

International

VIETNAM VETS, COMMENTATORS OFFENDED BY \$8-MILLION SALUTE

Victory parade has sour taste for many

by NORMA GREENAWAY
Southam News

WASHINGTON — Mike Milne climbed off the bus in his home town in Pennsylvania and fell into the arms of his waiting mother.

The quiet reunion at the Wilkes-Barre bus station in 1969 came at the end of his more than two years as an army "grunt" in the Vietnam war.

"No parades. Nothing. Zip. Zero," is how he summed up his stealth-like return from the unpopular conflict.

This week, Milne got a letter asking his organization, Veterans of the Vietnam War Inc., to contribute to Saturday's \$8-million salute to the Persian Gulf troops in the U.S. capital.

The huge party — to which President George Bush personally contributed \$1,000 — promises some 10,000 marching troops, flyovers by a "stealth" bomber, Cobra and Apache attack helicopters, dizzying displays of Scud-busting Patriot missiles and a grand fireworks show.

Milne threw the fundraising letter in the garbage. "We've got better things to do with our money," Milne said, noting most of the group's funds go to victims of Agent Orange poisoning during their stints in Southeast Asia.

Like many Vietnam veterans, Milne doesn't buy Gen. Colin Powell's suggestion the Desert Storm victory celebration will be a salute to them too.

"We're not taking anything away from the Persian Gulf vets, but you know, leave us out of this," he said in an interview. "It's a little too little too late."

If the day-long flaunting of America's military is a little too little for many Vietnam vets, to some critics it's a lot too much to celebrate the 43-day rout of Iraq and the war's tragic aftermath.

Letters to the editor of the Washington Post have expressed outrage over the costs of allowing General



U.S. Army helicopters arrive on the Mall in Washington in preparation for Saturday's celebration.

Norman Schwarzkopf to "lead his troops one more time," as the television ads say. Others ask what's to celebrate? Saddam Hussein is still in power, Iraq and its people have been devastated, the Mideast remains as explosive as ever, and several thousand American forces remain stuck in northern Iraq.

"Before we beat our breasts and give out Tarzan-

like yells of triumph, it is humbling to recall that we gave a war, but the Iraqis didn't show up," wrote John Holway of nearby Alexandria.

Of those that did, hundreds of thousands were killed and wounded, while the U.S. death toll came in at 115. The U.S. Defence Intelligence Agency made its first public disclosure about Iraqi casualties

this week. Based on "very limited information," it estimated that about 100,000 Iraqi soldiers were killed, 300,000 were wounded, and about 150,000 deserted. Still missing is any government estimate of civilian casualties.

Also dampening celebratory spirits here are continued grim reports and wrenching pictures documenting the plight of Iraq's war-ravaged people. After touring Iraq last month, a Harvard medical team forecast that up to 170,000 Iraqi children could die over the next five years, partly because of conditions caused by the U.S.-led bombing of the country.

America's returning warriors deserve "shrugs, not parades," wrote Washington Post columnist Colman McCarthy. The hoopla surrounding the victory parade keeps it from being seen for what it is: "A celebration of megadeath in Iraq, an impoverished Third World nation."

One pundit urged parade organizers to inject some modesty into the festivities by adding a float "honoring the god of serendipity" to balance the speeches about military brilliance and valor. "Brilliance and valor there were aplenty," wrote Jim Hoagland of the Post. "But there was also plain luck, including the drawing of Saddam Hussein as the opposing strategist on the battlefield."

Columnist Mary McGrory says she'll give the parade a pass. Her heroes are still in northern Iraq, she wrote, "taking care of Kurds, holding bottles, changing diapers and falling in love."

The Desert Storm Homecoming Foundation, which is organizing the event, remains undaunted by the criticism. Hundreds of volunteers have devoted months to making it a day to remember, and they expect more than 600,000 Americans to join in the cheering.

Ceremony held for Sir John A.

LONDON (CP) — A prayer and a wreath-laying ceremony was held at London's historic Westminster Abbey today to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald.

The five-minute ceremony was held beside a plaque dedicated to Macdonald, which bears the crest of a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath.

