



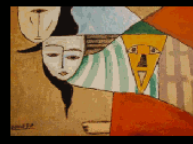
A COUNTRY
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VIETNAMESE
MIND

- **SACEI Newsletter** updates you on the latest news about Vietnamese-America.
- It serves as a **LINK** between **SACEI** members and those who are interested in the Vietnamese or Vietnamese-American culture.

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SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese-American Culture

NEWSLETTER # 112

FEBRUARY 2018

Indochina in the Year of the Cock—1969

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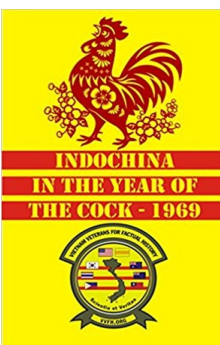
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Available on Amazon

<https://www.amazon.com/Indochina-Year-Cock-Lewis-Sorley/dp/1929932693/>



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The Battle of Dong Ap Bia (Hamburger Hill)

Nghia M. Vo

Hoping to capitalize on the 1968 gains, the new MACV commander General Creighton Abrams told his commanders to maintain "unrelenting pressure" on enemy forces and their base areas. In the I Corps, that meant battles in the A Shau Valley that ran at the base of the Truong Son (Annamite) Mountain range.

The Dong Ap Bia Battle

The battle took place from 10 May to 21 May, 1969 in the rugged, jungle-shrouded mountains of South Vietnam, 1.2 miles (1.9 km) from the Laotian border. Rising at 937 meters (3,074 ft.) above sea level from the floor of the A Shau Valley, Dong Ap Bia Mountain is a solitary massif, unconnected to the ridges of the surrounding Truong Son range. It is dotted of a series of ridges and fingers, one of the largest extending southeast to a height of 900 meters (3,074 ft.), another reaching south to a 916-meter (3,005 ft.) peak. The entire mountain is a rugged wilderness blanketed in double- and triple-canopy jungle, dense thickets of bamboo, and waist-high elephant grass. Official histories of the engagement refer to it as Hill 937 after the elevation while the American soldiers dubbed it "Hamburger

Continue on next page

Hamburger Hill... Hill," suggesting that those who fought on the hill were "chewed up like a hamburger."

During a campaign to destroy the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) base areas in the A Shau Valley, the 3/187th of Lt. Col. Honeycutt encountered NVA soldiers on Hill 937 on 13 May, although they did not know of the exact strength of enemy forces. Honeycutt was a protégé of General William Westmoreland, the former commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam. He had been assigned command of the 3/187th in January 1969 and had by replacement of many of its officers given it a personality to match his own aggressiveness.



Although Bravo Company seized Ridge 916 on 15 May, it was not until 19 May that the battalion as a whole was in position to conduct a final assault on Hill 937, primarily because of nearly impenetrable jungle. Steep gradients and dense vegetation provided few natural landing zones (LZs) in the vicinity of the mountain and made helicopter redeployments impractical. The terrain also masked the positions of the NVA 29th Regiment, making it nearly impossible to suppress anti-aircraft fire, while the jungle covered the movement of North Vietnamese units so completely that it created a nonlinear battlefield. The ridges were covered with numerous, well-sited NVA bunkers and constructed with overhead cover to withstand bombardment. (2)

This was a close combat with the two sides exchanging small arms and grenade fire within 20 meters (66 ft.) of one another. An intense thunderstorm on 18 May reduced visibility to zero and ended the fighting. Stuck in three feet of mud, US troops withdrew to safety down the mountain. The 3/187th's losses had been severe, with approximately 320 killed or wounded, including more than sixty percent of the 450 experienced troops who had assaulted into the valley. Colonel Zais, the brigade commander seriously considered discontinuing the attack but decided otherwise. Both the corps commander and the MACV commander, General Abrams, publicly supported the decision.

Two fresh battalions—the 2/501st Infantry and ARVN 2/3d Infantry—were airlifted into LZs northeast and southeast of the base of the mountain on 19 May. Both battalions immediately moved onto the mountain to positions from which they would attack the following morning. Meanwhile, the 1/506 for the third consecutive day struggled to secure Hill 900.

