

History of American Legion Post TH-02

Sergeant Thomas Oliver Ahlberg Memorial Post No. TH02
Pattaya City, Chon Buri, Kingdom of Thailand
Calendar Year 2020

Introduction:

The American Legion was chartered by the United States Congress in September 1919 as a patriotic veterans' organization dedicated to the enduring pillars of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children and Youth. Operating overseas under the jurisdiction of the Department of France, Sergeant Thomas Oliver Ahlberg Memorial Post No. TH02 was established to reduce the geographical and structural isolation affecting American veterans residing on Thailand's Eastern Seaboard.

The permanent lineage of Post TH02 is closely tied to the United States military presence at Osan Air Base in South Korea. Over several decades, a stable expatriate community of Department of Defense contractors, technical specialists, military employees, retirees, spouses, and children developed around the base. Although active-duty personnel rotated on short tours, many veteran civilians remained for extended periods, forming a close-knit overseas community that assisted newcomers in adapting to life abroad.

As these veteran civilians entered retirement, a significant number relocated permanently to Thailand's Eastern Seaboard, with many choosing Pattaya City as their home. Once settled, they recognized a critical service gap: many honorable wartime veterans did not meet the restrictive campaign-medal criteria required for membership in existing local veterans organizations. As a result, many who sought fellowship and service were left without a suitable local post.

Because The American Legion bases eligibility on periods of honorable wartime service rather than specific theater decorations, William Martin Ahlberg initiated the effort to establish Post TH02, thereby bridging the service gap between existing groups and the distant Post TH01 in Ubon Ratchathani. Motivated both by this need and by a long-held desire to honor his brother permanently, Commander Ahlberg rallied the Osan veteran diaspora and local expatriates to found the post in memory of Sergeant Thomas Oliver Ahlberg. To secure official standing, the organizers obtained formal written permission from his father to use his son's name for the new veterans' organization.

1. The Ultimate Sacrifice of Sgt. Thomas O. Ahlberg

On May 4, 1970, Sgt. Thomas O. Ahlberg was serving in the Vietnam War as an aircraft crew chief with Company A, 101st Assault Helicopter Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). His aircraft, a Bell UH-1H Iroquois, tail number 68-16244 and call sign Comanchero 20, was assigned flare standby for night illumination in support of the 1st Infantry Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. At approximately 1930 hours, Company A operations received an urgent request to provide night illumination for a practice Red Alert at Fire Support Base Kathryn in Thua Thien Province, Republic of Vietnam. Comanchero 20 departed the helipad at approximately 1955 hours and arrived on station over the fire support base at 2020 hours.

- Aircraft Commander: 1LT Larry F. Mattingly
- Pilot: CW2 Tommy L. Kearsley
- Crew Chief: Sgt. Thomas O. Ahlberg
- Gunner: Sgt. Rodney A. Taylor
- Observer: Sgt. Dean L. Aitken

Ten minutes later, at approximately 2030 hours, two AH-1G Cobra attack helicopters from Battery B, 4th Battalion, 77th Aerial Rocket Artillery, departed Camp Eagle for the same practice Red Alert mission. The wing aircraft, tail number 67-15620 and call sign Toro 91D, was crewed by WO1 Dean L. Bonneau and CPT Douglas N. Winfrey. While operating in the same restricted and unilluminated airspace, a catastrophic mid-air collision occurred between Comanchero 20 and the Cobra wing ship. An official inquiry concluded that Comanchero 20 suffered an in-flight flare ignition malfunction, was immediately engulfed in flames, and descended rapidly into Toro 91D, destroying the rotor systems of both aircraft. The UH-1H crashed in flames, while the Cobra entered brief autorotation before crashing into dense mountainous terrain. There were no survivors from either crew. Sgt. Ahlberg gave his life alongside nine fellow service members, and his sacrifice remains the enduring memorial foundation of American Legion Post TH-02.

2. Post Foundation and Leadership

The steering committee convened on March 5, 2020, in Bang Lamung, Chonburi, to organize the post, establish its service mission, and adopt an initial leadership structure. The committee unanimously resolved to name the post in honor of Sgt. Thomas Oliver Ahlberg and received written family authorization for that designation. The original officer framework named William M. Ahlberg as Commander, Joseph Thomas as 1st Vice Commander, Shane Curtis as Adjutant, and Danny Berry as Chaplain. The committee also approved the lease of a dedicated post home at 18/94 Moo 5, Banglamung, Chonburi, and set the temporary charter submission deadline for March 2020.

