

**CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE
VIETNAM CONFLICT**

**Texas Tech University
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FAX COVER SHEET

Date: January 26, 1996
To: Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.
Fax: (703) 528-5795
From: James R. Reckner
Subject: ARVN General Vinh Loc

Fwd

Number of Pages (Including Cover Sheet): 13

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*Fax to Jim R
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Gen Vinh Loc*

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To <i>DR RECKNER</i>	From <i>ADM ZUMWALT</i>
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Dept.	Phone #
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TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE VIETNAM CONFLICT

Box 41013 / Lubbock, Texas 79409-1013 / (806) 742-3742, 742-3744 / Fax: (806) 742-1060

January 26, 1996

Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.
1000 Wilson Boulevard, Suite
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear Admiral:

Yesterday I received a letter from General Vinh Loc in which he thanked me for inviting him to participate in our symposium(!) and indicated that he would like to join the panel discussion planned for you, General Giap and General Westmoreland.

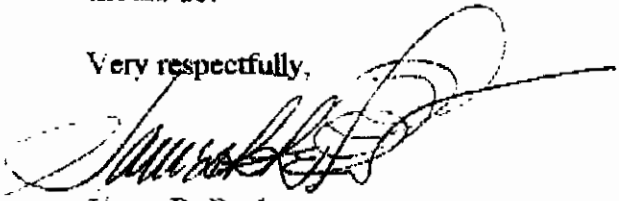
Thus far, I have sent but one letter to General Vinh Loc. I broadly outlined the work of the Center and very carefully avoided inviting him to the symposium, because of the complications that might arise should he appear on the agenda. I forward a copy of my letter to him of 21 November 1995 and his letter of January 19, 1996, with his enclosed comments about General Giap.

I believe it would be imprudent for us to expand the panel to include General Vinh Loc for at least two reasons: First, his presence on the panel might dash any chance that there will be a senior PAVN officer on it. And secondly, --although perfectly understandable given the painful South Vietnamese experience-- I am uncertain whether General Vinh Loc could conduct a meaningful discussion with General Giap. I draw this conclusion mainly from the tenor of his remarks about General Giap in his letter and the enclosed biographical comments, but also from the deep emotion that he expressed when he spoke at the conference on Mr. McNamara's book in Washington in November.

For the above reasons, I propose to deny his request as gracefully as possible, and at the same time to leave open the possibility that he might attend the symposium and be in the audience, from which position he might raise any points he wishes to make.

As this is an issue of considerable sensitivity, I will await a response from you before taking any action concerning the general. Please let me know what you think I should do.

Very respectfully,



James R. Reckner
Director

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

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Box 41013 / Lubbock, Texas 79409-1013 / (806) 742-3742, 742-3744 / Fax: (806) 742-1060

November 21, 1995

General Vinh Loc
Vietnam War Aftermath Study Project
13246 Carvel Drive
Houston, TX 77083

Dear General:

It was a great pleasure and honor to meet you at the recent McNamara conference at the Army & Navy Club. I am taking the liberty at this point to provide you with some further information about us and what we are attempting to do.

By way of personal introduction, I will say that I am a retired naval officer of no particular achievement while in the service, other than having served two tours as a senior advisor to South Vietnamese river forces. I retired in 1978, and now am an associate professor of history specializing in American military history.

We began our Vietnam project here at Texas Tech in the summer of 1989, when a group of Vietnam veterans from the community met at the university to discuss just what we might do. Some of the men suggested establishing a memorial, as has been done in so many communities around the nation. However, we determined that a more constructive course might be to establish an archive to preserve the record of the American experience in Vietnam in order that future generations might have some key to understanding what we did there.

It didn't take us long to discover that there is a tremendous amount of material out there in need of preservation, and, further, that there is a mountain of material available on microfilm/microform from commercial and other sources. One of our pressing needs to further the project was money (as it always is), and so we decided we needed an organization to raise the money to make the archive grow. With this in mind, we approached the university's Board of Regents in November 1989, and they unanimously established the Center for the Study of the Vietnam Conflict, with missions to guide and assist the growth of the Vietnam Archive, to encourage continuing study of all aspects of the American Vietnam experience, and to teach high school teachers how to teach Vietnam.

At this point I approached Admiral Zumwalt for assistance, and I am pleased to say that from the beginning of our work, the Admiral has been our strongest and most consistent supporter. In fact, I am quite certain that without his continuing assistance we would never have enjoyed the success that we have so far achieved. Admiral Zumwalt continues to be chairman of our National Council and chief supporter of our effort.

