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Vietnamese or Vietnamese-
American culture.**

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SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese-American Culture

NEWSLETTER # 145

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The 2020 SACEI Person of the Year Major General VIỆT XUÂN LƯƠNG



MAJOR GENERAL VIỆT XUÂN LƯƠNG
Commanding General, United States Army, Japan/I Corps Forward

2020 SACEI PERSON OF THE YEAR

MS Biological Sciences, University of Southern California
MS of Military Arts and Sciences
3rd Brigade Combat Team
(Rakkasans) 101st Airborne Division
2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment



Disclaimer: The listing in this newsletter of a book title or a film does not mean endorsement or approval by SACEI.

The Vietnam War: An Assessment by South Vietnamese Generals

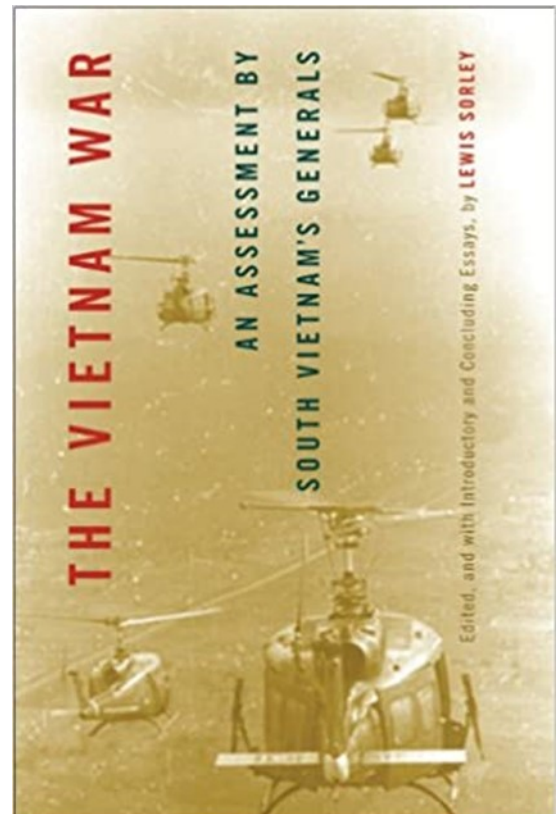
Lewis Sorley

Today, thirty-five years after the fall of Saigon, scholars and historians have had opportunities to examine the Vietnam war from diverse viewpoints and the distance of time. But soon after the war, memories of loss still fresh, top military leaders of defeated South Vietnam recorded their observations in a series of publications sponsored by the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Insightful and poignant, unaltered and unedited by the CMH, their distinctive stories are little known and long out of print. Veteran historian Lewis Sorley has gathered, edited, and arranged these seventeen monographs for ease of reference and access, providing valuable biographies of the generals (some including photographs), plus maps and index.

The volume's chapters cover a range of topics, including:

- "Leadership" by Gen. Cao Van Vien, for nearly a decade chief of the Joint General Staff (the rough equivalent of the U.S. chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff)
- "The U.S. Adviser" by General Vien and other senior officers
- "Intelligence" by Col. Hoang Ngoc Lung, longtime chief intelligence officer of the RVNAF (Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces)
- "Pacification" by Brig. Gen. Tran Dinh Tho
- "The RVNAF" by chief logistics officer Lt. Gen. Dong Van Khuyen
- "Territorial Forces" by Lt. Gen. Ngo Quang Truong, considered South Vietnam's best field commander

Augmented with Sorley's introduction and epilogue, *The Vietnam War* brings the South Vietnamese military experience into sharper perspective, at last available for wider use and appreciation.



Available on Amazon

<https://www.amazon.com/Vietnam-War-Assessment-Vietnams-Southeast/dp/0896726436>

Facebook Blocked in Vietnam over the Weekend Due to Citizen Protests

Sarah Perez@sarahintampa / 4:44 pm EDT•May 17, 2016

<https://techcrunch.com/2016/05/17/facebook-blocked-in-vietnam-over-the-weekend-due-to-citizen-protests/>

Facebook appears to have been blocked in Vietnam as a part of a government-imposed crackdown on social media, amid public protests over an environmental disaster attributed to toxic discharges from a steel complex built by Taiwan's Formosa Plastics. Dissidents are blaming wastewater from the steel plant for a mass fish death at aquatic farms and in waters off the country's central provinces. Citizens have been using Facebook to organize rallies, which is likely the cause of the shutdown.

