

Vietnam Veterans Day 2019

American Legion Post 21 and Fargo VVA Chapter 941 are hosting a Vietnam Veterans Day at the American Legion Post on Friday 29 March 2019. A complimentary lunch of scalloped potatoes and beverage will be served free to Vietnam Veterans and their families. Lunch will be served from 11:00am until 2:00pm with a social following until 4:00pm. Our Vietnam Veterans will have memorabilia on display during the meal and social.

The Vietnam War, as with most wars, has its roots deep in history. France's claim on Vietnam can be traced back to 1620 when a Jesuit priest arrived in Vietnam to spread the word of Catholicism. In 1787 France obtained possession of territory in Vietnam, including Da Nang along with exclusive trading rights. Everything did not go well and in 1825 the Emperor of Vietnam issued an edict prohibiting foreign missionaries in Vietnam. In the edit, the emperor asserted "The Westerner's perverse religion confuses the hearts of men. For a long time, many Western ships have come to trade with us and to introduce Catholic missionaries into our country. These missionaries make the people's hearts crooked, thus destroying our beautiful customs. Truly this is a great disaster for our land. Our purpose being to prevent our people from abandoning our orthodox way, we must accordingly completely eliminate these abuses.". Wars continued and in 1864 all of the French territories in southern Vietnam were declared to be the new French colony of Cochinchina. By 1887 France controlled all of current Vietnam and Cambodia. In 1954 Ho Chi Minh declared an independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam which was recognized by fellow Communist governments of China and the Soviet Union. This started the First Indochina War which ended in 1954 when Vietnam was partitioned into the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north and the State of Vietnam in the south. Laos and Cambodia also became independent in 1954.

The US involvement in Vietnam became shortly after the end of the First Indochina War based on the political belief in the "Domino Theory" which stated that if one country fell to communist control, its neighbors would soon fall like a row of dominos. US Intelligence agencies advised that was not the case. Sound familiar, US politicians not believing US Intelligence? The US sent advisors and financial support to South Vietnam during President Eisenhower's administration. The first American fatality occurred in 1956, Richard Fitzgibbon. Ironically, his son would be killed in Vietnam eleven years later. President Kennedy increased US involvement with increased aid and more advisors. Following Kennedy's assassination, President Johnson inherited the Vietnam problem. Fearing a withdrawal would hurt his 1964 elections campaign, Johnson continued US aid. Things changed on 2 August 1964 when two North Vietnamese torpedo boats engaged the USS Maddox in the Gulf of Tonkin. Two days later the Maddox and destroyer USS Turner Joy reported they were under attack by the North Vietnamese. Congress quickly passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution giving the President greater power to conduct the war. Later investigations could not verify an attack had actually occurred. On 30 April 1975, the last Americans were airlifted out of the country.

Although controversy exists about the Vietnam War, there is no controversy regarding our brave and patriotic men and women who served, answering the call of our country. Let us honor them.