



COUNTERPARTS

TƯƠNG HỮU ĐÔNG NAM Á

SITREP

Volume XXIV

Issue 1

Winter 2024-2025

2025 Reunion, April 29-May 2, Costa Mesa, CA.

Dave Priddy, our Reunion Coordinator has done lot of advance planning and coordination. Here's the latest update from Dave

Greetings from sunny Orange County, California! Today, we are enjoying temperatures in the mid-70s, with much needed rain forecast for the last weekend of January. The devastating wildfires in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties are still burning but being aggressively tackled. They are 50-60 miles above our reunion site and thankfully, have not interfered with life in the O.C. Please keep our friends, neighbors and your fellow countrymen in your thoughts and prayers.

Planning for our Reunion is almost complete, with few open items remaining. Transportation is finalized for the events outside the hotel on 30 April, 1 May and 2 May. Half of the hotel rooms reserved at the special rate are booked. If you haven't made your reservations yet, please do so as soon as possible. We reserved 40 rooms at the special rate, with the possibility of more rooms, if available, by the cutoff date of 8 April, so don't delay!

Your registration is due to me by 5 April with your banquet meal choice. I have had to contact several members to remind them that they forgot to select their choice of chicken, salmon or steak; otherwise, you may end up with baloney sandwiches or MREs. To date, we have six presentations scheduled and have slots for a few more; contact me to schedule.

Tom Vo has been busy working on the Black April program on 30 April, contacting the Mayor of Westminster on our behalf to participate in the Black April Remembrance Ceremony and locking in our luncheon after the ceremony. We have reserved a Vietnamese banquet hall and Tom has been reaching out to many of the former Vietnamese military service groups (all branches) and veterans and inviting them to join us for lunch and a program Tom is arranging. The special event menu will be a multi-course meal included in your registration: crab meat soup, jumbo shrimp, steamed chicken, beef with vegetables, fried fish, fried rice, a fruit dessert and soda. Wine or beer will be available for purchase at the bar.

On 1 May, we have the optional Lyon Air Museum tour scheduled. I am arranging to have Docents available to guide you and explain the exhibits in detail or you may wander at your leisure. Each Docent can accommodate a group up to 10 and the tours last approximately 1-1 1/2 hours. We have a chartered bus that will transfer attendees hourly back and forth commencing at 0945 hours to 1345 hours. In the back of the hospitality suite, there will be 30 minute member presentations from 1400-1630 hours.

We will conduct our annual Business Meeting in the hospitality suite on 2 May from 0900-1230 hours. A special tour of Newport Beach is scheduled for the spouses and guests, departing at 0900 and returning early-mid afternoon. A chartered bus and a local guide (Cynthia Priddy) will whisk them around, visiting Balboa Island for shopping and sightseeing before heading to Rogers Gardens, a local landmark for flowers, trees, shrubs, decor and much, much more. The member presentations will continue from 1400-1600 hours in the hospitality suite. Cocktails will begin at 1700 to 1900 hours and a plated dinner and program at 1900 to 2200 hours.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or would like to be a presenter.

Dave Priddy, 703-627-2109 <mailto:dave.priddy@yahoo.com>



COUNTERPARTS SITREP

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Commander's Corner

Greetings from snowy and cold Northeastern Wyoming. As we begin 2025, we remember our fallen CP members from 2024: SGM Ray Robison, Advisory Team 66 and 1LT Gary Rice, Advisory Team 31. They were both unique men and we enjoyed many reunions with both of them.

April 30, 2025, will be the 50th anniversary of the fall of South Vietnam. During our upcoming Reunion, April 29 – May 2, 2025, we will have the opportunity to share in the commemoration event with the Vietnamese community in Westminster, CA. Counterparts will be presenting a wreath at this event to honor the sacrifice of the South Vietnamese veterans and their families, as well as the commitment of American Advisors to the South Vietnamese in their heroic struggle to avoid the communist takeover.

This will be a significant event for both the Vietnamese veterans and for Counterparts. Dave Priddy will be sharing more details about the Reunion in his article. I want to encourage you to attend, as this point in history will not happen again. Besides, we kind of gotten to like hanging out with each other.

