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A Quarterly Newsletter from Project RENEW



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January VVMF delegation: \$1 million U.S. government grant for Project RENEW's humanitarian de-mining work



Gen. McCaffrey and Jan Scruggs with students at a primary school renovated with funds from American veterans

From 11 to 17 January 2010, nearly 30 Vietnam veterans and family members paid a visit to Vietnam as part of an educational and humanitarian delegation organized by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF).

Led by retired General Barry R. McCaffrey, a decorated U.S. Army veteran and a field commander in Vietnam during the war, the delegation had nearly a week to experience the country's history and culture while learning about the ongoing effects of the Vietnam War. General McCaffrey, former director of drug control policy under President Bill Clinton, is currently an adjunct professor, writer, and national security and terrorism analyst with NBC News.

At a press conference upon the delegation's arrival in Hanoi, VVMF founder and president Jan C. Scruggs announced that VVMF would receive a \$1 million budget appropriation to support demining activities in Vietnam. Approved by the U.S. Congress and signed into

law by President Obama, the grant is directed to be used for Project RENEW's work in cleaning up bombs and other ordnance in central Vietnam.

"The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund applauds the U.S. government for its continuing efforts to assist Vietnam with the deadly legacy of the Vietnam War – the more than 350,000 tons of explosive remnants of war (ERW) that continue to contaminate the country and harm its people," said Scruggs.

General McCaffrey, speaking for the other veterans, said, "We want to be back, would like to be engaged, like to be partner in building further cooperation with the Vietnamese people. The central part of this visit," he added, "will take place when we go to Project RENEW, an attempt to continue to work on repairing the damage of war."

The delegation toured Hanoi, the central provinces of Thua Thien-

Hue and Quang Nam, the coastal city of Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City. On 14 January, the delegation had their busiest day visiting Quang Tri Province, where they attended a ceremony to dedicate a primary school funded by Vietnam veterans. The delegation visited a UXO clearance site, spoke with UXO survivors who are Project RENEW beneficiaries, and met with the provincial leadership.

In the meeting with Mr. Nguyen Duc Chinh, Standing Vice Chairman of the People's Committee of Quang Tri Province, Gen. McCaffrey recognized the value of the cooperation between VVMF and Quang Tri Province. McCaffrey said he was glad to see that local capacity, Vietnamese technical specialists and RENEW professional staff, had been provided the tools to take on this demining work. And he pledged to return to the U.S. and help to secure more support for RENEW's successful mine action program.

Children's paintings of bombs and mines, part of RENEW's awareness and risk reduction effort, to be shown in Washington, DC area

Twenty paintings drawn by children who live in areas affected by unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Quang Tri Province will be shown in an April exhibition at the Amnesty International Human Right Arts Festival in Silver Spring, Maryland. The paintings will be displayed from 12 to 28 April at Montgomery College's Cafritz Hallway Gallery.

The paintings were submitted in a "bombs and mines drawing contest" that was one of many risk education activities within Project RENEW's integrated Mine Risk Education program. This public information and safety program, which extends down to the neighborhood level in villages across the province, provides critical alerts that activate responses from RENEW's mobile Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams who are dispatched to the sites on a priority basis.

During the past year, with funding from Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Project RENEW expanded its integrated risk education efforts into Cam Lo District. As part of this expansion, a new Community Reporting Network (CRN) was established within RENEW's Youth Union partnership to combine community participation in UXO safety at the grassroots level with

a strong mechanism for reporting findings of ERW that constitute a danger to local residents. The urgent information is quickly and accurately passed along to EOD Quick Response Teams which have been trained and organized by Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), a major donor and technical partner to Project RENEW. These teams then respond on a priority basis to the sites where ERW have been reported, with appropriate and safe interventions, to neutralize live threats to the community. More than 13,000 residents have been instructed on UXO safety, dangerous behaviors that trigger UXO accidents, and how to report UXO findings. By the end of 2009, 152 UXO findings had been passed on to the EOD teams via the CRN and Project RENEW's toll-free hotline telephone, resulting in 300 UXO being safely destroyed.