VIETNAM CENTER NATIONAL COUNCIL

Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr., USN (RET), Chairman
General William C. Westmoreland, Hon. William E. Colby
Hon. William P. Bundy, Hon. Bui Diem, Professor Douglas Pike

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ARCHIVE OF THE VIETNAM CONFLICT

Texas Tech Library
Lubbock, Texas 79409-0002 (806) 742-3758
Fax: (806) 742-1920

General Vinh Loc

Since 1989, our archival holdings have grown considerably, most notably with acquisition of the 1,000,000 plus original documents of the Douglas Pike collection, which had been housed at the University of California (Berkeley). A great many of these are captured VC documents. We also have long runs of many Saigon newspapers, as well as *Nhan Dan* and *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*. We now have over 100 smaller collections donated by Vietnam veterans from all over the country. Some are spectacular, such as an extensive collection relating to the My Lai incident, donated by a former U.S. Army JAG officer who defended a number of the enlisted men. Others are as small as sets of personal letters, home, photos, etc.

Within the last month, we have accepted custody of approximately 70 linear feet of documents relating to the National Coalition of Vietnam Veterans and a smaller collection donated by the Honorable J. Eldon Yates, relating to the founding of the Vietnam Veterans Institute. These will constitute what I hope will grow into a critical mass of research materials relating to Vietnam veterans, which will be of great importance to future generations of researchers seeking to understand our collective experience. We have a tentative promise of an extensive collection relating to POW/MIA affairs, and within the last week have learned that a foundation in Dallas has granted us nearly \$52,000 for microfilm purchases.

At present, our microfilm holdings are relatively limited, though we have spent nearly \$30,000 in that area already. We now possess the historical records of MACV, the national security files of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, records of the U.S. Army in Vietnam, historical files of NavForV, SEAJ. Team unit histories, and records relating to the media and public opinion. With the new grant we will purchase microfilm copies of approximately 40,000 monographs on Indochina, the originals of which are housed in the Echols Collection of Cornell University. We also will acquire the records of the U.S. Marine Corps in Vietnam and about \$8,000 of State Department confidential correspondence relating to Indochina.

The remarkable thing is that we need an additional \$200,000 just to complete the microfilm research collections! At the same time, the Library is beginning an effort to collect a complete hard-copy set of everything that has been published relating to Vietnam, to be held in the archive (as opposed to the general shelves of the library, where they are subject to damage and loss at the hands of students). We have allocated \$10,000 to begin this project this year, and have an additional \$16,000 set aside for acquisitions during this fiscal year.

Paralleling this acquisition program, the university currently is building an \$8.8 million archive building. Originally planned to house the university's extensive Southwest Collection, plans have been drawn specifically to accommodate the Vietnam Archive, which has become the university's most rapidly growing collection. Privately, I believe the Vietnam collection will overwhelm the Southwest collection in the years ahead, but I am not advertising that, as the "powers-that-be" here in west Texas hold the Southwest

General Vinh Loc

collection in high esteem. I will let the realization of what is actually happening dawn on them slowly.

Another of our missions is the encouragement of study and research into all aspects of the American Vietnam experience. Carrying out this mission has involved a number of measures. Texas Tech now offers undergraduate and graduate courses on the Vietnam war. These classes are consistently oversubscribed. We simply cannot meet the student demand. In fact, in order to discourage the casual students, we have rescheduled all Vietnam courses to 8:00 a.m., and they are still oversubscribed. Our younger generation truly wants to learn about Vietnam; American universities have been slow to offer them the opportunity. (I suspect that might have something to do with what today's senior professors were doing during the 1960s.)

One result of these courses is that we now have a very active graduate program in Vietnam studies. There are currently ten students working toward either theses or dissertations in various aspects of America in Vietnam. And as of this semester, the university has hired a tenure-track Vietnam specialist (Vietnam as Asian history) who is fluent in Vietnamese, and who can provide the students with a depth of knowledge of Vietnamese history that is generally lacking in Vietnam war courses.

Our symposium and conference program is another facet of the mission to encourage new research. We are now in the late stages of planning for our 1996 Vietnam symposium, which will begin on the evening of Wednesday 17 April 1996 and will run through to the evening of Saturday 20 April. Doubtless you have received a copy of our September newsletter which provides a rough outline of that symposium. Since September the program has grown remarkably. We now have 79 papers scheduled for presentation, in addition to five individual speakers and two celebrity panels. I will enclose a copy of the agenda as it now stands.

