

Exhibit Planned for 40th Anniversary of Vietnam Call-Up

The National Guard Educational Foundation (NGEF) will open a year-long exhibit in 2008 to mark the 40th anniversary of the call-up of 150 National Guard units to bolster U.S. defense commitments around the globe during a critical phase of the war in Vietnam.

The exhibit will be located just adjacent to the National Guard Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered the mobilization of 107 units of the Air Guard and 43 Army Guard units March 13, 1968.

By that time, U.S. forces had been heavily engaged in combat in Southeast Asia for nearly three years.

The strong showing by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong during the initial stage of the Tet Offensive, coupled with the taking of the *USS Pueblo*, a U.S. Navy intelligence ship, and imprisonment of its crew by North Korea in January 1968 prompted LBJ to act.

Only a small number of the units would see Vietnam, but their contributions were significant. The other units would serve in various parts of the world as a sign of U.S. readiness.

Air Guard fighter squadrons from Colorado, New Mexico, New York and Iowa, flying the F-100C Super Sabre, began deploying to South Vietnam in May.

Pilots from the New Jersey and D.C. Air Guard made up more than 85 percent of the active duty 355th Tactical Fighter Squadron in Vietnam.

The primary mission of the F-100 units in Vietnam was to provide close-air support to ground troops.

One official Air Force source said the Air Guard squadrons provided a "significant share" of that combat power, and often did so with a higher readiness rate and better operational effectiveness than their active-component counterparts.

The eight Army Guard units that arrived in Vietnam served in all four Corps Tactical Zones, and ran the gamut from front-line combat units to combat service support.

These units, like Kentucky's 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery and New Hampshire's 3rd Battalion, 197th Field Artillery, fought alongside active-component units and received high praise from senior commanders.

Known as the Indiana Rangers, the soldiers of D Company, 151st Infantry (Long Range Patrol) performed the same long-range recon patrols that companies of the 75th Ranger Regiment conducted, becoming known for their skill and professionalism. They were among the most decorated units to serve in Vietnam.

Engineer units like the 116th Combat Engineer Battalion from Idaho and the 131st Engineer Company (Light Equipment) from Vermont built roads and infrastructure, while Alabama's 650th Medical Detachment provided dental care for GIs and South Vietnamese troops alike.

The 40th anniversary exhibition, which will open in March, will honor the professionalism and dedication of those Guardsmen who served in Vietnam, whether as individual volunteers or with entire units.

Guard Vietnam veterans wanting to contribute to this endeavor through personal stories, photographs or memorabilia donations, should contact Jonathan Bernstein, NGEF director, at (888) 226-4287 or jonathan.bernstein@ngaus.org.

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