The twenty drawings to be displayed in the exhibition stand out among hundreds of entries submitted from children enrolled in 25 elementary and secondary schools in Cam Lo District. The purpose of such contests is to help students express their creativity through own ideas about an environment free from UXO. This also helps to educate children about the dangers of UXO, while reinforcing their responsibilities as part of the community to join in a common

effort to disseminate risk education and safety messages. A total of 5,632 paintings were submitted, presenting different topics ranging from dangerous behaviors that lead to UXO incidents, to dangers of UXO and other legacies of the war, to the value of risk education outreach activities at the local level.

It is hoped that such displays of children's paintings, expressing views and impressions about the threat of bombs and mines through their own eyes, will raise awareness of exhibit-goers as well as the general public about the lingering impact of UXO in Vietnam, which have claimed more than 100,000 casualties since the war ended in 1975. According to a survey conducted in 2006 by Project RENEW, 31% of the total casualties of UXO accidents that occurred in Quang Tri Province, Vietnam since the war ended in 1975 were children.

For more information about the exhibition, go to <http://www.humanrightsfestival.com/>.



"Keep away from unexploded ordnance" - painting by Duong Thi Ha, 15 years old



Let's join our hands for a world free from bombs and mine —painting by Le Ngoc Phuong Anh, 10 years old



A risk education meeting—painting by Mai Thanh Cuong, 13 years old

Former U.S. Navy medic returns to help local people rebuild a village temple destroyed during the war



Rupert Wenzel with villagers of An Thai

Rupert Wenzel served in the Vietnam war in 1969 as a U.S. Navy medic. One of his assignments was to provide medical aid for a small contingent of 12 U.S. Marines stationed in Quang Tri Province, the northernmost province of the former South Vietnam. The Marines lived in An Thai Village of Cam Lo District, one of Project RENEW's operational sites. As part of that wartime experience, Rupert said he felt fortunate to meet, make friends, and live with the people in the area around An Thai Village, where he developed a profound respect for the culture of Vietnam.

One evening during the war, Rupert was invited to participate in a religious ceremony in the An Thai village temple. He said that event changed him forever.

Rupert could see how important the temple was to the cultural and spiritual well being of the people of An Thai.

After several months in An Thai, Rupert continued his assignment providing medical support for U.S. Marines stationed in Con Tien and Cua Viet before completing his service and returning to the U.S.A. "After the war," Rupert Wenzel said, "I often thought of the people of Vietnam and I worried about them. I vowed that one day I would return to An Thai."

Three years ago, Rupert came back to Vietnam with his daughter and several friends. During that first return to Vietnam, after nearly 40 years, Rupert said he was surprised to find local people who still remembered him. "It was one of the most important events in my life," he said. "During that visit, several villagers in An Thai asked if I could help them rebuild the destroyed temple."

In February this year, with assistance from the Quang Tri Department of Foreign Affairs (DOFA) and Project RENEW, Rupert Wenzel paid his third visit to An Thai to talk seriously to local authorities about his intentions. Rupert talked to Mr. Trung, Chair-

man of Cam Tuyen Commune People's Committee, and Mr. Binh, Chief of An Thai Village. He told them he wanted to contribute something from his limited resources to help with a project that had significance to the people of the area. At that meeting, the local authorities said they highly appreciated Rupert's generosity and they would help arrange the necessary procedures to make his project a reality for the people of An Thai.

"I realize the Dinh lang* plays an important role in traditional Vietnamese culture, and I would like, to help in a small way, my Vietnamese friends rebuild something that is important to them and their community", Rupert wrote in his official letter to Quang Tri DOFA, in which he outlined his proposal to help the villagers of An Thai to rebuild their village temple.

Now it appears that the temple will become a reality. With funds provided by Rupert Wenzel, village leaders are making plans to start construction of the temple and hope to have the project completed within this year.

