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## VIETNAM INVITES 4 U.S. VETERANS TO VISIT HANOI

By BERNARD WEINRAUB, Special to the New York Times

**WASHINGTON, Dec. 12—** The Government of Vietnam has unexpectedly invited a group of American veterans of the Vietnam War to visit the Southeast Asian country next week to discuss such issues as the herbicide Agent Orange and the fate of American servicemen still missing in Indochina.

Robert O. Muller, executive director of the Vietnam Veterans of America, one of the four men scheduled to leave New York next Wednesday for Hanoi, said he was "somewhat stunned" at the decision by the Vietnamese to grant visas to the veterans. After stops in London and Bangkok, Thailand, the four are to arrive in Hanoi Friday for a six-day visit. State Department Backs Move

James Menard, a State Department Asian Affairs aide, concurred with the planned mission, saying, "We support efforts by private citizens to join Government efforts in achieving a full accounting for those missing in action."

Mr. Menard said that the department did "not want to characterize the motives of the Vietnamese Government" in granting visas for the first time to a delegation of former combat veterans who had fought against the North Vietnamese and Vietcong. The United States and Vietnam do not have formal diplomatic relations.

Mr. Muller, 35 years old, of Huntington, L.I., is a former Marine Corps lieutenant who was paralyzed from the waist down in 1969 in a battle near Con Thien, when an enemy bullet severed his spinal cord.

"What we expect to do is to make contact with the Vietnamese, to be as persuasive as we can in expressing concern about certain issues like Agent Orange and people missing in action," he said in an interview. "We are hopeful we can initiate a dialogue between our people, Americans and Vietnamese, after years of bloodshed and strain." Hope to Start 'Healing Process'

He added: "We'll be there as Christmas approaches, when so many people pause to reflect on peace and share a feeling of good will. Hopefully, the mood of the season will help start a process of healing between our two countries."

Among the issues to be discussed, Mr. Muller said, was the fate of the estimated 2,500 American servicemen unaccounted for in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos after the war ended in 1975. The Vietnamese have maintained that there are no American prisoners alive in Vietnam, and that all bodies that have been found have been handed over to the American authorities.

State Department officials say that the Administration is "still seeking a full accounting of M.I.A.'s," or those missing in action. Mr. Muller and the other veterans also plan to bring up the issue of Agent Orange, the military name for a defoliant that was used by Americans in "enemy" areas of the former North and South Vietnam. According to some medical data, many of those exposed to the toxic chemical have been stricken by cancer and other severe physical and mental problems, and their children have suffered birth defects.

"We're hopeful we can create some mechanism where American scientists will be allowed access to areas sprayed," Mr. Muller said. "For years we've been frustrated by a lack of full scientific information and now, hopefully, we can get it."

For several years, Vietnam veterans' groups, including Mr. Muller's, have been pressing for Government recognition of and aid to servicemen with ailments they contend are related to exposure to Agent Orange.

Accompanying Mr. Muller to Hanoi will be Michael Harbert of New York, a former Air Force sergeant who flew in bombing missions over North Vietnam; Tom Bird of New York, a former infantryman with the First Air Cavalry Division, and John Terzano of Detroit, a former Navy seaman who served on the destroyer Robison, which took part in the blockade of Haiphong harbor in 1972. All are members of Vietnam Veterans of America and were invited by Mr. Muller.

Mr. Muller said he flew to London in October to meet the Vietnamese Ambassador there, Tran Hoan. No Desire to 'Play Politician'

"We expressed our desire to be the first delegation of former American troops to return to Vietnam for the specific reasons of the M.I.A. issue and the consequences of Agent Orange," Mr. Muller said. "We made it clear that we didn't expect to be statesmen or play politician but to be simply who we were - veterans who have concerns about veterans' issues."

Mr. Muller said he later met with Vu Dung, a Vietnamese official at the United Nations. "He said to me, 'Where were you in the war?' and I said, 'Around Dong Ha and Quang Tri,' and I asked him where he was, and he said with enthusiasm, 'I was VC in northwest Tay Ninh province.' "

"We talked on a soldier-to-soldier basis," said Mr. Muller. "We talked about how we fought and how we handled our dead and it was clear to us, as we sat there and had a drink, that we had gone through battles against one another, yet we could talk without animosity."

Mr. Muller said Mr. Hoan called him Dec. 7 to say the visas had been granted.

Several days ago, the veterans were briefed at the State Department by Desaix Anderson, chief of

the section on Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Illustrations: photo of Tom Bird, Michael Harbert and John Terzano

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