I, like many others, put the whole Vietnam experience aside when I left the Army in 1977. I did not join any of the veteran service organizations or sign up with the VA. Everything changed for me in 2014 when my wife & I attended our first reunion in Greensboro, NC. Walking into the Hospitality Room the first afternoon & meeting men that I had served with in the late 1960's and had no contact with since, changed me (for the better I hope).

If there's anything I can do to be of assistance to you, please don't hesitate to contact me. I look forward to seeing you at the upcoming 2025 Reunion.

Steve King
Commander

DUES NOTICE: Annual Counterparts dues are payable now. Annual dues are \$35.00, or you can upgrade to lifetime membership for \$350.00. Our dues fund the several projects that Counterparts supports for our former Counterparts in Southeast Asia. Please make your check out to "Counterparts" and mail to Membership Officer John Haseman, 555 West Saddle Drive, Grand Junction CO 81507. Lifetime members do NOT pay dues, but those who may like to make a contribution are warmly received! If you are not sure of your membership status or payment record, feel free to email John at: jhaseman@earthlink.net



Book your Reservation

Group Name: Counterparts Reunion, Group #15507

Blocked Dates: April 29 - May 3, 2025

To book your reservation online, please click on the link below:

<https://costamesagroups.ayreshotels.com/?coupon=15507>

Deluxe Room Rate: \$159 (single/double occupancy)

Cut Off Date: 04/08/25

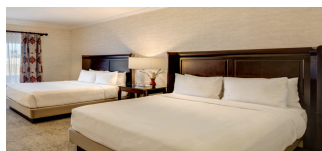
(Please make your reservation before the above cut off date; after this date, rate and availability cannot be guaranteed) (24-hour cancellation policy)

COMPLIMENTARY AMENITIES:

- Parking & Wi-Fi
 - Shuttle to/from John Wayne
 - Cookies in the lobby each evening
 - Shuttle within a 3 mile radius
- (Based on Availability)*

THINGS TO DO

- Minutes to the Sand in Newport Beach
- Balboa Island
- Newport Dunes
- South Coast Plaza
- Fashion Island
- Restaurants within walking distance
- Trendy shopping & dining at The LAB and The CAMP



HOTEL INFORMATION

284 deluxe guest rooms and suites, Flat-screen televisions, Irons and ironing boards, hair dryers, Refrigerators and coffee makers, MP3-compatible clock radios, EV Chargers, New Fitness studio, 2 heated pools and spas

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COUNTERPARTS REUNION 2025

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Tuesday, 29 April

Arrival day, hotel check-in
1200-2200 Hospitality Room

Wednesday, 30 April

0800-2200 Hospitality Room open
0830 Load buses for Black April ceremony in Westminster
0845 Buses depart
0915-0925 Arrive, proceed to seating
1000-1130 Black April Ceremony Counterparts Wreath Ceremony
1130 Load buses, proceed to Vietnamese luncheon
1200-1500 Vietnamese Luncheon (***Cost included in Registration fee***)
Counterparts Reunion attendees & South Vietnamese military veterans
coordinated by Tom Vo
1530 Load buses for return to the hotel
1600 Hotel - free time
Dinner on your own

Thursday, 1 May

0800-2200 Hospitality Room open
0900 Load buses (***Optional Trip- \$45/per person. Includes bus & entry fee to the museum***)
0930 Arrive at Lyon Air Museum
1000-1130 Tour Air Museum
1130 Load buses & return to hotel
1200 Lunch on your own
1400-1600 Member presentations** (30 minutes each)
Free time
Dinner on your own

Friday, 2 May

0900-1200 Counterparts Business Meeting (Hospitality Room)
0900-1200 Wives event (TBD)
1400-1600 Member presentations** (30 minutes each)
1600 Hospitality Room closed
1700-1900 Cash bar - cocktail hour
1900- 2200 Banquet

Saturday, 3 May

Farewells & check-out of hotel

***** Those wishing to present need to contact Dave Priddy to schedule your 30 minute time slot, provide a presentation title, outline & copies of any slides/pictures you will be using.***

2025 Counterparts Reunion

REGISTRATION FORM

Registration Fees:

\$195.00: Includes access to hospitality room & refreshments, banquet dinner, bus transportation to the Black April Ceremony & lunch. (further details on the lunch menu will follow)

Registration must be received NLT April 5, 2025

\$70: Spouse/Guest for banquet dinner only.