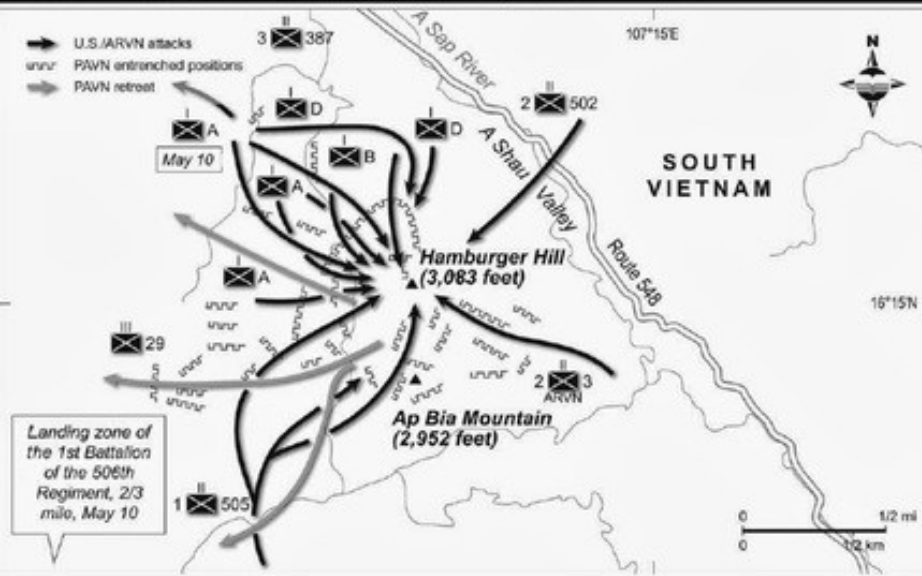
According to official documents, the 3rd Brigade launched its four-battalion attack at 10:00 on 20 May, including two companies of the 3/187 reinforced by Alpha Company 1/506. The attack was preceded by two hours of close air support and ninety minutes of artillery prep fires. The battalions attacked simultaneously, and by 12:00 elements of the 3/187 reached the crest, beginning a reduction of bunkers that continued through most of the afternoon. Some PAVN units were able to withdraw into Laos, and Hill 937 was secured by 17:00.

Results and controversies

U.S. losses during the ten-day battle totaled 72 KIA and 372 WIA. To take the position, the 101st Airborne Division

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BATTLE OF HAMBURGER HILL, MAY 11–20, 1969

*Hamburger Hill...*

eventually committed five infantry battalions and ten batteries of artillery that fired a total of 19,213 rounds. In addition, the U.S. Air Force flew 272 missions and expended more than 500 tons of ordnance. The enemy suffered 630 KIA. After having shed so much blood to take control of Hill 397, the U.S. abandoned it two weeks later on 5 June, 1969. NVA troops were seen returning to the hill some time later. The controversy of the conduct of the Battle of Hamburger Hill led to a reappraisal of U.S. strategy in South Vietnam

The first controversy relates to which unit arrived to the top of Hill 937 first. It was not the 3/187 men who despite their tedi-

ous, bloody, and valiant effort arrived first, but the 2/3 ARVN. The South Vietnamese knew that back in 1969, 2/3 ARVN under the command of Pham Van Dinh hit the ground to the southeast of Dong Ap Bia on 19 May and would have one of the longer lines of assault at five hundred meters below the crest of Hill 397. (3) Through reconnaissance, Dinh realized that the ARVN avenue of advance lay across open ground, which afforded the enemy a clear field of fire. He decided not to wait for the proposed assault time and moved his unit in the half-light of 20 May. The NVA not expecting an attack from the southeast had devoted minimal manpower to the defense of the area. The unit moved quickly up the hill where they encountered a barrage of small-arms fire at the top of the hill. "Around 1000 hours while 3/187 began to batter through heavy enemy resistance, 2/3 reached the crest of Hamburger Hill." (4)

Major Zimmerly, Dinh's advisor contacted Colonel Conmy who was circling over the hill to let him know that 2/3 ARVN had control of the top of the hill. Conmy told him to "get your people off the hill, because we are going to fire an artillery preparation on top of the Hill." On the ground, although incredulous, Dinh and his advisers did what they were told. "After Dinh and their men moved away, the leading elements of 3/187 broke through NVA defenses, moved to the summit of Dong Ap Bia and took their place in history as the victors." An hour and a half later, 2/3 returned to the top of Dong Ap Bia. (5)

Recent research unearthed by Andrew Wiest confirmed that view. Among the pile of documents, there was a one page memo by Colonel William C. Harper, Chief of Command and Control Division, who on 22 May 1969, at the headquarters of the United States Military Assistance Command, reported:

"On 19 May, 1969, 2/3 ARVN conducted combat assault on LZ YC324976 and began moving to positions to the southeast side of Hill 937, in preparation for four battalion attack on 20 May 1969. These battalions from the 3rd Airborne Brigade, 101st Division progressed to multi-battalion attack which began 201030H [20 May 1030 hours]. Advance of 2/3 was extremely rapid due to use of high speed trail and light enemy resistance. They were the first to reach the top of Hill 937 and assaulted positions vicinity YC327980. The 3/187 was meeting heavy resistance on their axis of attack. The 2/3 ARVN went to assist by moving N along Hill 937 and relieving the pressure. However, friendly fire from 3/187 prevented 2/3 ARVN from moving close. The 2/3 ARVN then moved on reverse slope of the southeast side of the hill." (6)

This was confirmed by General Abrams who commented:

"They got up to the crest of the hill, as a matter of fact ahead of the artillery preparation that was going in. The resistance was on the west slope—the third of the—3/187. And then they had to back Dinh's battalion off the top of the hill so they could put the artillery in on the reverse slope. So then he—it was an hour and a half later when he got back on top of the hill and met them. He was there to meet the 3rd of the 187th. So the facts are the first people to the crest was [sic] the ARVN. (7).

