

Who are Vietnam War vets?

(c) 2023 by Don Poss

The Vietnam War began on Nov 01, 1955 and ended with the fall of Saigon, Apr 30, 1975.

The Vietnam Service Medal (VSM) was authorized by Executive Order by President Johnson, 4 July 1965:



U.S. military who served in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, or in airspace above, in direct-support of operations in Vietnam, or the U.S. Navy in defined waters during ear years, and qualify for the VSM:

Those serving in the war theater previous to 4 July 1965, were authorized the Soldiers Medal, and could apply for the VSM but lose the Soldiers Medal (You could have one or the other but not both). For instance, the first USAF Air Policeman KIA in Vietnam (1 July 1965) was TSgt Terrance Jenson (Silver Star), was awarded the Soldiers Medal.

To qualify for presumption of exposure to Agent Orange (or other chemicals) would require proof of service in Vietnam as outlined below above. If you were on an aircraft manifest that touched down in Vietnam to refuel then departed, you qualify for the presumption but most likely not the VSM.

At war's end the date range for authorization for the VSM was between 4 July 1965 and 28 March 1973. You are a Vietnam War veteran if officially authorized the Vietnam Service Medal and your DD-214 confirms the VSM is authorized.

Otherwise, anyone claiming to be a Vietnam War veteran and not authorized a VSM—is not—if he cannot, prove military service on land or at sea in Vietnam, nor in the war theatre including Thailand, Laos, or Cambodia.

Interestingly, both Vietnam War veterans and Vietnam Era veterans who are buried or will be interred in a national cemetery will have inscribed on their government headstone or grave marker the name of the war(s) occurring during their time of service. In this case, "Vietnam".

Don Poss

Da Nang, RVN, 1965-1966.

USAF K9 Sentry dog, Blackie 129X