The principal decisions concerning the Center and its functions are made by a Vietnam Center Advisory Board, which is comprised of Vietnam veterans from the community. Ranging in former rank from private to lieutenant general, the board members have a couple of things in common: they have been reasonably successful in life, and they are dedicated to the program. In fact, many of the current board members were present for our first discussions in the summer of 1989, and haven't missed a board meeting since then. The current president of the board is Brigadier General A. R. Brownfield, USA (Ret). The lieutenant general is Bernhard T. Mittemeyer, a former surgeon general of the Army.

We also have a number of very active supporters who don't live in Lubbock, but nevertheless, use their former military connections to further the cause. A good example is Colonel Joe Potter, USAF (Ret), who lives in Colorado Springs and has done marvellous work for us. Through his connections he has managed to get us copies of all of the Air Force POW debriefings. And he has greatly facilitated our purchase of the Air Force's CHECO reports. (We currently have an order with the USAF for all 209 of the reports that

General Vinh Loc

have been declassified. About fifty remain to be declassified and we have standing orders for those whenever they are cleared.)

We continue major funding efforts. Money, of course, is the limiting factor in our growth and development, and also in the scope of the programs that we can offer. Additionally, we have managed, thanks to help from vets in the community with political connections, to get a special line item in the state budget for this biennium. It has provided the funds necessary for the 1996 Vietnam symposium as well as money to hire a full time Vietnam archivist and a number of other things.

Our goal at this point is quite simple: we want the Center for the Study of the Vietnam Conflict at Texas Tech to become the premiere archive and study center for all aspects of the American Vietnam experience. We are well along the way to achieving that goal, and we intend to continue pushing until we achieve it. And I know Admiral Zumwalt will continue to support us in that effort.

For those of us who have been involved, it has been tremendously rewarding. We are doing something totally positive about our Vietnam experience. In the process, we are creating a Vietnam memorial that will be alive and vibrant long after all of us who served there will have passed from the scene.

I will take the liberty, General, of placing your name on our mailing list for future brochures and newsletters relating to our project. I would be interested, too, to discuss any ways the Vietnam Center at Texas Tech might interact with VNWASP.

Very respectfully,

James R. Reckner
Director

encl: Newspaper offprints
Revised Symposium Agenda

VNWASP
Vietnam War Aftermath Study Project
Voice (713) 293-9656 Fax (409) 763-7943

Gen. Vinh Loo (AVN, NCI)

3218 Headquarters Drive Houston Texas 77082

January 19, 1996

Dr. James R. Reckner, Director
Center for the Study of the Vietnam Conflict
Texas Technical University
Box 41013
Lubbock, Texas 77409-1036

Dear Dr. Reckner:

Thank you for your interest in VNWASP and your kind invitation to the Symposium, *After the Cold War: Reassessing Vietnam*. We at VNWASP are delighted with the agenda of the Symposium.

As you well know, the Vietnam War has engendered a rich literature, consisting of anecdotes, stories, studies, analyses and seminars... Having participated in the recent McNamara book conference in Washington, D.C., last November, I believe your event promises to provide a markedly different perspective. It is of particular interest to us in two ways.

First, it is apparent from the agenda that considerable thought has been put into the conceptualization and planning of the event. Not only is the collection of topics comprehensive and exhaustive, each one by itself promises to be extremely interesting and thought-provoking. Examples of topics that caught my attention include John del Vecchio's scheduled talk, *The Importance of Story*, Peter Rollins' *Teaching Vietnam with Film*, and Sedgwick Tourison's *Let's Sell the Bones*. Many of the topics should contribute further military, political, academic, historical and social insight to our understanding of the War. I also find your sincere attempts to incorporate self-reflective and self-critical perspectives both refreshing and beneficial.

The war in Vietnam, like the country itself, has long been misunderstood. Generally observers were unable to put aside their personal cultural concepts and perceived historical events in a more or less distorted manner. Thus, for want of an adequate understanding of Vietnam, its culture, people and military, the credibility of an exclusive "American" account of history is severely hindered. I am very pleased to see that a few Indochinese participants (for example, Bui Diem, Nguyen Ba Cung and Vang Pao) are scheduled to speak at the symposium.

Secondly, no conference has yet been successful in getting the participation of a former enemy high-ranking officer in expressing North Vietnamese viewpoints on important facts of the war. I understand that Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap's involvement is still tentative, but the prospect of his participation in the symposium is very exciting indeed. I am glad to have produced a brief essay about Giap, which I furnished to Professor Cecil B. Currey, Chair of the History Department, University of South Florida, during the two years (1991-92) that I worked closely with him prior to the publication of his book — a carefully researched biography of the Commander of the North Vietnamese Army, from the time of his youth in Hue, in particular at the Quoc-hoc College in Central Vietnam.