\$45: Optional bus tour on Thursday

\$ 45 x ____ per = ____ (Optional trip to Lyon Air Museum)

\$195 x ____ per = ____ (Registration, hospitality, Black April Ceremony & banquet)

\$70: x ____ per = ____ (This only applies if this person is attending ONLY the banquet)

Total Enclosed: \$ ____

Entrée Selection for Banquet Dinner (select one for each person registering):

Chicken Brest in Lemon-Herb Sauce ____

Grilled Salmon with Lemon-Butter Sauce ____

Skirt Steak with Chimichurri Sauce ____

(All dinners served with a Spinach salad with choice of dressing, served with rolls & butter; fresh brewed coffee, tropical iced tea & chocolate cake for dessert.)

Member Name: ____

MACV Team # ____

Spouse Name: ____

Guest Name: ____

Email: ____

Make checks payable to Counterparts and mail to:

Dave Priddy

31392 Abanita Way

Laguna Niguel, CA 92677

703.627.2109

XO NOTES

Happy New Year to all my fellow Counterparts. Can you imagine it has been nine months since our last reunion. Time goes by so fast I can't remember what I did last month. Isn't retirement great! You get up when you want, think of what you may have to do but have to check my daily planner because we just can't "remember shit" like we use to. For me I have lived a happy life full of challenges, keeping up with family activities, planning travel, visiting the VA clinic and the countless other activities we occupy ourselves with. But the highlight of my year is attending the Counterparts Reunion.

The reunion committee has kept the command section abreast of the reunion activities planned and so far has done an outstanding job. Way to go reunion committee!!! I hope that you have made your hotel reservations and checking flight schedules and prices to get there on time to attend all the planned activities.

The Command section held its first ever zoom meeting a few months back to discuss the reunion and several topics that will be discussed in our business meeting on Friday morning. I can't tell you the specifics but you need to attend to find or wait for the fall SITREP to come out.

Be well, be safe and see you at the reunion

Hank Choy XO

PS. We some volen-told members to jump in and host our upcoming reunions. No shame "Just do it." 2026 is just around the corner. I would love to host you in the islands but the cost would kill you.

Be well, safe and see you in LA,

Hank Choy, XO

...And a Special Offer for Members,

I am COUNTERPARTS member Patrick Gillis, and I was in Vietnam in 1968 in the Delta on MACV team 56 in Can Tho. About 10 years ago I started a collection project of photos and images from Vietnam from fellow veterans. I can preserve the images for all by computer digitizing them for safe keeping and legacy purposes. I am doing this project at no charge. I currently have over 7,000 images from all 4 Corps in my collection. The images date from 1963 to 1973.

If any of you have any slides, pictures, or negatives from your time in Vietnam, and would like to save them permanently as part of your legacy, just let me know. Once completed by me I will send the originals back to you along with a computer flash drive containing all the images you sent me. Please contact me by phone or E-mail, for more information or to further explain the complete process, and if you have questions or concerns.

Phone 951-533-9769

Email: pgilli20@yahoo.com

WEBSITE NEWS

Doug Wilson, Advisory Team 86, provided a document with 63 teammates, including province MAT teams, RVN province and RVN district officials in Long An Province. Also included in the document were 555th MILPHAP USAF personnel who were attached to the team and work and taught at the RVN Long An Provincial Hospital in Tan An.

This information will be available for searches by 2/15/25.

One side benefit from the Bulletin Board project is that we now have a more reliable list of the MACV Province advisory teams and more MAT team personnel in the database.

Work is continuing on the revised Bulletin Board with completion now being estimated around 3/31/25.

Any members who have or know someone who has personnel information on MAT teams or MILPHAP teams, please send me the information. We have very limited data on these teams.

If you have MAT team info, please include the parent Province Team and the Corps Tactical Zone. Other sources on the Internet have listed MAT teams without the Province Team or listed the MAT team as a MACV advisory team.