Instagram also appears to have been affected, according to reports.

In addition to helping protesters organize, social media has been used to share photos of people at rallies, holding up hand-written signs that read "I choose fish."

Citizens are angry both at the steel company and their government's inaction. Formosa had denied wrongdoing in the matter, and the Deputy Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources said the fish deaths had been caused either by a toxic algae bloom or industrial waste. He also denied that Formosa was to blame.

Police arrested up to 300 protesters in Ho Chi Minh City's Paris Square, and many injuries were sustained during that process.

Facebook Blocked in Vietnam...

The UN's High Commissioner on Human Rights recently referenced these protests in a press release, saying: "We are concerned about the increasing levels of violence perpetrated against Vietnamese protesters expressing their anger over the mysterious mass deaths of fish along the country's central coast."

Protesters tried to rally for the third time on Sunday, but security in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City prevented major rallies taking place, Reuters reports.

The fish kill began in April, and a government investigation is still underway.



According to the Israeli proxy service Hola, whose software would be used to route around internet censorship like this (and which is capitalizing on this situation by way of press releases), both Facebook and the photo-sharing app Instagram were blocked on Sunday.

The company says it experienced a significant surge in downloads following the Facebook blockade.

"Though security forces have been preventing protesters from gathering in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, many citizens have been using Facebook to exchange information and organize rallies, thus the government is presumed to have shut the website down," the company wrote on its blog.

We've confirmed via app store optimization firm Sensor Tower that mobile VPN applications in the country also saw a huge boost as users there are trying to circumvent the block. (See above chart). This pattern is similar to when WhatsApp was blocked in Brazil, and is a fairly good indication that a Facebook blockage was, indeed, in effect.

As another source of confirmation of sorts, the Head of PR & Comms for Opera & Asia posted on Twitter that their company saw a surge of VPN users from Vietnam, and suspected a Facebook block was to blame.

There are a number of Twitter reports of a blockage as well.

<https://twitter.com/lotusr00t/status/732361201703755777>

Both Instagram and Facebook were blocked in Vietnam now. Tell me why?

— Panpan (@panpan143) May 15, 2016

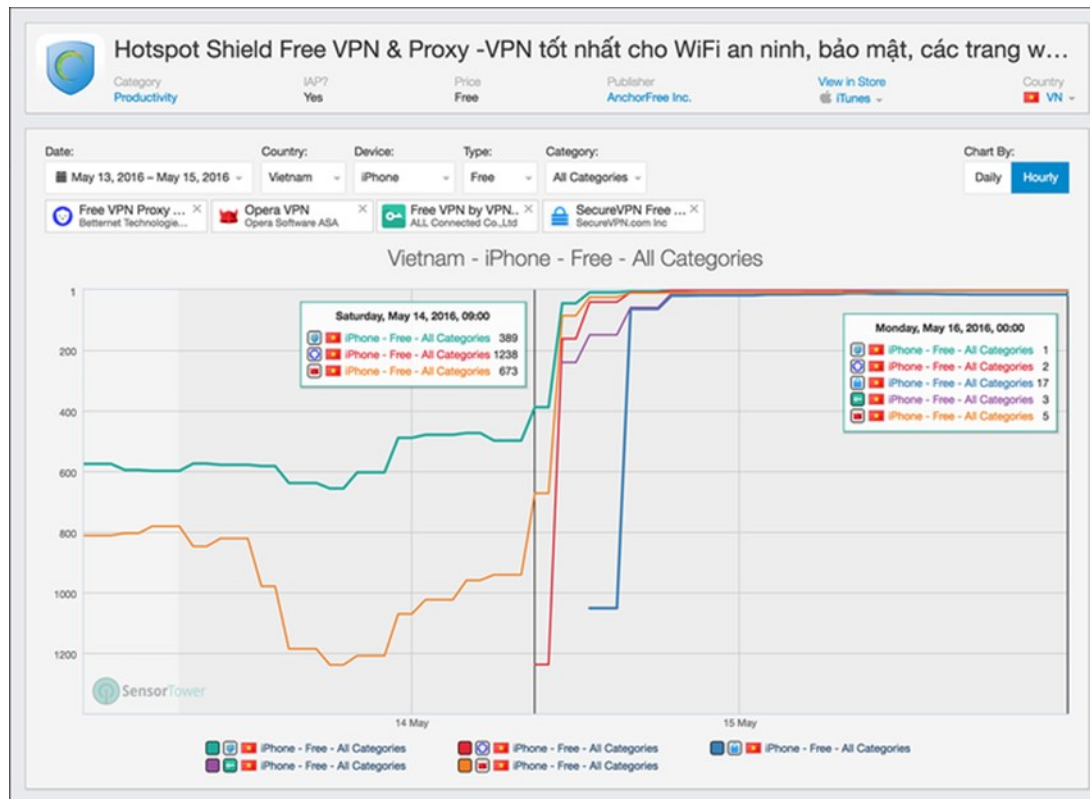
Vietnam's government has blocked social media off and on over the years, though more recently leaders appeared to be embracing Facebook. In October, Bloomberg reported that Vietnam's Communist government even set up its own page on the network dubbed "Government Information," in an effort to reach the 30 million citizens who used the service.

