

GREAT NEWS! Today, May 22, 2014 the House passed our amendment H.R. 4435 to the Department of Defense Bill asking for immediate consideration for placement of our “Lost 74” names on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. The bill read as follows:

Congressional Bill H.R. 4435

Whereas the Congress notes the continued popularity and importance of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a place of reflection and healing for a generation;

Whereas the simple inscriptions of the names of the Nation’s dead bear mute testimony to the sacrifice of more than 58,000 Americans, serving as a deep source of comfort and pride for the families of those who were lost;

Whereas, 74 sailors were lost aboard the USS Frank E. Evans, which sank after colliding with the HMAS Melbourne on June 3, 1969 during a Southeast Asia Treaty Organization exercise just outside the designated combat zone;

Whereas the Frank Evans had been providing support fire for combat operations in Vietnam before the exercise that resulted in the accident and was scheduled to return after the exercise;

Whereas the families of the 74 men lost aboard the USS Frank E. Evans have been fighting for decades to have their loved ones added to the Memorial;

Whereas exceptions have been granted to inscribe the names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for other service members who were killed outside of the designated combat zone, including in 1983 when President Ronald Reagan ordered that 68 Marines who died on a flight outside the combat zone be added to the wall;

Whereas Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, in a letter dated December 15, 2010, expressed support for the addition of the 74 names to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial;

Whereas heroism and sacrifice should never go unrecognized because of an arbitrary line on a map;

Now be it therefore resolved that it is the sense of Congress that the Secretary of Defense should order that the names of the 74 military personnel lost aboard the USS Frank E. Evans on June 3, 1969 be added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Our next step is to request all US Senators include the same language in Senate Bill S 2295. Please contact your US Senators and ask them for their support; The following is suggested language for you to use when making contact:

Dear Senator,

The House of Representatives recently passed (H.R. 4435) as a companion bill to the Armed Services Appropriation Bill, now Senate Bill (S 2294). I am asking for your support to include a provision urging the Defense Secretary to put the names of the “Lost 74” from the USS Frank E. Evans (DD 754) on the Vietnam Memorial Wall, just like one that was included in the House bill.

On 3 June, 1969, the USS Frank E. Evans (DD 754) was cut in half by an Australian aircraft carrier in the South China Sea – 74 American sailors lost their lives. The USS Frank E. Evans (DD 754) was participating in a joint Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) exercise called "Sea Spirit" in the South China Sea with more than 40 ships of SEATO nations, at the time of the collision with HMAS Melbourne (r 21). Despite operating in Vietnamese waters immediately before deployment to Exercise Sea Spirit, and being scheduled to return to activities supporting the war effort after the exercise, it was determined that since Exercise Sea Spirit took place 112 miles outside the geographical limit for the combat zone the crew was ineligible for inclusion on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

While the USS. Frank E. Evans (DD 754) was not in the combat zone as defined by Executive Order 11216, the ship was supporting the ongoing military conflict in Vietnam and the crew was instrumental in advancing American military objectives in Vietnam. Not to mention, the crew had participated in conflict just days before the collision. Vietnam veterans have long argued that inclusion on the monument should not be determined by geographic location, and exceptions to this rule have previously been made for service members killed as part of the conflict but not in Vietnam itself. For example, those involved in operations in Laos (Laos was later included in the combat zone) and those dying in transit to or from Vietnam have been made are eligible for the memorial.

It is clear the “lost 74” gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country. It is now time for our country to give back this loss by recognizing them and adding their names to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.