Continue on next page

Hamburger Hill...

The results of Dong Ap Bia were simple and chilling. The American people were tired of the war in Vietnam and called for the return of their husbands and sons from the distant battlefields. For the ARVN, it should have been the great year in which the U.S. and ARVN forces took the war into enemy sanctuaries in Laos and North Vietnam. "Instead, it was a year in which the enemy gained the upper hand in the war of wills, in part due to fighting over a desolate and essentially worthless hilltop." (8)

NOTES

1. Wiest, Andrew. *Vietnam's Forgotten Army*. 2008: 175.
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Hamburger_Hill Accessed 16 April, 2017.
3. Wiest 166.
4. Ibid, 170.
5. Ibid, 171.
6. Harper, Memorandum for the Record.
7. Sorley, *Abrams Tapes*, 1968-1972, 194.
8. Wiest 176.

The Forgotten South Vietnamese Airborne

Barry R. McCaffrey

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/08/opinion/south-vietnam-airborne.html>

I arrived in Vietnam in July 1966, and for the next year I served as an adviser with the South Vietnamese Airborne Division. It was the last year we thought we were winning. It was the last year we could define what we thought winning would be. It was a year of optimism, of surging American troop strength that largely took over the war from the Vietnamese — and of wildly expanding American casualty lists.

By the end of 1967, there were 486,000 American troops in the battle. The number of Americans killed in action that year roughly doubled from 1966. Amid all of that, the sacrifice and valor and commitment of the South Vietnamese Army largely disappeared from the American political and media consciousness.

The South Vietnamese Airborne Division, which I joined as an assistant battalion adviser, was an elite combat unit. By 1967 these paratroopers, with their camouflaged jump uniforms and distinctive red berets, had grown to 13,000 men, all volunteers. Those of us privileged to serve with them were awe-struck by their courage and tactical aggressiveness. The senior officers and non-commissioned officers were extremely competent and battle hardened; it's easy to forget that while the Americans were new to Vietnam, many of these men had been at war since 1951.

As advisers, we essentially acted as staff and liaison officers at the battalion and brigade levels. We had spent a year preparing in California, including 16-hour days of cultural and language immersion at the Defense Language Institute. I ended up with a sub-fluent command of spoken Vietnamese. Counterinsurgency tactics and training in the World War II-era weapons systems that the Vietnamese still used took place at Fort Bragg, N.C.

We played a wide range of roles: coordinating artillery and airstrikes, arranging helicopter lifts and medevac and providing intelligence and logistical support. We didn't give orders, and we didn't need to. Our Vietnamese counterparts were men we admired, and they were glad to have us — and American firepower — with them. We ate their food. We spoke their language. We trusted the Vietnamese completely. I usually had a paratrooper as a bodyguard and as a radio operator.

Normally, a battalion-level advisory team like mine consisted of three men: an American Army captain, a first lieutenant and a senior noncommissioned officer, usually a sergeant. The sergeants were the core: While officers rotated in and out, many of the sergeants stayed with their assigned South Vietnamese units until the end of the war — or until they were killed or knocked out of the fight.

My introduction to Vietnam was a bloody experience. We deployed by American Navy assault boats and Army helicopters into the swampy river delta south of Saigon. This was combat without glory, fighting and drowning in the saltwater muck. There was none of the adventure that we felt in Ranger school. My captain, an incredibly professional and competent senior adviser, was killed. Back at base, I helped carry his body off the helicopter. It was only the beginning.

Four months into my tour with the airborne we were involved in a giant, bloody battle supporting American Marine units north

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Forgotten SVN Airborne...

of Dong Ha, near the coast in the northern part of South Vietnam. Two of our battalions were inserted by helicopter into the Demilitarized Zone to check a significant force of North Vietnamese moving south. It turned into three days of intense and bloody combat. My senior adviser was killed. Our incredibly courageous noncommissioned officer, Master Sgt. Rudy Ortiz, was riddled from head to foot. He asked me to load his M-16 and put it on his chest so that he could “die fighting” with the rest of us (luckily, he survived). We took hundreds of casualties and came very close to being overrun. But the South Vietnamese paratroopers fought tenaciously. At the critical moment, with supporting air and naval fire, we counterattacked. The executive officer of my Vietnamese battalion walked upright through heavy automatic weapon fire to my foxhole. “Lieutenant,” he told me, “it is time to die now.” It gives me chills to remember his words.

In combat, the South Vietnamese refused to leave their own dead or wounded troopers on the field or abandon a weapon. In another battle one of my West Point classmates, Tommy Kerns, a huge Army football player, was badly wounded and stuck in a narrow trench as his airborne battalion tried to break contact with a large North Vietnamese force. The Vietnamese paratroopers with him, all much smaller than Tommy, couldn’t haul him out of the trench. Rather than withdraw and leave him, they held their ground and won a violent engagement over his giant wounded body. He survived because of their courage.