Facebook has not yet responded to a request for comment.

It's unclear at this time if the ban, implemented to crack down on the Sunday protests, is still in effect. It appears it may have been lifted, however, according to websites that track outages like outage.report and DownDetector.

It's also unclear if it extended outside of Hanoi and Saigon, where the demonstrations were planned.

Facebook Blocked in Vietnam ...



Pham Doan Trang: Vietnam Arrests Leading Pro-democracy Blogger

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/pham-doan-trang-vietnam-arrests-135509279.html>

Pham Doan Trang faces years in jail if convicted

Vietnam has arrested a prominent dissident writer and blogger just hours after holding talks with the United States on human rights.

Pham Doan Trang was detained in Ho Chi Minh city late on Tuesday and accused of carrying out anti-state activities.

Ms Trang has been detained before and is an advocate for democracy, press freedom and the rule of law in Vietnam.

Vietnam's one-party communist state frequently jails its critics. There was no immediate comment from the US.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have demanded her immediate release.

Ms Trang has been charged with "making, storing, disseminating or propagandising information, materials and products that aim to oppose the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam", state media report.

Such charges carrying jail terms of up to 20 years.

"There will be more arrests of dissidents and human rights activists before the Communist Party's 13th Congress early next year," fellow dissident Pham Thanh Nghien told BBC Vietnamese. "It turns out Doan Trang is first in line."



Pham Doan Trang...

Bill Laurie

Another activist who spoke to BBC Vietnamese said: "Looking at the range and depth of Doan Trang's activities in the past years, it is totally predictable that she would be detained. Trang was prepared mentally to go to prison."

Earlier this year, Ms Trang stopped working for an independent book publisher, citing police harassment, heightened state abuse and the abduction of colleagues.

With the growing importance of social media, the internet has become a vital platform for dissidents in a country which tightly controls its press.

The 24th annual US-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue was held for three hours on 6 October and "addressed a wide range of human rights issues", the US state department said on its website.

"The promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms remains a critical pillar of US foreign policy and is key to further building upon the US-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership," it added.

US Citizen Accused of 'Insulting' Vietnamese National Hero

Published 1 February 2018

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42869322?>



IMAGE COPYRIGHT YOUTUBE/DAN HAUER

Daniel Hauer lives in Vietnam, is married to a local woman and speaks fluent Vietnamese.

He has a wide local following on Facebook and Youtube for his English language teaching videos and his observations about Vietnamese and Western culture.

But a joke about General Vo Nguyen Giap triggered widespread condemnation on social media. Hundreds of people are calling for him to stop teaching and leave the country.

