

THE AMERICAN CONFLICT – THE VIETNAM WAR & AMNESTY
THE PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS TAKEN AGAINST THE THOUSANDS OF
MEN WHO EVADED THE DRAFT AND THE DESERTERS DURING THE VIETNAM CONFLICT

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THIS ARTICLE IS IN THREE SECTIONS

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- 2. PRESIDENT CARTER GIVES FULL UNCONDITIONAL PARDONS TO VIETNAM WAR DRAFT EVADERS/DESERTERS - ON JAN 21, 1977**
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SECTION 1



PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD'S REMARKS ANNOUNCING A PROGRAM FOR THE RETURN OF VIETNAM ERA DRAFT EVADERS AND MILITARY DESERTERS

DATE OF SPEECH - SEPTEMBER 16, 1974

VIDEO OF THE SPEECH IS AVAILABLE

COPY & PASTE THE BELOW LINK INTO YOUR BROWSER

<https://geraldfordfoundation.org/announcing-program-for-the-return-of-draft-evaders-and-military-deserters/>

Good morning:

In my first week as President, I asked the Attorney General and the Secretary of Defense to report to me, after consultation with other Governmental officials and private citizens concerned, on the status of those young Americans who have been convicted, charged, investigated, or are still being sought as draft evaders or military deserters.

On August 19, at the national convention of Veterans of Foreign Wars in the city of Chicago, I announced my intention to give these young people a chance to earn their return to the mainstream of American society so that they can, if they choose, contribute, even though belatedly, to the building and the betterment of our country and the world.

I did this for the simple reason that for American fighting men, the long and divisive war in Vietnam has been over for more than a year, and I was determined then, as now, to do everything in my power to bind up the Nation's wounds.

I promised to throw the weight of my Presidency into the scales of justice on the side of leniency and mercy, but I promised also to work within the existing system of military and civilian law and the precedents set by my predecessors who faced similar postwar situations, among them Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Harry S. Truman.

My objective of making future penalties fit the seriousness of each individual's offense and of mitigating punishment already meted out in a spirit of equity has proved an immensely hard and very complicated matter, even more difficult than I knew it would be.

But the agencies of Government concerned and my own staff have worked with me literally night and day in order to develop fair and orderly procedures and completed their work for my final approval over this last weekend.

I do not want to delay another day in resolving the dilemmas of the past, so that we may all get going on with the pressing problems of the present. Therefore, I am today signing the necessary Presidential proclamation and Executive orders that will put this plan into effect.

The program provides for administrative disposition of cases involving draft evaders and military deserters not yet convicted or punished. In such cases, 24 months of alternate service will be required, which may be reduced for mitigating circumstances.

The program also deals with cases of those already convicted by a civilian or military court. For the latter purpose, I am establishing a clemency review board of nine distinguished Americans whose duty it will be to assist me in assuring that the Government's forgiveness is extended to applicable cases of prior conviction as equitably and as impartially as is humanly possible.

The primary purpose of this program is the reconciliation of all our people and the restoration of the essential unity of Americans within which honest differences of opinion do not descend to angry discord and mutual problems are not polarized by excessive passion.

My sincere hope is that this is a constructive step toward a calmer and cooler appreciation of our individual rights and responsibilities and our common purpose as a nation whose future is always more important than its past.

At this point, I will sign the proclamation [4313] that I mentioned in my statement, followed by an Executive order [11803] for the establishment of the Clemency Board, followed by the signing of an Executive order [11804] for the Director of Selective Service, who will have a prime responsibility in the handling of the matters involving alternate service.

Thank you very much

SECTION 2

(Approximately 27 months after President Ford's "Pardon To Be Earned Speech)

ON JANUARY 21, 1977, U.S. PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER GRANTS UNCONDITIONAL PARDON TO HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF YOUNG MEN WHO EVADED THE DRAFT DURING THE VIETNAM WAR



On January 21, 1977, U.S. President Jimmy Carter grants an unconditional pardon to hundreds of thousands of men who evaded the draft during the Vietnam War.

In total, some 100,000 young Americans went abroad in the late 1960s and early '70s to avoid serving in the war. Ninety percent went to Canada, where after some initial controversy they were eventually welcomed as immigrants. Still others hid inside the United States. In addition to those who avoided the draft, a relatively small number—about 1,000—of deserters from the U.S. armed forces also headed to Canada. While the Canadian government technically reserved the right to prosecute deserters, in practice they left them alone, even instructing border guards not to ask too many questions. In WW2 one soldier was shot for desertion



For its part, the U.S. government continued to prosecute draft evaders after the Vietnam War ended. A total of 209,517 men were formally accused of violating draft laws, while government officials estimate another 360,000 were never formally accused.

If they returned home, those living in Canada or elsewhere faced prison sentences or forced military service.

During his 1976 presidential campaign, Jimmy Carter promised to pardon draft dodgers as a way of putting the war and the bitter divisions it caused firmly in the past.

After winning the election, Carter wasted no time in making good on his word. Though many transplanted Americans returned home, an estimated 50,000 settled permanently in Canada.