The American advisers and most of the Airborne Division were stationed in and around Saigon. We loved the energy and fun of the city. We loved the culture and the language and the Vietnamese. We were terribly proud of our status with the Red Berets. We were sure the entire world envied our assignment — we were working with the country’s elite. With combat and airborne pay, we had what seemed like a ton of money. We lived in air-conditioned quarters. We were young and harebrained and aggressive. The American colonels and lieutenant colonels who ran the advisers were older, stable and battle-hardened men who had seen much worse combat in World War II and Korea as paratroopers.

Life as an adviser in the Vietnamese Airborne Division was unpredictable. The division’s job was to serve as a strategic reserve, to be inserted into combat whenever commanders needed an edge. A Vietnamese airborne battalion or a full brigade would be alerted for emergency deployment in the middle of the night. We would cram into American and Vietnamese Air Force transport planes, which sat, engines roaring, in long lines at Ton Son Nhut Air Base, near Saigon. Live ammo would be issued. Sometimes parachutes were issued. A hurried battle plan.

And then — mayhem. The battalions deployed to wherever they were needed. We could head anywhere in the country and find ourselves in the middle of a firefight. Many of the American advisers and hundreds of the Vietnamese paratroopers I served with did not come back from these operations. I can see their young faces still. Capt. Gary Brux. Capt. Bill Deuel. Lt. Chuck Hemmingway. Lt. Carl Arvin. My very young radio operator, Pvt. Michael Randall. All dead. Brave. Proud.

Vietnam wasn’t my first combat tour. After graduating from West Point, I joined the 82nd Airborne Division in the Dominican Republic intervention in 1965. We had deployed to the island and quashed the Cuban-inspired Communist uprising, and then stayed as an Organization of American States peacekeeping force. We thought that was what combat meant, and when we returned to Fort Bragg, we were eager to get to Vietnam — several lieutenants from my infantry battalion jumped into a car and drove all the way to Army headquarters in Washington to volunteer for the battle. We thought we were going to miss the war. Now we know the end of the story. Two million Vietnamese probably died. The United States lost 58,000 and 303,000 were wounded. America descended into a bitter and convulsive political civil war. We knew nothing of it then. I was so very proud to have been selected to serve with the Vietnamese airborne. My new and beautiful wife, whom I loved dearly, knew I had to go. My dad, an Army general, would honor me if I was killed.

All this was over 50 years ago. The Vietnamese Airborne Division soldiers who survived the collapse of South Vietnam either escaped through Cambodia or went through a decade of brutal “re-education” camps. Most of them eventually made it to the United States. We have an association of the American advisers and our Vietnamese comrades, and there is a memorial to our efforts at Arlington National Cemetery. We gather there every year and remember how we fought together. We wear our red berets. We laugh at our old stories, but there is a deep sadness that we lost so many, and that it came to nothing.

People often ask me about the lessons of the war in Vietnam. Those of us who fought with the Vietnamese Airborne Division are not the ones to ask. All we remember and know is the enduring courage and determination of the Vietnamese Airborne privates pushing forward into battle. They have no monuments except in our memories.

Barry McCaffrey ([@mccaffrey3](#)) served as an adviser in the Vietnamese Airborne Division. He retired as a four-star general, later served as the Clinton administration drug czar and is now a national security commentator for NBC News.

Honors & Errors: The Burns-Novick Vietnam War Documentary

KEITH NIGHTINGALE

<http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/honors-and-errors-the-burns-novick-vietnam-war-documentary>

The recent acclaimed Burns-Novick documentary on Vietnam is great cinematic art but poor history. Unfortunately, with the nano-second emotion/attention mentality of our population, it will be generally judged as THE history. For those that were part of the Vietnam “experience,” it lanced old boils while ignoring the root cause of the disease. The series systematically ignores crucial points of fact while emphasizing the emotional points-veterans as victims, the North as righteous warriors and the peace movement as a penultimate demonstration of taking moral high

ground. Some of this is right. Much of it is wrong and as “history,” it has huge holes. Hindsight is always that, 20-20 in product but often twisted and distorted by the viewer. Some thoughts not addressed by Burns follows.

LBJ got the US into Vietnam because at the time, he had no choice. JFK and Ike had both viewed communism as a single monolith that had to be confronted at every opportunity to preserve the Western world. He could not be the President that ignored their legacy. But, he made the decision to intervene with crucial and ultimately disastrous guidelines-points the series largely downplays.

The “How” LBJ that specified to the JCS, in some detail, is the most crucial to the ultimate outcome. We ought to examine the engagement decisions he made with the time they were made. There was little credibility to the concept of a non-monolithic communism. Ho, the PRC, USSR etc. were viewed as the same, ergo - We had to fight/defeat the commies in SVN in order to save the region (dominos etc.). That said, LBJ established many crucial restrictions on the engagement that largely led to the defeat of the South. Congress provided the coup de grace and it’s all history - much of which Burns egregiously ignores.