2020 Officer Roster (as organized and updated during the year)

- Post Commander: William M. Ahlberg
- 1st Vice Commander: Joseph Thomas
- 2nd Vice Commander: Shane Curtis
- Adjutant / Finance Officer: Michael J. Chitwood
- Chaplain: Shane Curtis
- Historian: Richard Garcia
- Judge Advocate: Howard Gundy
- Sergeant-at-Arms: Claude (Skip) Storno
- Post Service Officer: Shane Curtis

3. Chronology of Major Events and Milestones

Following its organization in March, the post devoted the spring of 2020 to building its constitutional and administrative foundation. On June 15, 2020, the steering committee formally adopted the Post Bylaws and Constitution and adjusted the officer slate following resignations, elevating Shane Curtis to 2nd Vice Commander and appointing Michael J. Chitwood as Adjutant and Finance Officer. By that date, documentation for 34 charter members had been processed, marking a significant step toward recognized status. On June 18, 2020, Post TH-02 conducted its first general membership meeting and formally opened for business in Pattaya under the Department of France. At that meeting, the Commander affirmed the post's mission to assist U.S. veterans, their spouses and families, expatriates, and local nationals in need. The post also initiated development of its Honor Guard and Color Guard while strengthening ties with allied veterans' organizations in Thailand.

During the summer, the post expanded its infrastructure and daily operations. By July 25, 2020, Jenny had been hired as Office Manager, a local liquor license had been secured for the canteen, and Historian Richard Garcia had begun establishing a physical "TH-02 History Wall." Membership increased to 37, with additional transfers and new applications pending. In September, the Executive Committee refined meeting procedure, authorized a visitor log for the post home, and approved procurement of post regalia and apparel. On September 26, 2020, the post established a regular weekly fellowship schedule to strengthen comradeship and encourage participation. Activities included cards at the post home, breakfast gatherings, potluck meals, community outings, hospitality evenings, and family-oriented events. This routine supported continued growth, and membership reached 43 by late September.

October 2020 brought formal recognition and broader engagement. Leadership clarified the charter window governing charter-member status and monitored final approval milestones. On October 24, 2020, the post was granted temporary status by the Department of France. During the same period, Brad Vick, Vice Consul for American Citizens Services at the U.S. Embassy Bangkok, addressed the membership and provided guidance on emergency and citizen services. By late October, membership had increased to 46.

4. Financial Condition and Membership Growth

As the year advanced, Post TH-02 encountered mounting financial pressure. Income and donations fell short of early projections, requiring the leadership to reduce recurring expenses and revise daily operations. On November 3, 2020, during an emergency House Committee meeting, the paid Office Manager position was terminated due to insufficient funds. Thereafter, the post home shifted from daily hours to an appointment-and-events operating model.

Despite rumors of closure, Commander Ahlberg assured the membership in late November that the post would continue and that a long-range financial plan would be developed. By December 15, 2020, strict cost controls had stabilized operations, and the post closed the year with a positive balance of 29,667 Baht. Membership continued to grow throughout this period, reaching 50 by the final general membership meeting of 2020, including several important transfers from other overseas posts.

- 34 charter members processed by June 15, 2020
- 37 charter members recorded by July 25, 2020
- 43 charter members recorded by September 26, 2020
- 46 members recorded by October 24, 2020
- 50 total members by the final 2020 meeting

5. Taps and Memorial Tributes

The first year of Post TH-02 also required the solemn discharge of memorial duties. Among the earliest notices were the passing of Steven Jones (“Biff”). In October, the post rendered American Legion Honor Guard honors for John Pryor, a U.S. Army veteran, and also recorded the passing of Vic Cross, a U.S. Air Force veteran. In November, the post honored Rick Olson, a former American Legion Post Commander in Kansas, and recorded the passing of John Weir, a U.S. Army Air Corps veteran who had earlier been listed in distress. These observances reflected the post’s commitment to comradeship, dignity, and final tribute from its earliest days.

Conclusion

Calendar Year 2020 marked the formative period of American Legion Post TH-02 in Pattaya. From the initial steering committee meeting in March to the granting of temporary status and year-end operational stabilization, the post established its identity, leadership, and service mission under demanding conditions. The record of 2020 reflects an organization founded on remembrance, practical service, and a determined commitment to provide a lasting American Legion home for veterans on Thailand’s Eastern Seaboard.

14-10-20

The American Legion
National Executive Committee

15

Held on
October 14-15, 2020

Resolution

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No.: 15

Title: Authorizè Issuance Of Temporary Charters To Foreign Posts (Puerto Rico, France and Hawaii)
Origin: Membership & Post Activities Committee

WHEREAS, Application for the issuance of temporary charters to posts outside of the continental United States are received and were properly endorsed by officers of the departments which will accept responsibility for supervision, and all are in conformity with Resolution No. 42, adopted by the National Executive Committee at its meeting of April 29-30, May 1, 1959; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on October 14-15, 2020, That the national adjutant is authorized to issue a temporary charter to the following posts to be affiliated with the named departments:

1. Expeditionary Post DR01, located in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic and affiliated with the Department of Puerto Rico.
2. Sgt. Thomas Oliver Ahlberg Memorial Post TH02, located in Pattaya, Thailand and affiliated with the Department of France.
3. Returning Warriors Post 0022, located in Majuro, RMI (Marshall Islands) and affiliated with the Department of Hawaii.



