



A COUNTRY STAYS
ALIVE WHEN ITS
CULTURE IS
ALIVE.

HOPE NEVER DIES IN
THE
INDOMITABLE
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

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81 ARVN Paratroopers Laid to Rest in Westminster, CA

Oct 26, 2019. And there [POW/MIA lab in Hawaii] the remains of the South Vietnamese soldiers have been sitting for the past 33 years. Because there was no flight manifest for such a combat mission, we will probably never know the names of those who were lost. They are identified only as members of an elite airborne battalion of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam.

The Hanoi government twice declined to accept them for a proper burial in Vietnam. And because these were not American citizens or soldiers, there was no clear way for them to be buried and properly honored in the United States. They are unknown soldiers, and have indeed become "Men Without a Country," after having given their lives on behalf of a country that no longer exists.



The ceremony will do far more than merely remembering the sacrifices and the five decades odyssey of those young soldiers who so long ago lost their lives for the ideals of democracy on behalf of a country that no longer exists. It will also serve as a reminder of the hundreds of thousands of other soldiers who lost their lives and the thousands of others whose remains might never be found.

And it will help us to remember who we are as Americans, and who we should always aspire to be: a people who treasure human life, and who will never forget those who stood beside us during extraordinarily difficult times.



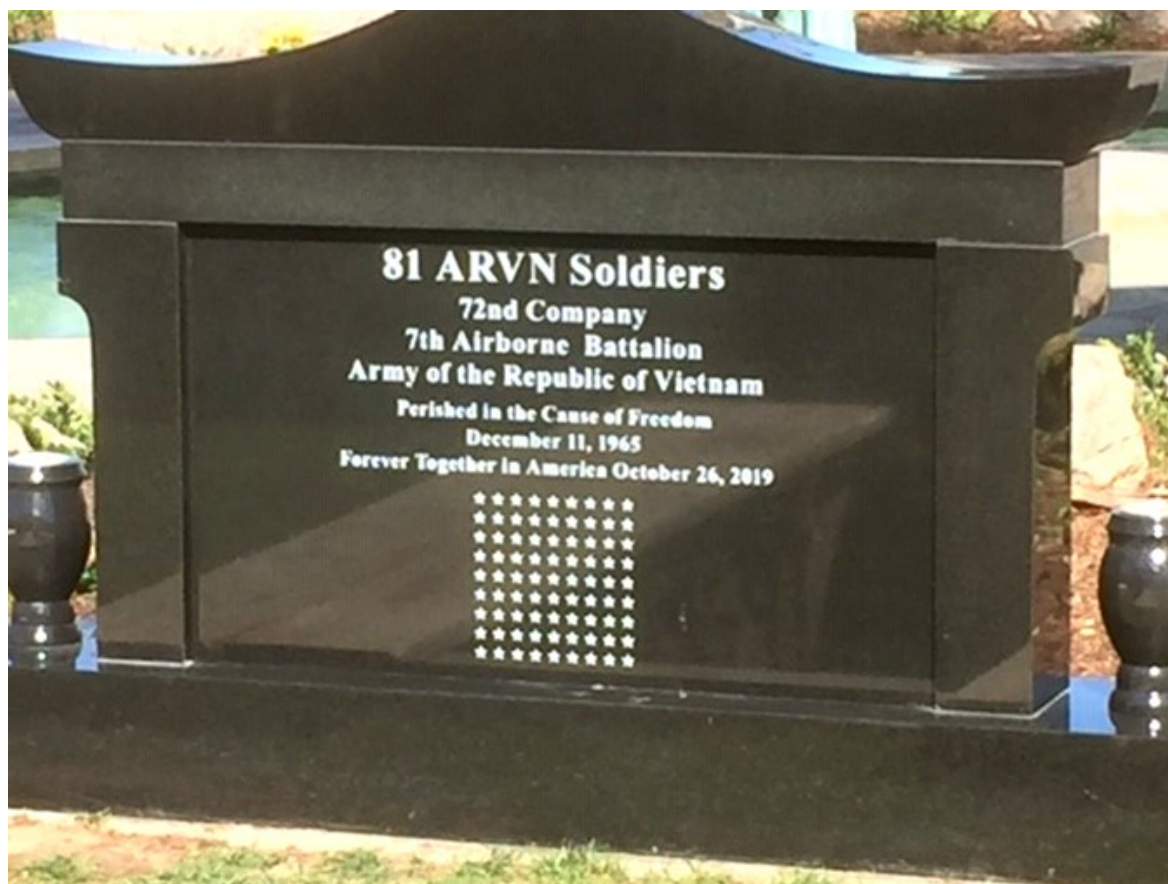
<https://www.yahoo.com/news/jim-webb-remember-south-vietnam-100011883.html>

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81 ARN Paratroopers Laid to Rest...