Thanks and best regards,

Jim Alkek
jimalkek@yahoo.com
Cell 210-842-6574

Welcome Our New Members:

Louis O. Constantini (Lon) joined us as a Lifetime Member. He served as an advisor to the 41st Ranger Battalion, Quang Tri Province, Advisory Team 21, 1969-1970. Lon lives in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Thomas H. Lyons served on Advisory Team 42 in Binh Dinh Province from August 1969 to July 1970. Tom was Team Chief, MAT Team II-84. Tom joined us as a Lifetime Member of Counterparts. He lives in Newcastle, Maine.

Walter L. Shaw, Jr. served on Advisory Team 21 in Pleiku from January 1968 to August 1969. He was an intelligence analyst on the province team. He lives in Birmingham, Alabama.

Douglas D. Smith served on Advisory Team 95, Phuoc Long Province. He was Deputy and Chief of MAT Team III-18 in Dong Xoai District, 1970-1971.

Cambodia Corps Fall update 2024

Cambodia Corps continues in its mission to help the Montagnard help themselves through education. Our new relationship with Wildlife Conservation Society and their efforts to thwart the illegal activities in the huge Keo Seima sanctuary through education of the Montagnards who live within the sanctuary are proving to be a learning process for both of us. We are providing a high school program tailor made for their agenda in which we highlight different career fields which can be utilized within the sanctuary such as forestry management, ecology, eco-tourism and other related fields. The hope is to educate the youth in the preservation of their rain forest to slow down and perhaps end the illegal activities by Vietnamese companies crossing into the Cambodian sanctuary. WCS has also entered into an agreement with CCI to fund five scholarships for college level training in related environmental fields. We'll be closely monitoring our graduates to gauge how effective their training will be. We have already attracted the attention of the government Ministry of Environment who is also interested in the program we have developed together with WCS. This is our first foray into actively working to save the rain forest. But it is part of our mission to help the Montagnard in the preservation of their lands and culture, so we are excited to be entering into these partnerships with WCS.

MEDAL OF HONOR
SERVICE AS ADVISOR TO VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES

Second in a Series
By Colonel John B. Haseman, U.S. Army, Retired

Lieutenant Thomas Rolland Norris, U.S. Navy
and
Petty Officer Michael Edwin Thornton, U.S. Navy

I've chosen to combine the amazing stories of two courageous U.S. Navy SEALs, who epitomize the commitment to never leave a man behind.

Thomas R. Norris was born in Jacksonville, FL on 14 January 1944, grew up in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, DC. He graduated from the University of Maryland in 1967 with a degree in sociology with a specialty in criminology. He intended to pursue a career with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) but when his student deferment ran out he enlisted in the navy and later obtained a commission. He was an accomplished wrestler in high school and in college, and Atlantic Coast Conference champion in his 115 pound weight class in both 1965 and 1966. Short in stature and slender in appearance, he was amazingly strong physically and mentally, and successfully finished the arduous training to become a SEAL.

By early 1972, Lieutenant Norris was on his second assignment in Vietnam and was one of the few SEALs remaining in Vietnam. His first Vietnam tour was with SEAL Team Two, but this time he was assigned as a SEAL Advisor, Naval Advisory Detachment Danang, a part of the then highly-secret Strategic Technical Directorate Assistance Team, U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam Studies and Observation Group (MACV-SOG). Among their assigned tasks were covert reconnaissance and security operations, and sea and riverine operations training and advising their Vietnamese counterpart Sea Commandos.

In the spring of 1972 North Vietnam launched its huge "Easter Offensive" by attacking across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) into Quang Tri Province. The United States launched hundreds of B-52 strikes, often assisted by U.S. Air Force EB-66 electronic warfare aircraft to blind the NVA's highly sophisticated anti-aircraft arrays. On 2 April 1972 one of those aircraft was shot down, but one crewman, Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Iceal "Gene" Hambleton, safely parachuted before the aircraft exploded. Code-named BAT-21B, he knew intimate information about U.S. missiles and targets from a tour at Strategic Air Command, so it was critical that the enemy not capture him. He landed right in the middle of the NVA invading force of more than 30,000 men. On 3 April two rescuing aviators were shot down; of the two, only Captain Mark Clark evaded capture. In the succeeding five days the most intense and costliest rescue operation of the Vietnam War cost the death of 14 aviators, two more captured, and eight aircraft lost. General Creighton Abrams decreed the end of aerial rescue operations to secure the two aviators.