Subcommittee on Resolutions Recommendation

Approved

Rejected

Referred to:

Other Action

Signature Chairman, Subcommittee on Resolutions

William W. Kite

Committee/Commission, Chairman Name, and Signature

John Bowen

JOHN W. BOWEN, Chairman
Membership & Post Activities Committee

Robert E. Newman

ROBERT E. NEWMAN, Chairman
Internal Affairs Commission

TEMPORARY CHARTER
THE AMERICAN LEGION

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS, INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

CHARTER FOR SGT THOMAS OLIVER AHLBERG MEMORIAL POST NO. TH02
(Name of Post)

DEPARTMENT OF FRANCE

*This is to Certify, that the National Executive Committee of
THE AMERICAN LEGION, hereby grants a charter to*

Arrington J. Wilson	Bruce Cronheim	Christina Thomas
Dan Morgan	Danny Berry	Dave Spurling
Delbert Marhohl	Derrick James	Donald Delomba
Erle Kershaw	Frank Guisto	Gary Steuer
Gary Umpress	George Knickerbocker	Glen Ahlberg
Guy Herron	Howard F. Holzworth	Howard Gundy
James Headrick	Joseph Bozsoki	Joseph Thomas
Lawrence Williams	Marcellus W. Fegley	Matt Mayclin
Michael Chitwood	Michael Mayclin	Michael Taylor
Panya Laona	Patrick Spielman	Richard Garcia
Robert Graham	Roger Knorr	Shane Bentley
Shane Curtis	Skip Storno	Steve Gray
Steven R. Bell	Steven R. Kausal	Tom Bacon
Warren McCreary	William Ahlberg	Donald L. Meurett
	Brian J. Luffman	

for the formation of a Post of THE AMERICAN LEGION at Pattaya Thailand,

Department of France under the name of Sgt Thomas Oliver Ahlberg Memorial No. TH02.

This charter is granted on the recommendation of the Department Organization and on the following terms and conditions:

1. All acts heretofore duly and properly taken for the formation of the above-named Post are recognized and confirmed by the National Executive Committee.
2. The above named Post shall uphold the declared principles of THE AMERICAN LEGION and shall conform to and abide by the regulations and decisions of the Department Organization and of the National Executive Committee, or other duly constituted national governing body of THE AMERICAN LEGION.
3. This charter is subject to revocation by the National Executive Committee, on the recommendation of the Department Organization, or by such authority that may hereafter be established by the National Convention.

In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands this 14th day of October, 2020.

Santos Alvarado

Department Commander

John D. Fleming

Department Adjutant

James W. "Bill" Byford

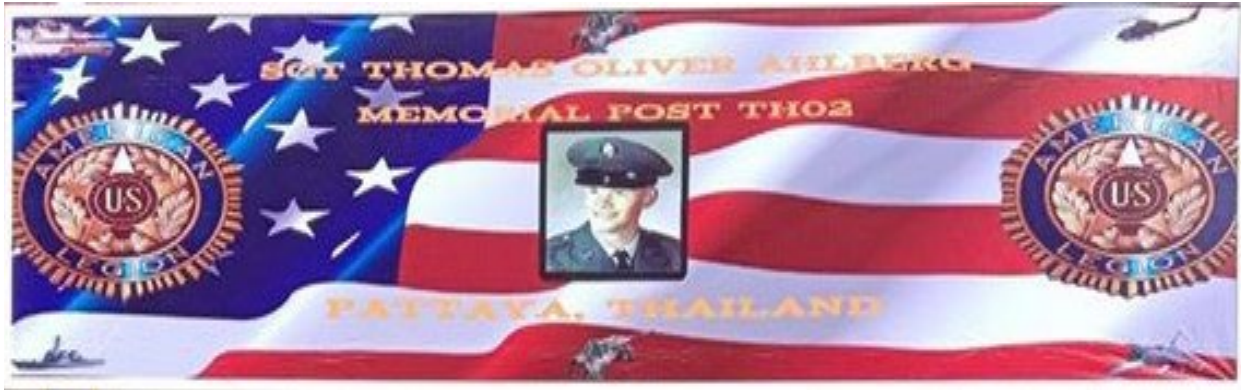
National Commander

Donald L. Meurett

National Adjutant



Original Post Banner



Original Logo



Original Post Shirt



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