



Stories from Bosque Bello

The lives they led...

Soldiers of the Vietnam Conflict

Although the U.S. had been providing limited military aid and advisors to South Vietnam since the early 1950s, the first combat units, comprising about 3,500 troops, arrived in South Vietnam in March 1965. Three years later, more than 500,000 U.S. troops were in South Vietnam, as well as assigned to other Southeast Asia locations supporting combat operations.

According to the Department of Defense, just over 58,000 U.S. military members died during the Vietnam Conflict. Interestingly, it technically remains a "conflict" because the U.S. Congress never officially declared it a war. However, ask anyone who was there, and they will say that it was very much a war despite any official declaration.

Of those that died in Southeast Asia military operations, nearly 2,000 were from Florida. Of those casualties, three are buried in Bosque Bello Cemetery. They are:

- John Thomas Fulford, Sergeant, U.S. Army, on May 19, 1967
- William Thornton Pocher, Corporal, U.S. Army, on July 29, 1969
- Michael Ray Rice, Private First Class, U.S. Army, on December 26, 1967

In January 1973, the United States, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the Vietcong signed a peace agreement in Paris, ending U.S. military involvement. In 1975, the last few Americans still in South Vietnam were airlifted out of the country as Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City), the capital of South Vietnam, fell to communist forces.