My interest in Giap dates as far back as in 1945, when I witnessed his first appearance as Chief of Armed Propaganda Units. Afterwards, I saw his rise to Minister of the Interior in the Revolutionary

Government, then to Chairman of Armed Forces Counsel in 1946. As Commander of the Intervention Task Force for the 2nd Division in Tonkin, I closely followed his operations in North Vietnam from 1952 to 1954. After the Geneva Agreement, I held the Army Corps Command of the Central Highlands and faced his tentative ambition of cutting across South Vietnam in 1965.

Our acquaintance spans a long period in history. In fact, we met many times before 1947. I think no senior US Army officer can claim this experience. I feel strongly about providing an authentic balance to General Vo Nguyen Giap's presence: the panel slot designated on your draft agenda for "a senior army officer" to join Admiral Zumwalt and General Giap on the panel should be filled rather by two senior army officers — one of the ARVN and one US veteran of the Vietnam War (I take the liberty to suggest Gen. Fred Weyand, Theodore Mathaxis, or Davison.)

As Douglas Pike mentioned several years ago, General Giap is quite astute in realizing that no US or Western general could curtail his temptation to present himself as a "Napoleon of Asia" larger than life. As I have observed Gen. Giap throughout the Vietnam War, in particular in my capacities as President of the National Defense College, Army Chief of Staff, Chief of the Military Delegation at the Paris Peace Talks, and at present a founding member of VNWASP, I believe my presence on the panel will, in a sense, provide a reason for Gen. Giap to be more cautious in making unqualified or pretentious statements before an American audience. It will serve as a safeguard against inaccurate presentation or subtle omission of pertinent facts and details. In the interest of history, it is my hope that a thorough and well-rounded presentation of past events — one that is fair and acceptable to all — will emerge from the discussion. My presence on the panel will not be an occasion for confrontation but will be destined for fair and courteous discussion.

Furthermore, despite the passage of more than twenty years, we still hope to see Gen. Giap, with his fame as a former commander of the North Vietnamese Army, take a leading role in the area of political and social reforms, in hope of cooperating effectively with the world community of nations. The discussions, therefore, have the potential of extending beyond a meaningful historical endeavor and may progress as a forum for the observance of human rights for the immediate and near future in Gen. Giap's country. Believing as he did in the ideals of his struggle, General Giap must have strong feelings regarding the true well-being of the Vietnamese people. With best wishes for the success of your symposium and with warm regards,

Sincerely,

Vinh Loc

(derived from 1991 correspondence with Professor Cecil B. Currey, History Department Chair, University of South Florida)

First and foremost, I wish to tell you that my position is not only as an observer of Vo Nguyen Giap, of his activities political as well as military, but mainly as an army officer on the side opposing Giap. I watched him with vigilance during the crucial years pending a change in tactics of the 1952-54 Tonkin campaign, during 1965-69 in the Highlands, and finally as Chief of Military Delegation during 1969-1973 for Paris Peace Talks. Alas, I belong to the South that had "lost" the war, a dreadful and widely misunderstood war, towards which the American public harbored a one-way hostile opinion, an unfair judgment, and ultimately, an attitude leading to a disastrous, fatal outcome.

My remarks are sincere and perhaps painfully honest towards Giap, who considers himself the "vanquisher of the Colonialist French and the Imperialist American." I find this sense of entitlement and self-importance outrageous and my commentaries on his role reflect this. Just after Dienbien Phu, our Commanding Officers tried to analyze and uncover the real personality of Giap, to examine his zealous conduct during the war, in almost the same manner that Montgomery of Alamein reflected upon the large portrait of the amazing "Desert Fox" under his tent in Africa. However, they never touched upon the fundamental elements of Giap's military genius; they could not see beyond Giap's self-endorsement for he was "ruthlessly ambitious with a touch of vanity suggesting to interviewers from that he should be considered an Asian Napoleon."

Let there be no misunderstanding: I do not deny Giap his prominent place during the four decades in Vietnam history following World War II. Beyond the arrogance and self-aggrandizement, Vo Nguyen Giap--after all--was a devoted revolutionary, a forceful opponent of the colonialist regime,

an unbridled student in Hue, a solid and colorful teacher of history in Hanoi, an influential lieutenant of Ho Chi Minh, a loyal and harsh Minister of Interior, a dogmatic and energetic member of the Communist Party, and a humble disciple of Mao's writings.