Back in the U.S., Carter's decision generated a good deal of controversy. Heavily criticized by veterans' groups and others for allowing unpatriotic lawbreakers to get off scot-free, the pardon and companion relief plan came under fire from amnesty groups for not addressing deserters, soldiers who were dishonorably discharged or civilian anti-war demonstrators who had been prosecuted for their resistance. Using the figures given above the President gave UNCONDITIONAL PARDONS to 569,000 draft dodgers alone plus those who deserted while serving.

I would like to take a "time-out" here to tell a very true story of two families that lived on the same street my parents lived on in Columbus, Ohio during the Vietnam Conflict. Both families had a son who was drafted. One of the boys took his joy ride to Canada and chose to come home after the pardon and enrolled in college and resume his life while the other son was killed in Vietnam. Your thoughts ????? JEC

Years later, Vietnam-era draft evasion still carries a powerful stigma. Though no prominent political figures have been found to have broken any draft laws, Presidents Bill Clinton, Donald Trump, George W. Bush and Vice Presidents Dan Quayle and Dick Cheney—none of whom saw combat in Vietnam—have all been accused of being draft dodgers at one time or another. Donald Trump received five draft deferments during the Vietnam War, once for bone spurs in his heels. Although there is not currently a draft in the U.S., desertion and conscientious objection have remained pressing issues among the armed forces during the recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

ARTICLE 3

WHEN PRESIDENT CARTER UNCONDITIONALLY PARDONS THE DRAFT DODGERS- ONLY ½ OF THEM CAME BACK

Carter's executive order left many people furious, while others saw it as a bold show of compassion.

It was a move with the power to unite the country—even if it came at the cost of ruffling a few feathers. Just days after Jimmy Carter's inauguration in 1977, the new President fulfilled a campaign promise: the granting of a blanket pardon to Vietnam War draft evaders by executive order. Yet the draft had proven so divisive that not even the promise of an open-arms reunion could convince as many as 50,000 American dodgers to return home.

At the time of the order, it wasn't clear what impact it would have, or even how many people it affected. A 1977 *New York Times* article, for instance, described the act as "narrow," applying to just 10,000 people, "largely white, and middle or upper class." *The total number, in fact, was closer to 500,000.* (Among them was Muhammad Ali, whom President Donald Trump offered to pardon all over again.)

About 100,000 draft evaders had left for foreign shores instead of going to war. The vast majority headed to Canada, *where they were accepted as legal immigrants.* So far as Canada was concerned, this influx of young men was a highly desirable addition to the labor force.

They were often young and well-educated, and had few ties to the country that they had felt obliged to leave—making it easy for them to stay for good, even after Carter issued his pardon and they were permitted to return.

Back in the United States, in the days after the inauguration, the White House was beset with angry phone calls about the pardon. Many people were furious: *Senator Barry Goldwater famously called it "the most disgraceful thing a president has ever done," while the then-director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars described it as sadder "than Watergate or Vietnam itself.* The general public seemed to agree.



Antiwar demonstrators burning their draft cards on the steps of the Pentagon during the Vietnam War, 1972

But an initial rage burned brightly, and then quickly went out. "Three weeks later," says Peter Bourne, who worked with Carter for decades and later wrote his biography, *"most people didn't care what he'd done."* The phone calls stopped, *the furor died down.* While some were happy about the executive order, those who weren't had largely moved on. *"Members of the Congress sort of accepted it," he says.*

Gradually, people began to come back to the United States. Mostly, however, they were those who had lacked the skills or education to distinguish themselves among the Canadian workforce. (In some cases, they had simply found the weather too severe.) The youngest and most qualified, however, found themselves faced with ample opportunities in Canada—as well as a political climate that felt especially hospitable in comparison to their home country and its draft. There was every reason to stay put.

For Canada, these young people were a boon to the economy, described by the Ottawa government as "the largest, best-educated group this country ever received." For the nascent

Canadians, their new home was a blank slate, without the same history of “lynches and hatred and persecution,” as one draft evader described.

In fact, Carter likely shared many of these young people’s views. Long before he became president, Bourne remembers him as a fierce opponent of the war. “He did feel strongly against it,” Bourne says. “So it was primarily a decision of moral character that he was making.”

As for the optics, Bourne believes Carter barely considered what effect the executive order might have on his public standing, and instead wanted to do what he felt was an ethical imperative. “I think he had no idea whether it would help him or cost him,” he says. *I think he assumed it would cost him.*



Draft resisters marching at a demonstration organized by the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, 1969.

For many people, Carter’s presidential pardon changed the course of their lives. Douglas Brinkley, author of the biography *The Unfinished Presidency: Jimmy Carter’s Journey Beyond the White House*, describes it as one of the defining moments of his presidency. “It gave people their lives back,” he says. “Carter dealt with the anti-war issue by saying, ‘You are Americans and we’re going to take you back into the fold.’”

WHY DON’T AMERICANS KNOW WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN VIETNAM ?



Instead of confronting the truth, we scrubbed the record