

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

THE VIETNAM CENTER

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September 20, 1999

Hon. Larry Combest
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Combest:

I deeply regret that circumstances conspired to cancel out our meeting in Washington last week. Nevertheless, I had a very useful meeting with Rob Lehman, and hope I will have the opportunity to meet with you some time during your next visit to Lubbock.

There was one issue I failed to bring up to Rob, and therefore I am forwarding it to you now. During the Vietnam War, I served one of my tours of duty on board the 32' fiberglass jet boats known as PBR's. The young men who served on board these boats were a very special breed: daring, irreverent, non-regulation, caring of the Vietnamese people -- particularly the children, remarkably brave, and incredibly young. The uniqueness of their service was officially recognized by the Navy by authorizing them to wear, in lieu of traditional Navy headgear, the Black Beret.

In early July of this year I traveled to Ft. Mitchell, Kentucky, to meet with this veterans' group as they held their first annual reunion. I didn't see anyone I knew in Vietnam, but in another sense, I had known them all. Now they are in middle-age, very respectable men, family men, and as you would expect given their experiences, exemplary citizens.

I have now been advised by the President of that organization that they are seeking a Congressional Charter for their organization. I advised them that they have a very hard row to hoe to achieve their goal, but they are determined. As far as I am concerned they earned that privilege a quarter-century ago.

The President of the PBR Forces Veterans Association (PBR-FVA) has asked Senator John Ashcroft to assist them toward their goal. The purpose of this letter, therefore, is to urge you also to support their efforts. In my view, no

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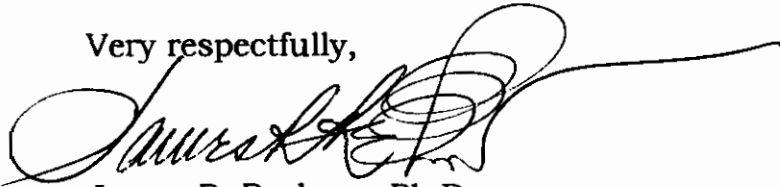
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finer bunch of men have ever served our country. And I am exceedingly proud of them all.

Trusting you will see your way clear to add this one additional request to the many you have already received from me over the years, I remain,

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James R. Reckner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

James R. Reckner, Ph.D.
Director

encl: Correspondence from PBR-FVA

xc: Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.