However, not for a single moment during his 35 years of activities--from 1941 to the collapse of Saigon in 1975--did Giap truly embody the characteristics of a genuine General as clearly set forth by the Classical Asian Military school of thought: An Army General must necessarily be Humane (Nhan), Clever (Tri) and Brave (Dung). The degree that Giap possessed the last quality of bravery was the extent to which he lacked the first and second traits.

Giap certainly lacked a sense of humanity. He was a sanguine activist who was eager to kill the opponents from the non-communist parties in the first phase with savage liquidation techniques (the record numbers easily reached 10,000). He did not hesitate to execute the poor countrymen who were reticent to collaborate with guerrilleros groups in the second phase. How humane and kind could he have been in order to violate the truce at Tet--the festival and holiday for Family and Ancestors? Furthermore, he unabashedly and fanatically refused to receive the PAVN prisoners of war who had been held for years in the South following the Peace Conference. He flatly denied the presence of Hanoi troops south of the Parallele--the very soldiers who committed their allegiance to his leadership. Would Napoleon have done the same, disavowed the engagement of French fighting divisions in Marengo, in Austerlitz, in Wagram, in Spain, or even in Russia?

With regards to cleverness, Giap also failed to acquire this quality. His sectarian myopia produced a clumsiness that was at the root of needless suffering: Giap was unable to materialize the results that neighboring Southeast Asian nations

enjoyed, where their people did to have to endure an endless war with innumerable, scandalous killings and sacrifices but instead devoted their resources and energies toward nation-building and prosperity. Sun Tzu, in a chapter of *Art of War*, said: Supreme excellence per se does not consist of fighting battles and conquering. Rather, what is more admirable to achieve is the breaking of enemy resistance without fighting.

In the West, the concept of an ideal general prescribes the combination of three "chariots of war": Leadership, Organization, and Strategy. Douglas Pike, in his book about Giap, rated him as a competent commander, although not a "brilliant" one, a good builder and administrator, and a gifted amateur in strategy.

Having met Giap and known him since 1945, having watched him at work at the top of the Northern Army through the different phases of the war, I am only truly able to accord him the following laurels:

(1) Giap possessed the ability to attract a young generation into war for more than 30 years. It was true that Giap built an effective army; however, it was possible only with unsavory training and political indoctrination. Furthermore, Giap benefited from the collective efforts of other insurgent patriots such as Nguyen Thai Hoc, Phan Dinh Phung, and Hoang Hoa Tham, all of whom set the stage for a hypnotic appeal to nationalism. With their rhetoric for national independence, these men encouraged the people to join the army without reserve, to respond to the sacred call to arms for the service of our Fatherland. This urging was the direct result of their collective endeavors and rested upon the back of ideology.

The mobilization of people was a function of this--not Giap's personality nor an invitation from him to the people.

(2) Giap was successful in conducting guerrilla warfare

with logistical support from far behind the front lines. But at what price? The guerrilla activists had the monopoly on barbaric terrorism and savage cruelty. They infiltrated at night, threatened and forced peasant families to perform various destructive acts, including murder. These tasks were executed with stealth, yet they were also conducted with reluctance for they went against the grain of the people's religious and moral convictions. Many people did not have options, lest they were willing to face death.

(3) Finally, Giap broke down the Dienbien Phu resistance and managed to force the French Expeditionary Corps's collapse. Anyone who advocated the elimination of the Dienbien Phu garrison knew that the camp, because of its improper location, did not obstruct the advances of Giap's forces towards Laos. In other words, the entire camp in the valley of Nam Hu failed to block anything; instead, it was the product of the faulty vision and overly optimistic imagination of the newcoming General Navarre. Additionally, any other PAVN commander would have been able to achieve the same result, given the support from the two top "voluntary" Chinese Generals Vi Quoc Thanh and La Quy Ba. It was their initiatives and decisions that drove the surprising and revolutionary use of Field and Anti-air Artillery which were well-hidden on the front slope of the surrounding hill mass.

As for the the debacle of Saigon, victory essentially was passed on a "silver tray" to the North as pressure from the Anti-War Movement in the U.S. could no longer be handled with minimal scrutiny. The American Congress played a part, as did the controversial "virtuoso" Henry Kissinger with his coarse duplicity.

I hope that my efforts help illuminate and contribute to the

depiction and portrayal of General Vo Nguyen Giap. Documentation and evidence from valuable witnesses can aid in the proper and authentic revelation of his character and capacity as commander. Let no reader misread or misinterpret my contribution to this historical endeavor regarding the "arch enemy" of my country, both parts North and South. With judicious consideration, we may accord him his rightful merits, even allow him to rest on his laurels. But never should we accept an inaccurate, "larger than life" image of this man.

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Vinh Loc (1991)