.
- **Support transitioning veterans** by offering guidance on resumes, interviews, networking, or navigating civilian life, drawing from resources like American Corporate Partners or MilMentor.
- **Volunteer with established programs** such as the Floresville AirForce JROTC Program run by Major Morshe D. Araujo USAF (Ret). You can contact the Major at (830) 393-5370 ext. 21509 or by email: maraujo1@fisd.us
- **Share your own story** at Post meetings or events — Johnathon would like to record and share your experiences in and out of the military that can inspire others to step forward.

These small acts of guidance reflect the enduring American spirit: that freedom and progress depend not only on defending our nation in uniform, but on building stronger communities one relationship at a time. Mentoring honors our fallen by ensuring their sacrifices lead to a legacy of opportunity and hope.

If you've ever mentored someone—or been mentored—consider sharing your story with the newsletter. Your experiences can encourage fellow comrades to join in this vital work.

Here are a few inspiring scenes of veterans passing on wisdom and building connections with the next generation:



This January, let us recommit to the timeless veteran tradition of service—on and off the battlefield. By mentoring others, we continue to strengthen the fabric of our nation and uphold the ideals for which so many have fought. Thank you for your ongoing dedication, comrades. Together, we lead the way forward.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
			New Years Eve	New Years Day		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
			08:00 - 10:00 Food Distribution			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	19:00 - 21:00 Monthly Post Meeting			Mid Winter Convention		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
						18:00 - 21:00 VFW Appreciation Dinner / Chili Cook-Off
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
		Vietnam Peace Accord				

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
			08:00 - 10:00 Food Distribution			
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	19:00 - 21:00 Monthly Post Meeting					
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
13:00 - 15:00 Post 8555 Auxiliary - Lotteria						Operation Desert Storm