* Ding lang: Vietnamese word for village temple

"I would like, to help in a small way, my Vietnamese friends rebuild something that is important to them and their community."

Cluster bomb treaty enters into force in August, 2010: major help for countries contaminated by post-war ordnance

A total of 104 governments that have signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions will celebrate August 1, 2010 as the date when the convention becomes binding international law, following deposit of ratification documents with the United Nations by the nations of Moldova and Burkina Faso on 16 February 2010.

Those two countries are the most recent of the first 30 states to ratify the cluster bomb treaty, the number needed to bring the convention into force. The treaty prohibits any use, stockpiling,

production, acquisition or transfer of cluster munitions. It also sets out an obligation for states to destroy their own stockpiles and assist affected countries in clearing hazardous unexploded ordnance (of all types, not only cluster bombs) that is left on the ground and under the surface. Victims are also entitled to assistance under the convention.

Cluster munitions are weapons that scatter many explosive submunitions across a wide area. Due to the way in which they are scattered, cluster munitions have a

tendency to strike both military and civilian population and objects when used near populated areas. Furthermore, they have consistently left large number of submunitions unexploded which have impeded access to community resources and caused death and injury to civilians long after conflict has ceased.

The 30 ratifying countries include states that led the "Oslo Process" effort to create the Convention (Norway, Austria, the Holy See, Ireland, Mexico, and New Zealand), states where cluster muni-



A dump of over forty cluster bombs, identified as BLU 24, were found and safely removed by RENEW/NPA EOD Team in Trieu Phong District, Quang Tri Province

Cluster bomb treaty...continued

tions have been used (Albania, Croatia, Lao PDR, Sierra Leone, and Zambia), cluster munition stockpiles (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Moldova, Montenegro, and Slovenia), as well as Spain, the first signatory country to complete destruction of its stockpile. Other ratifying states are: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malawi, Malta, Nicaragua, Niger, San Marino, and Uruguay.

Governments which have signed the treaty, UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and NGOs will participate in the First Meeting of States Parties to be held in Lao PDR in November. Although Vietnam has not yet signed the treaty, there are

indications that Vietnam will sign prior to the November meeting. Viet Nam is not believed to have ever used, produced, stockpiled, or transferred cluster munitions. However, Viet Nam remains extensively contaminated by cluster bombs and other explosive remnants of the war that ended 35 years ago. This contamination continues to claim lives and require extensive clearance operations.

Vietnam has earned global respect for overcoming colonialism and defeating numerous foreign invasions. By signing the treaty, Vietnam would help build significant momentum for other remaining non-signatories to follow suit. More importantly, Vietnam's par-

ticipation will secure needed international assistance to help Vietnam rid the country of tons of cluster munitions and other unexploded ordnance.

The tragedies and the damage from these weapons continue. On 12 February 2010, a forty-year-old ethnic minority man, the father of six daughters, was killed on his family's mountainside farm plot in western Quang Tri Province, near the old Ho Chi Minh Trail. He was clearing weeds from around his banana trees and preparing for the Traditional Lunar New Year holiday, which began in Viet Nam on the following day.

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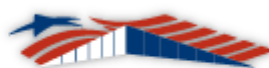


Restoring the Environment and
Neutralizing the Effects of the War

Project RENEW - Restoring the Environment and Neutralizing the Effects of the War - is a humanitarian mine action organization dedicated to preventing accidents, injuries and deaths from explosive remnants of war (ERW) and to rebuilding the lives of affected families.

Founded in 2001 as a comprehensive and integrated model to address the problem of ERW, Project RENEW has received positive recognition for its humanitarian work through an effective implementation of combined programs: Mine Risk Education, Mine Victims Assistance, EOD clearance teams, Information Coordination and Post-Clearance Support.

Project RENEW would like to thank the following donors and technical partners that provide support to our work:



VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL FUND