Ontario Agent-General Thomas Wells and Gaetan Lavertu, Canadian deputy high commissioner to Britain, attended the ceremony at the front of the stone Abbey across from the tombs of Henry VII James I.

Macdonald was "the architect of the Canadian nation", said Rev. Hugh Pruett during his prayers.

Born in Glasgow in 1815, Macdonald emigrated to Kingston, Ont., at the age of five.

A ceremony honoring Macdonald was scheduled for this afternoon in Kingston. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was among those expected to attend.

Macdonald is regarded as the dominant figure in bringing about the British North America Act, and with it the creation of Canada as a country.

He was prime minister from 1867 to 1873 and again from 1878 to 1891.

"You see that he (Macdonald) was facing the same problems the country is facing today," said Wells, alluding to regional conflicts and divisions between English-Canadians and Quebec.

"Some of the reasons that brought about the formation of the Dominion of Canada were solutions to the same kind of problem we have today."

Cambodian ceasefire ends

BANGKOK (Reuter) — The Khmer Rouge ordered its guerrillas back to battle today, formally ending the first ceasefire of Cambodia's 12-year war.

The group's radio accused the Phnom Penh government and its Vietnamese backers of trying to destroy a United Nations peace plan for Cambodia and of not implementing the May 1 ceasefire.

The radio announcement instructed the entire Khmer Rouge army to "continue to actively and constantly fight the Vietnamese enemy and puppets through our guerrilla war and people's war until the UN documents are ac-

Pit bulls win reprieve in Britain

LONDON (Reuter) — Britain's more than 10,000 American pit bull terriers won a reprieve Wednesday in proposed legislation to curb their bloody attacks on people.

Home Secretary Kenneth Baker's new Dangerous Dogs Bill did not carry out an earlier threat to order the mass destruction of pit bull fighting dogs dubbed Devil Dogs by the media.

The legislation, hastily written after three gory attacks by pit bulls shocked the country, would allow ownership of pit bulls only if they are neutered, insured and have special permits.

The bill proposes that the brawny pit bulls, whose jaws grip like a steel clamp, must be muzzled and leashed in public. It would be an offence to breed, sell or exchange them.

Baker said the bill would be debated in Parliament next week. He hoped it would be enacted by the end of July.

cepted and implemented."

The Khmer Rouge had vowed to end the ceasefire before the latest round of peace talks in Indonesia which ended Tuesday, if the government did not accept the full terms of the UN plan.

The Khmer Rouge rejected accords reached in Jakarta between its non-communist guerrilla allies and the government to extend the ceasefire and stop receiving foreign military assistance.

The guerrillas are armed by China, while the government side has been supported by the Soviet Union.

In Jakarta, Khieu Samphan, the

nominal leader of the Khmer Rouge, accused Phnom Penh of trying to sabotage the UN plan by demanding amendments to it. These included clauses to take account of Khmer Rouge killings during its 1975-1979 rule.

The Khmer Rouge is held responsible for the deaths of more than one million Cambodians during that time. It is now the strongest of the guerrilla groups.

Even before the Khmer Rouge announcement, Thai miners working in western Cambodia said government troops had attacked Khmer Rouge positions near the gem mining town of Pailin.

East German given corruption sentence

BERLIN (AP) — A Berlin court convicted one of East Germany's most powerful leaders on corruption-related charges today. It was the first trial of a member of the ousted Communist regime.

Harry Tisch, 64, was sentenced to 18 months in prison.

Authorities allege East German Communist leaders routinely plundered their late country's meager finances to provide luxuries for themselves, friends and families.

Millions of dollars in Western currency — perhaps hundreds of millions — was allegedly misused or smuggled out of the country. Much of it remains unaccounted for.

Tisch was a member of the ruling Politburo and, as head of the nine-million-member, state-run labor union, he was one of the country's most powerful officials.

Prosecutors said Tisch illegally took 84,000 East German marks (about \$16,500 US) of union funds for personal vacations for his

family and a Communist party crony.

Authorities also said he took 100 million East German marks (\$19.6 million US) of union funds that had been earmarked to help stage a nationwide festival for the Free German Youth.

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