The movement of BAT-21B became the subject of both a novel and a film in 1988, both titled *BAT-21* (the novel by William C. Anderson, and the movie directed by Peter Markle). As fiction, neither revealed the actual ensuing dramatic and courageous ground rescue of the two men. Both the method of operation to effect the rescue, and the identity and missions of Norris' organization, remained classified for many years afterwards.

Norris and his five-man Sea Commando team set up in an isolated bunker on the south bank of the Mieu Giang River. Nearly surrounded by the invading NVA forces and subject to constant enemy mortar and artillery attacks, Lieutenant Norris was given operational instructions for the team to swim up the river to the location of the two aviators. He ignored those instructions.

The river current was too strong to swim against, and enemy ground activity was very close. Fortunately, he had a top-quality radio and could communicate with both Hambleton and Clark as well as friendly operational combat forces, including artillery and forward air controllers overhead.

On 10 April 1972 the five-man team moved out cautiously, aimed to rescue Mark Clark, who was closer to them. They walked most of the night along the south bank of the river and avoided numerous enemy patrols. However, when they reached almost to the Cam Lo bridge over the river and watching dozen of enemy tanks crossing, Norris realized they had gone too far. The team reversed down stream and Norris, having pinpointed Clark's approximate location, told the pilot to float down the river. He did so, the team got him ashore and returned safely through enemy territory to their bunker.

The bunker received a heavy enemy mortar attack that killed or wounded two of the Vietnamese Sea Commandos, including their commander. Captain Clark and the team casualties were medevacked by helicopter. That night, 11 April 1972, the three-man team attempted twice to find Hambleton, but were unsuccessful. On the next afternoon an aerial forward air controller contacted Hambleton and pinpointed his location, notified Norris, and so on the night of 12 April Norris again planned to move up the river to find the exhausted aviator. But two of the Vietnamese refused to go. However, the third man, Petty Officer Nguyen Van Kiet, volunteered to accompany Norris.

Norris and Kiet set out on foot disguised as fishermen, and fortunately found a serviceable sampan in a deserted village along the way. Paddling quietly upstream, Norris and Kiet found Hambleton at the precise location expected. They gave him water and some first aid, laid him in the bottom of the sampan and covered him with bamboo and banana leaves. As they returned downstream the team was accosted on several occasions by enemy patrols, but Kiet was able to convince them that they were innocent fishermen. At one point enemy soldiers fired on them with a machine gun. Norris beached the sampan, and they hid while he called for artillery and an air strike. They soon reached the safety of their bunker, called for extraction, and Hambleton and the team were moved to safety.

The author thanks Katie Lang's DoD News on-line article *Medal of Honor Monday: Navy Lt. Thomas R. Norris, April 11, 2022*, for much of the details of Norris' movement to rescue the two aviators. Access at [Medal of Honor Monday: Navy Lt. Thomas R. Norris > U.S. Department of Defense > Story](#)

Following his courageous operation to rescue Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton and Captain Mark Clark, Petty Officer Kiet returned to his Danang Sea Commando unit and during the ensuing years conducted operations from the DMV to the Mekong Delta, was wounded several times, and received several Vietnamese Navy awards for courage. In 1975 with the fall of the Republic of Vietnam, Kiet and many other Vietnamese Navy personnel safely fled and were picked up at sea by U.S. Navy vessels. He settled in Washington State, first in a lumber mill and then for 20 years with the Boeing Corporation. In 1976 the U.S. awarded him the Navy Cross, the only living Vietnamese to receive our second-highest decoration. I met Mr. Kiet at a Vietnam Center conference at Texas Tech University. He impressed me with his dignity, character and courage and we remained in contact. I wrote an article about his operation with Lieutenant Norris for Vietnam Magazine. See *Unsung Hero in the Amazing Rescue of Bat 21 Bravo*, December 2008. Access at: <https://www.historynet.com/unsung-hero-amazing-rescue-bat-21-bravo/>

Lieutenant Norris remained in his MACV-SOG assignment and continued to train Sea Commandos and conducted many covert intelligence operations over the next six months. On the night of 31 October 1972, he commanded a small five-man team with Petty Officer Michael Thornton as his deputy team chief. Their objective was to collect intelligence on a North Vietnamese naval base on a river just south of the DMZ.