The Requirement to Protect the NVN Infrastructure

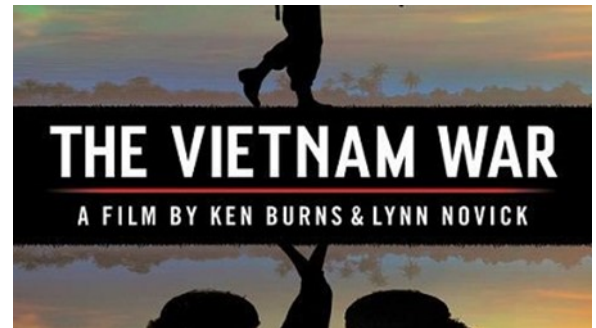
The decisions to avoid bombing; the Red River dikes; the very limited road network between the PRC and NVN; establishing Haiphong as a safe harbor and preserving the antiquated electrical and hydrologic infrastructure, allowed the GONVN to preserve itself as a functioning entity and funnel the vast majority of its military age citizens directly into the war effort in the South.

The decision to announce to the North, via diplomatic channels, intended targets within North Vietnam, allowed the north to mass anti-aircraft weapons within the known strike areas, resulting in significant pilot losses. This is ignored by the documentary.

Protecting the Border Sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia by Prohibiting Incursions

Prohibiting incursions into the border areas, permitted the North to establish a very extensive safe basecamp and supply infrastructure, as well as succor and prepare major forces for attacks into the South and recover them without fear of disturbance. The covert bombing and MAC SOG insertions were largely mosquitos on the elephant of security. The Lam Son 719 incursion demonstrated both how extensive that area was as well as how crucial it was to the North. Too little, way too late. Separating the war into two components, conventional and unconventional/insurgent, while placing the clear majority of resources/emphasis on the former while largely ignoring the supremely important latter.

Assigning the ARVN to urban area defense while US forces pursued Search-Kill operations made sense initially (1965-66), but



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Honors & Errors...

did not transition as the war went on until Congress directed withdrawal. Because of this, the ARVN largely ignored the outlying rural defenses in favor of emulating the US forces. Concurrently, any "civil war/counter-insurgency" programs were quietly closeted or managed on threadbare and erratic budgets.

The End: Over and Under Emphasis on the How and the Why

The Burns-Novick series also has an ironic over and under emphasis that erroneously skews the conclusions as well as misrepresents how and why the war ended.

The issue of corruption, continuously addressed, was not a game changer/decider. It was a constant irritant and distractor but had little to no bearing on the ultimate outcome which was decided by brute massed force conventional tactics. The north's strategic assumption that the southern population would rise-up because of the 1968 Tet offensive, was patently wrong. The populace largely stuck with the South.

The role of the ARVN, largely ignored by the series, was greatly understated to the point of falsifying the conflict. Throughout our engagement - 1965-1973 - they conducted 90% of the operations and suffered an equal preponderance of casualties. This fact was greatly under-reported by the US media at the time and by the Burns recount now. Any factual study of ARVN operations in the Delta, as well as I and II Corps would affirm that. Even in III Corps, during Tet, the ARVN carried the bulk of combat operations.

The draft deferment program, only marginally addressed, combined with the policy of no Guard or Reserve elements deployed (actually a few but unpublic), effectively condemned US forces to a very limited manpower pool as well as allowed the national population to have a clear issue avoidance-especially if a family had even modest means. Vietnam was a poor man's war, largely under-represented by the middle class-most of whom went to college in some form or gained a medical deferment.

The role of the media was crucial to the emerging and ultimately grossly negative US attitude toward the war and the South in particular. The Bleed and Lead press mentality, coupled with the inept MACV press management, insured the US population would have a negative skewed view of the war effort. The lack of balance regarding media is unfortunate-Burns depicts it as good, all knowing, truth telling in the face of falsity etc. The truth is that both sides were at fault, but the overall media slant was patently unfair to the facts at hand. While Westmoreland had rightly lost much of his credibility, any visit to the countryside post Tet, would have convinced a neutral observer, even a Cronkite, that the ARVN had done a highly credible defense and that the VC infrastructure was largely decimated. These points are studiously ignored.

The quality, determination and moral fiber demonstrated by the southern population and its steadfast opposition to northern imposition, was virtually ignored in favor of a cinematic message of the righteousness of the northern cause against the corrupt malefactors of the South coupled with the gross victimization of those US personnel that served. In 1973, absent any US forces, the South effectively defended itself against the north in a one on one campaign albeit assisted by US air power.

The overarching fact, completely ignored by Burns-Novick, was the effect of the aid cutoff by congress. The great emotional divisiveness generated by Nixon and Watergate, eliminated any shred of tradition bipartisanship when it came to warmaking. Congress, statutorily, halted all military aid to the South and specifically precluded any introduction of air or ground power, regardless of how transitory. Rather than provide funds for fuel, ammo and spare parts as it quickly did for Israel in similar circumstances, the South was allowed to run out of fuel, ammo and the entire wherewithal for war. Most importantly, congress killed the spirit and hope within the fighting forces of the South that we had built over our total immersion in the conflict.

The ocean of refugees that flooded to our shores and the population of the "re-education" camps, attested to what America meant to the South and what Burns-Novick largely ignore in their drive to spin a message. They have, unfortunately, sullied what would otherwise have been a continuing chapter in their previously unimpeachable artful historical records.