He has since posted an apology video, was summoned by the authorities and is now facing a fine or a warning. It is thought to be the first time a foreign citizen has had to appear before officials for comments posted online.

Communist Vietnam has a high rate of social media usage, but exercises strict control over the internet, filtering out content deemed undermining of the government of its values.

US Citizen Accused of 'Insulting'...

Tight control

Its censorship rules have often been used to silence government critics and several dissident bloggers have been jailed.



image caption Blogger Nguyen Van Hoa was sentenced to seven years in prison

On Wednesday, three activists Vu Quang Thuan, Nguyen Van Dien, and Tran Hoang Phuc were sentenced to between six and eight years in jail for distributing propaganda against the state.

In 2017, popular environmental **blogger Mother Mushroom received a 10-year prison sentence** under similar charges. The same year, 22-year old blogger Nguyen Van Hoa was sentenced to seven years for writing about a toxic spill from a factory poisoning millions of fish.

In 2015, activist lawyer Nguyen Van Dai was arrested without trial after already having served a lengthy sentence previously. Mr Hauer's controversial comment was trivial, in comparison. It came last week, when the country was swept up in a wave of patriotism after its under-23s football team made it all the way to the finals of the Asian Cup, Vietnam's biggest ever football success. A Facebook commentator had said he would get a tattoo of the Vietnamese flag, should the country win. In a hyperbolic joke, the English teacher said that was nothing - after a Vietnamese athlete recently won a gold medal, he said, he'd got a penis piercing resembling Gen Giap. General Vo Nguyen Giap is revered for leading successful military campaigns against both the French and the US. He passed away in 2013, receiving a grand funeral.

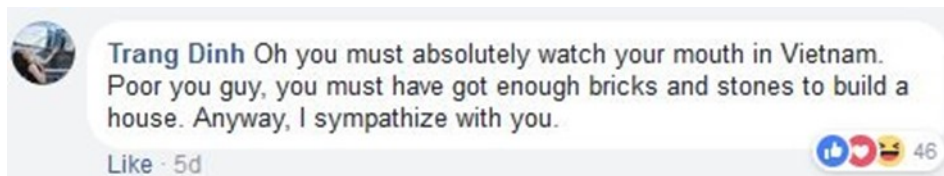
Fury and condemnation

Mr Hauer's flippant remark first caused widespread protests online and eventually made it into the news on national state television. Many online commentators were not holding back with furious condemnation, asking for him to be deported, leave the country and accusing him of gross cultural insensitivity. Yet there are also other comments pointing out that a sincere apology would be enough to eventually set things straight again while some even sympathise with him.

US Citizen Accused of 'Insulting'...



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COPYRIGHTFACEBOOK/TRANG949

The grandson of Gen Giap also publicly shared his anger about the post, initially in a strongly worded comment and which he later replaced with a more toned down one saying "millions of people who love him [Gen Giap] felt the anger caused by this foreigner's insult".

'Not meant as an insult'

But Mr Hauer was also in trouble with the authorities.

A controversial law introduced in 2013, known as **Decree 72**, bans online activity if it falls under certain categories, including opposing the government, harming national security or insulting honour and dignity of organisations and individuals.

Mr Hauer's comments are thought to fall under the latter category,

The US citizen, who declined to speak to the BBC, has apologised for his post, saying he had made a distasteful joke but had not meant it as an insult to the general or the Vietnamese people.

He added that the reaction to the post had taught him a lesson and that he wanted to personally apologise to the family of the general.

According to officials, he now faces a warning or a fine of up to 100m Vietnamese dong (\$4,390; £3,131). Fellow expat Cameron Lucy runs a Facebook group for foreigners in Hanoi and appeared on Vietnamese TV to comment on the case.

He told the BBC that Mr Hauer likely "didn't understand how serious the situation was."

"It is never a good idea to insult a national hero, especially when you're a visitor to that country. I'm sure Dan is really regretting his comment now and very sorry for that."

Reporting by Hoang Nguyen of BBC Vietnamese and Andreas Illmer