



U.S. Navy Commander Everett Alvarez, Jr. (Ret.) Prisoner of War - Served in Vietnam, 1964 to 1973

Commander Everett Alvarez, Jr., was the first American aviator taken captive in Vietnam after being shot down near Hanoi. He became the second longest-held U.S. prisoner of war (POW) in U.S. history. Commander Alvarez, the grandson of Mexican immigrants, joined the U.S. Navy in 1960 as an aviator and had graduated from Santa Clara University in California with a degree in Electrical Engineering. He was a 26-year old Navy pilot based on the USS Constellation aircraft carrier in the South China Sea on August 5, 1964, as tensions were heightening in the area. He was part of a bombing mission over North Vietnam sent in retaliation after a reported North Vietnamese attack a day earlier on two U.S. destroyers. Commander Alvarez's Douglas A-4 Skyhawk was shot down in the immediate aftermath of what is known as the Gulf of Tonkin incident that marked the start of a significant escalation of U.S. military action in Vietnam. He endured eight years and seven months of brutal captivity by the North Vietnamese at the Hỏa Lò Prison, known by fellow POWs as the "Hanoi Hilton" where he was repeatedly beaten and tortured. He was released from captivity on February 12, 1973.

Commander Alvarez has said that he survived imprisonment thanks to primarily his faith in God, and the mutual support of the other prisoners who communicated with each other by tapping on the prison walls. "We had a philosophy that you didn't ever let your fellows down," he said in the interview. "If they couldn't take care of themselves, you took care of them because you knew darned well they would do the same. And we had a goal. We were determined to come home with our personal integrity, our reputation and with our honor." He has co-authored two books: "Chained Eagle," with Anthony S. Pitch, about his captivity; and "Code of Conduct / An Inspirational Story of Self-Healing by the Famed Ex-POW and War Hero," with Samuel Schreiner, about his return and life afterward. He holds numerous military decorations including the Silver Star, two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, two Bronzes Stars, and two Purple Hearts.

After he returned from Vietnam, Commander Alvarez received a Master Degree in Operations Research and Systems Analyst at the Naval Post Graduate School where he has been installed into the Alumni Hall of Fame. He also has Juris Doctorate degree from George Washington School of Law where he is a distinguished Alumnus. He is a member of the Washington DC Bar. He went on to serve as Deputy Director of the Peace Corps, Deputy Administrator of the Veterans Administration (now known as Department of Veterans Affairs) and vice president for government services with the Hospital Corporation of America. After retiring from government service, he founded and is presently Chief Executive Officer of the consulting firm Alvarez LLC. Commander Alvarez and his wife, Tammy, serve on various projects involving wounded warriors, including the Green Road Project at Walter Reed that provides a natural healing environment for wounded service members and their families. He also served for 21 years on the Board of Regents of the Uniformed Services University.



Former POW and U.S. Navy LCDR Everett Alvarez (Captured August 5, 1964) talks at the microphones to the public and press there to greet the plane load of former POWs flown in from Clark Air Base. LCMDR Alvarez was released by the North Vietnamese in Hanoi on February 12, 1973.

On December 23, 2024, the Everett Alvarez, Jr. Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2023 was signed into law by President Joe Biden. This law awards Retired Navy Commander Everett Alvarez, Jr., with the Congressional Gold Medal, the oldest and highest civilian award in the United States, alongside the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Once the medal has been designed, it will be formally presented to Commander Alvarez in a ceremony at the U.S. Capitol to celebrate his lifelong dedication to his country.

On January 15, 2025, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced that the seventh Constellation-class frigate would be named *USS Everett Alvarez* in Commander Alvarez's honor.

Commander Alvarez and his wife Tammy have made Rockville, Maryland their home since 1976. They have two sons who grew up in Rockville. Marc, is an attorney and President of Alvarez LLC. Bryan is a medical doctor and served as a battalion surgeon in Iraq and is a Commander in the Navy Reserves.