The 88 Project: Vietnam Political Prisoner Database

<https://vietnamprisoners.info/>

Our newly launched Vietnam Political Prisoner Database at <https://vietnamprisoners.info/> might be of interest for those who study/follow Vietnamese dissident politics and social movements.

This is a searchable database that allows users to search for prisoner profiles by name, year of arrest, charges, length of sentence, gender, religion, ethnicity, areas of activism, and current status. You can use these criteria separately or in combination.

On the home page, users can also conveniently see the number of prisoners who are currently in pre-trial detention or serving a sentence, as well as the numbers of female and ethnic minorities prisoners (who, unfortunately, are often overlooked).

Many detailed profiles are already available for many prisoners. You could sort the list by "most recently updated" to get the latest updates.

Updates on political prisoners and social movements in general, as well as related news, are also available via our [weekly newsletters](#).

Best,

Huong

Editor at [The 88 Project](#)

Bishop Thomas Nguyen Ordained as “Bearer of Life” to Orange County’s Vietnamese Catholics

Caitlin Kandil

In a multicultural ceremony held in four languages — English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Korean — the Diocese of Orange ordained the Rev. Thomas Thanh Thai Nguyen as bishop last week, making him the second Vietnamese American in U.S. history to hold the post.

Nguyen will serve as auxiliary bishop in the Diocese of Orange, home to an estimated 70,000 Vietnamese American Catholics, the largest such community in the country.

"You, in another way, daily, will be a bearer of light to those in need of guidance and hope, who are surrounded by darkness at times, who are trying to find their way back to God," said the Rev. Kevin Vann, bishop of Orange, drawing a parallel between the star of Bethlehem, which according to the Bible led to the baby Jesus, and the stars that guided Vietnamese refugees to safety in their escape from persecution during the Vietnam War.

Nguyen himself was a war refugee. He was born in Nha Trang, Vietnam, where he entered the seminary at 13. But his studies were cut short in 1975, when the Communist government took over and forced Nguyen and his fellow seminarians into a labor camp. Four years later, Nguyen and his extended family escaped Vietnam by motorboat.

They spent 18 days at sea, where they were hit by a tropical storm that left them without food or water for several days, before arriving to safety in the Philippines.

The family spent 10 months in a refugee camp before relocating to the United States, where Nguyen completed his seminary training. He then served as a priest in Georgia and Florida, where his work focused on the Vietnamese Catholic community.

For many Vietnamese Catholics, Nguyen's history is seen as an asset that will help him minister to the community.

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"He has that connection to many of the stories in the Vietnamese population, of the Vietnam War, of immigrating over the years, and especially of being a boat person," said the Rev. Brandon Dang, a priest at Our Lady Queen of Angels in Newport Beach.

"Also, the dynamic of being Vietnamese American, being in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, and then the Diocese of St. Augustine in Florida, he'll be able to bridge those cultures."

Francesca Tran of Santa Ana agreed, adding that speaking Vietnamese will also help Nguyen reach out to the community.

"He can relate to them and they can relate to him," she said.

Clergy from around the world, including priests from St. Joseph Seminary in Vietnam, where Nguyen began his training, as well as interfaith leaders from Orange County, attended the ordination on Dec. 19 at St. Columban Church in Garden Grove. As the largest church — and the largest Vietnamese congregation — in the diocese, an estimated 1,600 faithful attended the ceremony.

"To my new family and friends in the Diocese of Orange, please know how grateful I am for the love and kindness you've showed me," Nguyen said at the closing of the service. "I look forward to getting to know you better in the coming days."

But the ordination was also marked by sadness, coming less than a week after the funeral for the Rev. Dominic Mai Thanh Luong, auxiliary bishop emeritus of Orange. Luong was the first Vietnamese American bishop in U.S. history and served in the diocese for 12 years.

"It was a big loss to see Bishop Dominic go before the ordination," said Elysabeth Nguyen, a parishioner at Christ Cathedral in Garden Grove. "It's definitely mixed emotions, in the same week. Vietnamese people are going through a lot of emotions right now — they probably couldn't tell you if it was happy or sad."

Elysabeth Nguyen said she hopes the new bishop will lend his leadership to the construction of the Our Lady of La Vang shrine at Christ Cathedral, a \$25-million project dedicated to the Vietnamese Marian apparition that also became a symbol for persecuted Catholics in Vietnam. Completing the shrine was one of Luong's dreams.

"It is sad, but I think we all accept it," said Nguyen of Christ Cathedral. "It's the passing of the torch from Bishop Dominic to the new bishop. It's very appropriate."

Bishop Thomas Nguyen...



International Human Rights Day: Dec 10, 2017

The 2017 International Human Rights Day was celebrated at Brandenburg Gate (Paritzer Platz) in Munich, Germany on December 9, 2017 at the invitation of the Vietnamese German organization. The president of the Viet-German delegation Dr. Hoang My Lam thanked all the delegations for coming to Munich for the meeting. She reminded the delegates that communist Vietnam although having signed the declaration of Human Rights in 1948 continues to violate the rights of the Vietnamese people.

