



## PRESS RELEASE

Vietnam Veterans of America

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### **VVA on DoD Announcement of Guidance for Upgrading Discharge Requests**

“Vietnam Veterans of America is very pleased with the recent announcement by Secretary of Defense Hagel regarding the September 3, 2014, Department of Defense (DoD) guidance to Military Department Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records (BCM/NR) when considering petitions regarding discharge upgrade requests by veterans claiming Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, who received Other Than Honorable (OTH) Discharges,” said VVA National President John Rowan.

“It is the right thing to do, especially for our Vietnam veterans. Many of our brothers and sisters were inappropriately discharged under other than honorable conditions after serving their country, because PTSD was not recognized at that time. In many cases, a PTSD diagnosis was not made until decades after their service was completed. And, because of their OTH discharge, they were unable to receive VA benefits. VVA has been advocating for these veterans for a long time, and we are very grateful that Secretary Hagel has taken this action,” said Rowan.

As stated in the September 3 guidelines, “...in cases where service records or any document from the period of service substantiate the existence of one or more symptoms of what is now recognized as PTSD or a PTSD-related condition during the time of service, liberal consideration will be given to finding that PTSD existed at the time of service. Liberal consideration will also be given in cases where civilian providers confer diagnoses of PTSD or PTSD-related conditions when case records contain narratives that support symptomatology at the time of service, or when any other evidence which may reasonably indicate that PTSD or a PTSD-related disorder existed at the time of discharge which may have mitigated the misconduct that caused the under than honorable conditions characterization of service.”

“We thank Secretary Hagel for this effort,” said Rowan, “However, now begins the challenge of reaching out to all those Vietnam veterans affected by such OTH discharges and helping them get their discharges upgraded, so they can access the health care and other benefits due them. We urge the DoD and the VA to initiate such efforts to identify and reach out to the affected veterans.”

*Vietnam Veterans of America ([www.vva.org](http://www.vva.org)) is the nation's only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA's founding principle is “Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another.”*