Michael E. Thornton was born on 23 March 1949 in Greenville, South Carolina. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1967 after graduating from high school and entered U.S. Navy SEAL selection and training at Coronado, California. He graduated in March 1969, one of only 18 students from BUD/S class 49, which started with 129 members. Petty Officer Thornton received a direct assignment to SEAL Team One and deployed several times to Southeast Asia between 1969 and 1972.

In October 1972 Petty Officer Thornton was assigned to the Naval Advisory Group, advising and training South Vietnamese naval special operations personnel known as Sea Commandos. On the night of 31 October 1972 Thornton was on an operation to capture prisoners and gather intelligence about a North Vietnamese riverine naval base near the Demilitarized Zone. In addition to Thornton, the team consisted of SEAL Lieutenant Thomas R. Norris and three experienced South Vietnamese Sea Commandos. The team dropped off a Vietnamese junk, paddled a rubber boat to within a mile of shore, then swam to the beach.

The team soon realized that they in the wrong location and were actually in North Vietnam. A force of an estimated 150 enemy soldiers discovered them and attempted to surround and capture them. The small team fled toward the ocean under fire, during which Thompson was wounded several times. Lieutenant Norris ordered the team to extract to the beach while he covered them.

One of the South Vietnamese sailors saw Norris get shot in the head and assumed he was dead. But Thornton was not about to flee and leave his lieutenant behind. He ran 400 meters through enemy fire back to Norris and found him with a severe head wound. Thornton put Norris on his shoulders and ran back to the beach, into the surf, inflated Norris' life vest, and swam into the ocean with him and a wounded Vietnamese Sea Commando. Thornton bandaged Norris' wound as best he could and kept the group afloat for almost three hours. They were picked up by their supporting Vietnamese junk and transferred to the *USS Newport News*.

Petty Officer Thornton knew that Lieutenant Norris had been recommended for the Medal of Honor, but at the time of this action no decision had yet been made. Lieutenant Norris survived his wounds, although he spent over four years going through a long series of reconstructive surgeries.

Petty Officer Thornton's Medal of Honor nomination moved relatively quickly through channels. Lieutenant Norris, of course, knew of the coming award and was invited to the White House ceremony. But he was confined to Walter Reed Army Hospital for yet another series of surgical procedures and was denied medical clearance to attend. But two SEALs were not about to let that prevent attendance. Lieutenant Norris was able to attend Thornton's award ceremony on 15 October 1973, just a year after the hazardous beach landing that wounded Norris and gained Thornton's Medal of Honor.

Petty Officer Thornton remained in the navy following his Vietnam experiences. He spent two years on an exchange assignment with the British Special Boat Squadron, and in 1980 was named a plank owner member of SEAL Team Six. In June 1982 he received a direct commission to ensign in the U.S. Navy. Following service in Operation Desert Storm, he retired in 1992 in the rank of Lieutenant.

Security clearance procedures eventually moved Lieutenant Norris' award nomination forward. He spent most of that time undergoing repeated medical procedures to repair the damage to his face and skull, and he lost his left eye. On 6 March 1976 President Ford presented the Medal of Honor to Lieutenant Norris. Petty Officer Thornton attended the ceremony.



Lieutenant Thomas Norris



Lieutenant Michael Thornton



On 9 November 2013, officials dedicated a 10-foot statue depicting Lt. Thornton carrying Lt. Norris on his shoulders at the National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum in Fort Pierce, Florida. The bronze statue was commissioned by former presidential candidate H. Ross Perot. The sculptor is Paul Moore of Norman, Oklahoma. (Lt. Thornton standing left, Lt. Norris standing right)

photo credit:

<https://navyseals.com/ns-overview/notable-seals/thomas-r-norris/>

In 1979, after getting a disability waiver, Norris became an FBI agent, which is what he'd hoped to do when he entered college more than 15 years earlier. He worked as an FBI agent for 20 years and was an original member of its hostage rescue team as an assault team leader. He retired and lives in northern Idaho.