Even the German people knew it. They witnessed this year the kidnapping in their own country in broad daylight of Trinh Xuan Thanh in Tier Garten close to Brandenburg Gate under the direction of communist general Dung Minh Hung. Mr. Thanh was then spirited back to Vietnam for trial. This shows too well the disregard of the Vietnamese communists towards human rights in Vietnam and overseas in Germany.

Following the demonstration, the delegates were invited to attend a mass celebration at the St Aloysius Church close by.



<https://youtu.be/QGYUy4DGwEc>



In the meantime, delegations from the Overseas Vietnamese community and the Vietnamese American community after meeting with the United Nations Commissioner on Human Rights on the International Human Rights Day demonstrated in New York City in front of the United Nations for Human Rights and Freedom from Communism in Vietnam.

In San Jose, CA the Vietnamese also demonstrated and held a hunger strike on 9-10 December, 2017.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olZdhWO_u1s&feature=youtu.be

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The Last Jedi: Viet-Am Actress Kelly Marie Tran

<http://metro.co.uk/2017/12/14/star-wars-newcomer-kelly-marie-tran-ready-make-history-im-excited-part-change-7152507/?ito=cbshare>

Star Wars' newcomer Kelly-Marie Tran is ready to make history: 'I'm excited to be part of the change' Kelly-Marie Tran is about to burst into tears in front of me and we can't find any tissues. She's been set off again after I ask about why she cried on the red carpet for the Los Angeles premiere of Star Wars: The Last Jedi, and it's clear she's been left overwhelmed by the response.

'I don't want to look back in 50 years and think I never let myself feel anything,' she admits, 'so I thought, I don't care if people said don't cry I was going to let myself be a mess.' Tran stars as Rose in The Last Jedi, episode eight in the Star Wars saga that has spanned five decades and is known globally. She is a newcomer to the series but don't think that she has no idea of what kind of world she has let herself in to. She speaks passionately about the film, about director Rian Johnson, about working closely with John Boyega, about the opportunities she's been given, about diversity in Hollywood – even about my sequinned cardigan which she exclaims over when we first meet. Her enthusiasm is infectious and makes you realise how one film role can really change someone's life.

Tran has been a jobbing actor for nearly ten years, but this is her first big screen role. It took her four years for a commercial agent to sign her – without even a commercial agent, she says, no one from TV or film would even consider hiring her – but in the meantime she was still working a full-time job to pay the bills, and auditioning, writing and doing improv sketches in her spare time. It was her parents' resilience and determination that she and her sister be given the opportunity to dream and make those dreams reality that ensured she never gave up.

'From the beginning something that has really helped me is where I come from and where my parents come from,' she says. 'The idea that their only dream was, really, to give me a choice – they came to the US not speaking the language in their late teens, and they have spent their entire lives working jobs that they don't necessarily enjoy as it was just to provide for us, so we could reach the level of having the luxury of having a dream.' 'So many people don't realise you need to be on a certain level of Maslow's hierarchy to have a dream, you have to have food and be safe from danger, all these things my parents didn't have at the get go, so I, from the very beginning, believe I have been living for multiple generations, for my parents and grandparents.'

When we discuss the importance of diversity, Tran, a Vietnamese-American actress, understandably pauses and sighs; 'I wish I didn't have to answer this question, I wish we lived in a world where every different person has the chance to write, direct, produce, and star in movies but that's just not true.'



Little Saigon's Restaurant Scene Revives as Second Generation Vietnamese Americans Mix it up

Caitlin Yoshiko Kandil

<http://www.latimes.com/socal/daily-pilot/news/tn-wknd-et-little-saigon-201711-story.html>

One of Sonny Nguyen's favorite childhood memories was eating out in Little Saigon.

"We would only go out to eat once a month, and it was a pho restaurant," Nguyen, 38, said of the Vietnamese noodle soup dish. "It was a big highlight. It was a luxury."

In the decades since, Nguyen has seen Little Saigon transform itself, from a place where "choices definitely were limited" to mom-and-pop Vietnamese eateries into what he called a "food mecca" for Southern California. The area now bustles with shops serving cutting-edge desserts and beverages. Fusion restaurants thrive with the help of social media, from customized churros and ice cream-stuffed doughnuts to cotton candy-topped tea and Asian-inspired tacos.

"It's completely changed," said Nguyen, who has been a part of this change as one of the co-founders of 7 Leaves Cafe, which offers beverages featuring flavors from across Asia, such as taro milk tea, Japanese matcha tea and mung bean milk tea.

"The transformation you're seeing in Little Saigon is the second generation — or even the third generation — taking what was great and making it even greater," he said.

"It's not just an ethnic enclave for Vietnamese refugees who couldn't speak English very well," said Linda Trinh Vo, professor of Asian American Studies at UC Irvine. "It's becoming a place that's attracting new clients, new businesses, the younger generation, non-Vietnamese and foodies. It's becoming known as a place for food innovation."



