

JAN 24 1996

January 14, 1996

Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. (U.S. Navy, Ret.)
1500 Wilson Blvd., Suite 641
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear Admiral Zumwalt,

As a former POW, I had complete support for President Clinton's decision to establish full diplomatic relations with Vietnam last July. The war ended more than twenty years ago and in the world community, we would have been left alone nowadays in any effort to punish Hanoi for being victorious in the Vietnam War!

While scholars may still be debating merits of our 15-year involvement in that war, we all should look forward to a future of co-operations between two countries. As a matter of fact, my colleagues will soon depart for Vietnam to work on a humanitarian project. One of our recent studies about the aftermath of the war showed that destruction inflicted upon the land and the people of Vietnam could have a long-lasting impact, well into the next century! Under such circumstances, anyone with a good conscience certainly feels obliged to offer a helping hand to that country.

However, a question has been haunting me ever since my return to the States in 1973. It's about the use of our air power during the war! Being one of the highest-ranking military officers at the peak of the Vietnam War, would you think the outcome of that war could have been different and thousands of lives could have been saved if our bombing policy were to be made by military leaders, not by those politicians in Washington. Since your view on this issue will help me close the last chapter on the Vietnam War, I truly appreciate it.

Very respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Calvin Taylor".

Calvin Taylor, Ph. D.

for Vietnam general



E. R. ZUMWALT, JR.
ADMIRAL, U.S. NAVY (RET.)

January 25, 1996

Calvin Tavlör. Ph.D.

Dear Dr. Taylor:

With regard to your letter of January 14, I have the following comments concerning your question.

If our bombing policy had been made by military leaders rather than politicians in Washington, in my judgement the War could have been brought to a halt ten years earlier. The proof of Hanoi's reaction had it been done earlier is their immediate seeking of a truce when President Nixon finally unleashed the all-out bombing of Hanoi. This kind of air war a decade earlier or at any time up through 1968 would have taken place at a time when there was still strong political support for winning the war. It would have permitted resumed bombing after a truce had Hanoi subsequently violated a deal. Tragically, President Nixon was so badly wounded domestically when the all-out campaign was initiated that that repetition was not possible.

The civilian authorities always worried that the Chinese would intervene in response to an all-out bombing campaign. The military never believed that the Chinese would and always knew that we had the military capability to deal with it should it occur. The proof of the wisdom of this view on the later point is that Hanoi's legions defeated the Chinese invasion after our forces had left Vietnam.

All best wishes.

Sincerely,

E. R. Zumwalt, Jr.
Admiral, USN (Ret.)

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