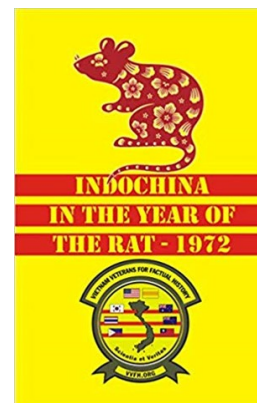


Indochina in the Year of the Rat—1972

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Available on Amazon

<https://www.amazon.com/Indochina-Year-Rat-William-Stearman/dp/1929932723/>

Postcard From a Poisoned Coast: Vietnam's People Smuggling Heartland

NGHE AN, Vietnam (Reuters) - The countryside in the Vietnamese provinces of Nghe An and Ha Tinh is dotted with billboards for labor export companies advertising jobs or study overseas.

Thousands of people respond to the lure of a better life abroad every year, but many take the underground route - via smugglers and sometimes dangerous journeys by sea and road.

That phenomenon is now in sharp focus after 39 bodies were discovered in a truck outside London last week.

Many are feared to be Vietnamese from Nghe An and Ha Tinh, rice-growing areas in the northern-central part of the country.

Poor job prospects, encouragement by authorities, smuggling gangs, environmental disaster and government pressure on Catholics are all local factors behind the wave of migrants.

"Almost everyone round here has a relative overseas," said Bui Thac, whose nephew Bui Phan Thang is feared to be among the container dead.

"Almost all households have someone going abroad. Old people stay but young people must find ways to work abroad because it's difficult to work at home".

Impoverished rural communities in Nghe An and Ha Tinh have been plunged into despair amid fears that missing loved ones are among those who died in the tragedy.

LABOR "EXPORTS" A PRIORITY

For Vietnam's ruling Communist Party, the benefits of people legally moving abroad to work are clear.

The People's Committee of Nghe An issued a report on boosting labor exports this September.

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"Labor exports are a priority for the Party and the state's socio-economic development program to promote job creation, poverty reduction, career development and income generation for the People," the report on Decision No. 274/2009/NQ-HDND reads.

GDP per capita in both provinces is lower than the national average of \$2,540. Last year, people in Nghe An and Ha Tinh earned a total of \$1,636 and \$2,217 respectively.

But remittances from overseas help. Nghe An alone brought in \$255 million a year, according to state media.

"Labor exports are one solution to unemployment," Nguyen Quang Phu, deputy chairman of Thanh Loc Commune, Can Loc district, told Reuters. "Remittances have helped to improve the lives of the people here".

Despite economic advantages, the tragedy has exposed the limits of the Communist Party's ability to govern how people are leaving.

Vibrant Catholic communities and people-trafficking gangs both pose headaches to the party, which rules from Hanoi some 300 km (180 miles) to the north.

A toxic spill that poisoned fishing grounds three years ago is a further incentive to go abroad.

GANGS

Among those who once set out from Nghe An to find work abroad was communist revolutionary and founding president, Ho Chi Minh.

Vietnam's first billionaire, Pham Nhat Vuong, went to the former Soviet Union in the 1990s before returning to build his Vingroup conglomerate. His roots are in Ha Tinh.

"People from these provinces have a long history of going overseas to earn money to send back home, especially during the time of the labor export program to the former Soviet bloc countries," said Mimi Vu, an independent anti-trafficking advocate based in Ho Chi Minh City.

"After decades of this, the people believe that it's the only way to be successful and support the family with remittances," Vu said.

Though impossible to quantify, local residents and people-trafficking experts believe many people leave with the help of smuggling gangs in Vietnam, who charge families thousands of dollars to get a relative overseas.

People-smuggling to Britain has persisted for a long time, and London's National Crime Agency has posted a liaison officer to the British Embassy in Hanoi who helps combat the problem with Vietnamese police, along with handling other issues.

In an opinion piece published last month, Britain's Ambassador to Vietnam, Gareth Ward, warned of the dangers of believing promises made by the gangs.

"They are not friends. They are criminals."

POISONED WATERS

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Postcard From a Poisoned Coast...

Opportunities for local employment have been hampered by environmental disaster.