Over the past several years, Norris has taken part in various Navy and Medal of Honor events and discussions that celebrate the meaning of the medal. He said he has a great deal of pride for what it stands for:

“I’m just a custodian of this medal. I wear it for the members of my teams and the people that served as valiantly and will never have the chance to wear an award like that. There are those out there who deserved it but were never recognized, and the folks that gave their lives for the missions they were sent on who will never be back again,” he said. “It’s an honor for me to wear it, but I don’t consider it mine.”

The author expresses thanks and appreciation to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society for its informative website and for the gracious assistance in getting approval for this article.

The best book I know about the rescue of BAT-21B, and the role played by Lieutenant Norris and Petty Officer Kiet and the armada of their support is Darrell D. Whitcomb: *The Rescue of Bat 21*, Naval Institute Press; Illustrated edition (July 15, 2014). Whitcomb (Colonel, U.S. Air Force-retired) was a Forward Air Controller flying overhead and in radio contact with both BAT-21B and Lieutenant Norris during much of the time of the rescue operation.

Even better is the story of two SEALs and their incredible lives:

By Honor Bound: Two Navy SEALs, the Medal of Honor, and a Story of Extraordinary Courage, co-authored by Tom Norris, Mike Thornton, and Dick Couch, St. Martin's Press (May 17, 2016).

Michael Edwin Thornton

Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while participating in a daring operation against enemy forces. PO Thornton, as assistant U.S. Navy adviser, along with a U.S. Navy lieutenant serving as senior adviser, accompanied a three-man Vietnamese Navy SEAL patrol on an intelligence-gathering and prisoner capture operation against an enemy-occupied naval river base. Launched from a Vietnamese Navy junk in a rubber boat, the patrol reached land and was continuing on foot toward its objective when it suddenly came under heavy fire from a numerically superior force. The patrol called in naval gunfire support and then engaged the enemy in a fierce firefight, accounting for many enemy casualties before moving back to the waterline to prevent encirclement. Upon learning that the senior adviser had been hit by enemy fire and was believed to be dead, PO Thornton returned through a hail of fire to the lieutenant's last position, quickly disposed of two enemy soldiers about to overrun the position and succeeded in removing the seriously wounded and unconscious Senior Naval Advisor to the water's edge. He then inflated the lieutenant's lifejacket and towed him seaward for approximately two hours until picked up by support craft. By his extraordinary courage and perseverance, PO Thornton was directly responsible for saving the life of his superior officer and enabling the safe extraction of all patrol members, thereby upholding the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.

Presentation Date & Details: October 15, 1973

The White House, presented by President Richard M. Nixon



<https://www.cmohs.org/recipients/michael-e-thornton>

Thomas Rolland Norris

Citation

Lt. Norris completed an unprecedented ground rescue of two downed pilots deep within heavily controlled enemy territory in Quang Tri Province. Lt. Norris, on the night of 10 April, led a five-man patrol through 2,000 meters of heavily controlled territory, located one of the downed pilots at daybreak, and returned to the Forward Operating Base (FOB). On 11 April, after a devastating mortar and rocket attack on the small FOB, Lt. Norris led a three-man team on two unsuccessful rescue attempts for the second pilot. On the afternoon of the 12th, a forward air controller located the pilot and notified Lt. Norris. Dressed in fishermen disguises and using a sampan, Lt. Norris and one Vietnamese traveled throughout the night and found the injured pilot at dawn. Covering the pilot with bamboo and vegetation, they began the return journey, successfully evading a North Vietnamese patrol. Approaching the FOB, they came under heavy machine-gun fire. Lt. Norris called in an air strike which provided suppression fire and a smoke screen, allowing the rescue party to reach the FOB. By his outstanding display of decisive leadership, undaunted courage, and selfless dedication in the face of extreme danger, Lt. Norris enhanced the finest traditions of the U.S. Naval service.

Presentation Date and Details: March 6, 1976

The White House, presented by President Gerald R. Ford



<https://www.cmozs.org/recipients/thomas-r-norris>