Kevin Chang / Staff Photographer

Sonny Nguyen, 38, is a co-founder of 7 Leaves Cafe in Garden Grove, which serves beverages featuring flavors from across Asia. (Kevin Chang / Staff Photographer)

Founded after the 1975 fall of Saigon forced hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese to flee their homes, Orange

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Little Saigon...

County's Little Saigon, which spans parts of Westminster and Garden Grove, started as a clustering of a handful of family-owned restaurants and shops.

Eateries served traditional Vietnamese fare, "catering more exclusively to the new refugees and immigrants," said Vo, and helping to "satisfy their cravings for home." Today, many second-generation restaurant owners are taking those same Vietnamese flavors and blending them with tastes from their upbringing in Southern California.

"This generation grew up with an exposure to different kinds of foods, growing up in multi-ethnic, multi-racial neighborhoods," said Vo. "It expanded their taste buds."

At 7 Leaves Cafe, Nguyen said the most popular drink is a creamy iced Vietnamese coffee — a Vietnamese take on the Frappuccino.

And Andy Nguyen, one of the co-founders of Afters Ice Cream, said his jasmine milk tea and Vietnamese coffee ice cream were inspired by his favorite drinks growing up in Westminster.

"We used to hang out at all the [drink] spots all the time, and jasmine milk tea was my go-to drink," he said. "So I thought, can we turn that into an ice cream flavor?"

Meanwhile, Hop Pham, one of the co-founders of Dos Chinos, said the inspiration behind his Vietnamese-Mexican fusion menu was his childhood in Santa Ana and the Mexican-American friends who introduced him to a variety of new foods.

"They fed me cactus, and I was like, 'What is this? I don't know if I can eat this, it has needles and stuff' — but it was delicious," Pham said. "And they fed me avocado with salt, and I was like, 'Avocado with salt?' Because in Vietnamese community we normally eat avocados with sugar so it was the total opposite of what I'm used to."

"We're living really close together, cultures were intermarrying, we're best friends, growing up together — there needs to be a Vietnamese-Mexican something," Pham said of how he thought of the idea for Dos Chinos, a food truck that offers tacos, burritos and bowls with ingredients such as Vietnamese chimichurri chicken.

Tam Nguyen, former president of Orange County's Vietnamese American Chamber of Commerce, said the restaurant industry in Little Saigon has exploded in the past five years, fueled in large part by young entrepreneurs leaving careers in medicine, law, banking and technology for something they're more passionate about — food.

While Vietnamese Americans live throughout Orange County, Nguyen explained that many young restaurant owners still come back to Little Saigon to establish their shops.

Part of this is for practical reasons, he said — the rent is cheaper than other parts of the county, and many still have family ties in the area — and also for authenticity, a sense that a Vietnamese restaurant "has to succeed to the Vietnamese palate first and foremost."

But it's also out of a sense of responsibility to the community.

"As second-generation stakeholders, it's important that we have that conversation — and continue to do so — so that Little Saigon doesn't become neglected in the next generation and that it continues to be a draw for food, culture and activities for our children," Nguyen said. "Now that we're young parents and our children are born here, they need to be drawn to Little Saigon in the same way that we were growing up."

With the surge of new eateries, the customer base of Little Saigon has changed, too.

Loan Nguyen, co-founder of The Loop, which offers churros that can be customized with dips, glazes, toppings and frozen yogurt, said that "80 to 90%" of her customers aren't Asian. "We wanted to come up with a dessert that appeals to everybody," she said.

Pham, of Dos Chinos, said that customer diversity extends to traditional eateries as well.

"Before it was probably 98% Vietnamese," he said. "Now it's a great mix. You go to some of the great hole-in-the-walls that the local community has supported for 20 years, and you'll notice that there's Vietnamese, Mexican, white people, black people."

UC Irvine's Vo said the culinary transformation of Little Saigon also is affecting tastes outside the area, as evidenced by food items such as Sriracha sauce and banh mi sandwiches finding their way into mainstream American restaurants.

Vi Que Fish Sauce

<https://www.nguoi-viet.com/little-saigon/san-xuat-nuoc-mam-tai-hoa-ky-khong-phai-de/>

TP Food Processing Inc. (TP Food) has been approved by the FDA to produce *Vi Que nuoc man* (fish sauce) in Westminster, CA in early December 2017. Although he was a former owner of a fish sauce factory in Vietnam, Philip Ma, TP Food Processing Inc.'s owner could not imagine how difficult it was to obtain from the FDA the license to produce fish sauce.

The process took more than a year. First, he had to have the approval of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), a unit that looks at food safety from procurement to processing and consumption. Then the CA Health Department had to look at the factory that has to be clean; workers have to follow regulations; the level of histamine in the fish sauce has to be acceptable. The fish sauce base was processed in Phu Quoc, Vietnam then shipped to TP Food in CA for processing according to FDA regulations.

In the end, the process was approved. Vi Que does not have the particular fish sauce smell and could be used fresh out of the bottle without mixture or preparation.



Photo: Đăng-Giao/Người Việt