Sandwiched between thin sandy beaches and herds of buffalo wallowing in rice paddies, the smoking chimneys of the Formosa Steel plant dominate this small corner of Ha Tinh province.

The steel mill, owned by Taiwan's Formosa Plastics, was blamed by Hanoi in 2016 for causing one of Vietnam's worst environmental disasters when a chemical leak poisoned coastal waters, unleashing widespread protests and damaging livelihoods.

"We decided to let my husband work abroad in 2016 when the Formosa incident happened," said Anna Nguyen, whose husband left Vietnam and traveled illegally to Ukraine, France and then the UK to find work in a nail salon.

"We were afraid that the contamination would harm our health and future so we took the risk. But now our life is so hard," she said.

Ha Tinh's state-run newspaper said last month that over 40,000 people leave the province annually for work elsewhere, including overseas.

THE PRIEST

Like Anna Nguyen, many of those feared to have died in the container incident had Catholic names.

Northern-central Vietnam is dotted with clusters of small, Catholic communities, a hangover from France's conquest. Nghe An is home to 280,000 Catholics, according to state media and 149,000 live in Ha Tinh.

At a special ceremony held in the white-walled My Khanh Catholic church in Yen Thanh, Nghe An province, on Saturday night, father Anthony Dang Huu Nam blamed pollution, social difficulties and natural disasters such as floods and drought for the region's most recent migrant exodus.

Nam's outspoken sermons and criticism of Vietnam's government have earned both him and his church extra attention from the police, another factor encouraging some people to look for a new life elsewhere.

"Why do so many Vietnamese people have to pay lots of money just to be dead?," Nam said during the ceremony.

"Why is it that, even though Vietnam is not at war anymore, so many people are forced to leave for another land?"

(Writing by James Pearson; Editing by Matthew Tostevin and Mike Collett-White)

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Vietnam Jails Music Teacher for 'Undermining' State

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/vietnam-jails-music-teacher-undermining-state-080234637.html>

All independent media is banned in Vietnam, and its government has been accused of cracking down on online dissent too (AFP Photo/HOANG DINH NAM)

Vietnam sentenced a music teacher to 11 years in prison on Friday for Facebook posts that allegedly undermined the one-party state, which has been accused of tightening the noose on online dissent.

Communist Vietnam has long jailed its critics but has come under fire recently for targeting users on Facebook, a popular forum for activists in the country where all independent media is banned.

Nguyen Nang Tinh is the latest activist jailed for his Facebook comments, including posts about police brutality, land rights, and a Taiwanese steel firm that dumped toxic sludge into the ocean, killing masses of fish off the coast of Vietnam.

Authorities accused the college music teacher of posting "hostile thoughts" and "profound anti-government material" on social media.

The 42-year-old was sentenced to 11 years for "producing, disseminating or spreading information and documents aimed at undermining" Vietnam, his lawyer Nguyen Van Mieng told AFP from central Nghe An province.

He got another five years probation.

The jail term was "too harsh", Mieng told AFP, arguing that prosecutors did not have sufficient evidence.

Tinh's father Nguyen Ngoc Dinh insisted his son was innocent, saying he "only raised his voice against injustice in society".

- Missing activist -

Tinh's conviction Friday came as another activist was believed to be held at Hanoi's airport as she arrived from Thailand.

Dinh Thao is a pro-democracy campaigner and vocal critic of Vietnam's communist regime who has lived abroad working for a Vietnamese civil society organisation.

Her husband said she came back to help fellow activists in the country, but he lost touch soon after her arrival Friday.

"When she came to immigration, she saw a lot of police waiting for her there. That was the last message I got from her," her husband Phillip told AFP, asking to use only his first name.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International decried her detention, while immigration police refused to comment to AFP.

The news comes just days after a dissident with Australian citizenship was jailed for 12 years in Vietnam on terrorism charges, along with two other Vietnamese nationals who got 10 and 11 years.

Vietnam is accused of cracking down on activists since a conservative leadership came to power in 2016.

A cybersecurity bill passed last year -- and not yet implemented -- requires sites like Facebook and YouTube to remove

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Vietnam Jails Music Teacher...

content if asked by the government to do so. The controversial law would also require companies to hand over user data and host servers in the country.

Amnesty International says there are at least 128 political prisoners behind bars in Vietnam, 10 percent it estimates were jailed for Facebook posts.

Other rights groups put the number of jailed dissidents as far higher, but no official data is available.

