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50 Years Later, a Local War Hero Remembered

MILWAUKEE, Wisc. – January 18, 2018 – Monday, January 22, 2018, marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Air Force fighter pilot, Medal of Honor recipient and local war hero, Capt. Lance P. Sijan. The Bay View, WI native, who was honored locally back in May 2017, with the unveiling and dedication of the Lance P. Sijan Memorial Plaza at General Mitchell International Airport, died at the Hòa Lò camp in Hanoi, Vietnam, where he had been a prisoner of war. Sijan is the only Medal of Honor recipient in Academy history to date, the highest honor awarded to the nation's military.

The 50th anniversary of his death will be commemorated by a number of special events at by the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where Sijan graduated in 1965.

At 6:30 a.m. MST the entire Cadet Wing will assemble and Capt. Lance P. Sijan will be recognized. Following the opening remarks and throughout the day, his former Cadet Squadron 21 will be hosting a display of some of Sijan's personal belongings, alongside a life-size portrait of Sijan that dons a wall at the Academy in a dormitory has been named in his honor and the cadets will join together to sing a verse of the Air Force song in Sijan's honor. Later that evening, a taps ceremony will be held at 11:00 p.m. MST to commemorate the time of Sijan's passing.

The events will be streamed live on the Team Sijan Facebook page ([Facebook.com/TeamSijan](https://www.facebook.com/TeamSijan)). People are encouraged to watch in real-time and share any personal stories of how Sijan and his story played a part in their lives. In addition, those interested in learning more about the Sijan are welcome to follow the Team Sijan Facebook posts, beginning today, that chronicle the last days of Sijan's heroic journey.

More information on Sijan

Sijan flew combat more than 50 combat missions with the 366th Fighter Wing of the 480th Tactical Fighting Squadron stationed at the Da Nang Air Base in southern Vietnam. In November 1967, his plane exploded when the ordnance he was carrying malfunctioned and detonated, leading to his capture and imprisonment.

He suffered a fractured skull, mangled right hand, and compound fracture of his left leg, injuries caused by his landing after he ejected from his aircraft. Unable to walk and without food and water, he evaded capture until December 25, whereupon he was moved to a holding compound in Vinh, North Vietnam.

Despite beatings and torture, he obeyed the POW code and refused to give the North Vietnamese information other than his name, date of birth, service, rank, and serial number. He was transferred to the infamous Hòa Lò Prison, the “Hanoi Hilton,” where he died of pneumonia on January 22, 1968.

Sijan’s courage throughout his ordeal has served to help define the current ethics guide related to US Armed Forces and the code of conduct for evading capture and being a prisoner of war.

Photo Assets:

