

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

**Texas Tech University  
Lubbock, TX 79409-1013  
Fax: (806) 742-1060**

**FAX COVER SHEET**

**Date:** April 24, 1995

**To:** Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.  
Fax: (703) 528-5795

**From:** James R. Reckner

**Subject:** Approach to Secretary McNamara

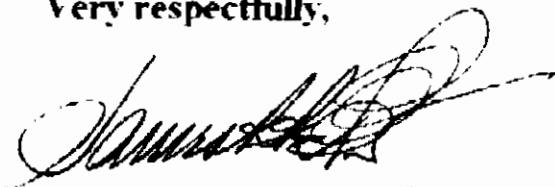
**Number of Pages (Including Cover Sheet):** 7

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**Dear Admiral:**

Thank you for agreeing to approach Secretary McNamara on our behalf. Attached is a rough draft of a letter for your consideration.

Very respectfully,



**James R. Reckner**

*I have analysed copies of General Rosen's letter and the Army WAR College's internal report of the conference. Underlining on the report was done by the Commandant, General Chulcoat*

**D - R - A - F - T**

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The purpose of this letter is to call your attention to the Center for the Study of the Vietnam Conflict at Texas Tech University and its ongoing program of Vietnam Conferences. I have chaired the Advisory Board for this Center since its inception in 1989, and have maintained close contact with it as it has grown in the last five years.

Directed by ~~retired naval officer~~ <sup>now</sup> an associate professor of history at Texas Tech, the Center has embarked upon a program of conferences which are designed specifically to encourage scholars and participants in the war to ask all of the hard questions and seek the truth, however difficult those truths might seem.

Most recently the Center, with the U.S. Army War College, cohosted a Vietnam Roundtable that reexamined Harry Summers' thesis and, I believe, began an important new dialogue about how the war was conducted. You would be most impressed with a paper presented by a former PRC naval officer who is now an academic in the United States. Using recently released Chinese materials, he outlined in great detail the Chinese reaction to the initial American involvement in South Vietnam, reporting Chinese troop strength in North Vietnam reached a peak of 170,000 in the late 1960s. And he confirmed the validity of American concerns over the possibility of direct Chinese intervention as in Korea had we taken more direct action against North Vietnam. So important were the papers presented at this roundtable, that Douglas Pike has volunteered to write the introduction for the soon-to-be-published proceedings

For the past year the Center has been planning a major Vietnam symposium for 18-20 April 1996. Among the speakers already committed to participate are Dr. Walt Rostow, Ambassador William Colby, Ambassador Bui Diem, Douglas Pike and <sup>(me)</sup> (myself). And I have hand-delivered an invitation to General Vo Nguyen Giap to attend. I firmly believe

*who has indicated a  
personal interest*

that if his health holds out and full diplomatic recognition is extended to Vietnam, he will agree to participate

The conference planners have already lined up many of the leading American historians of the war. A Russian academic from the Academy of Sciences in Moscow is committed to present a paper on the Soviet contribution to the North Vietnamese effort. A special panel will examine Laos. And Dr. Hoyt Purvis, Director of the Fulbright International Program, is seeking Vietnamese scholars to attend and participate in the conference.

I am aware that you have publicly indicated your desire to use some of the royalties from your book, *In Retrospect*, to host a conference on Vietnam. Might I suggest that the Center for the Study of the Vietnam Conflict's forthcoming conference, entitled, *After the Cold War: Reassessing Vietnam*, might be the ideal vehicle for your support? In Texas Tech University we have an already established and smoothly functioning conference organization specifically dedicated to examining all aspects of Vietnam. It has already won the respect of the academic community through its earlier efforts. Therefore, I would like to invite you to support this conference and to take an active role in the proceedings, either by joining the panel already comprised of Dr. Rostow, Ambassador Colby and Ambassador Hui Diem, or by offering a separate presentation should you so desire

By supporting the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech you will not only meet your own goals of sponsoring a Vietnam Conference, but also you will be providing an important boost to an organization that has worked for over five years without official funding to preserve the record of the American experience and at the same time to encourage the younger generation of Americans to examine that record and draw from it conclusions important for America's future. There can be no more important goal for those of us who were in so many ways touched by the Vietnam experience

12 April 1995

Dr. James R. Reckner  
Director, Center for the Study  
of the Vietnam Conflict  
Texas Tech University  
Lubbock, TX 79409-1013

Dear Jim:

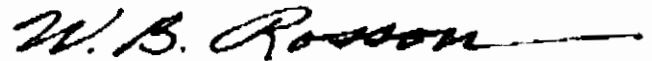
This letter brings to you my undisguised compliments on the stamp of excellence that marked the Texas Tech/US Army War College 1995 Vietnam Roundtable. I consider myself privileged to have been invited to participate, and I welcome this opportunity to say that I benefitted richly from the presentations and discussion.

No undertaking of this kind can succeed without strong leadership -- leadership characterized by vision, organizational ability, sound planning, thoroughgoing preparation, careful coordination and effective implementation. In the realm of organization, a key requirement resides in selection of those to be entrusted with responsibility for presentations. On all of these counts, I consider your leadership to have measured up to the highest standards. More than that, you have my salute for it.

Apropos your request for a finalized copy of my presentation, I have yet to redo the paper I revised while in Lubbock, but I intend to do so as soon as possible. The copy you desire will be mailed promptly when available.

Every good wish, Jim, and thank you both for having enabled me to participate in the Roundtable and for the courtesies you extended to me.

Sincerely,



2 Encls: Data pertaining to  
air travel.

W. B. Rosson  
General, USA, Ret.



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
UNITED STATES ARMY WAR COLLEGE  
CARLISLE BARRACKS PENNSYLVANIA 17013-5050



REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OSSI/Dr. Tilford

April 3, 1995

Dr. James R. Reckner  
Center for the Study  
of the Vietnam Conflict  
Box 41013  
Lubbock, Texas 79409-1013

Dear Jim:

The Army War College-Texas Tech Vietnam Roundtable, "The Summers Thesis: Twenty Years After the Fall of Saigon," exceeded my grandest expectations. Its excellence resulted from your hard work and effort. It is rare that scholars of such note as those who gathered at Texas Tech last week, can join with actual participants in the events to obtain the kind of intellectual synergies we achieved.

Enclosed you will find a revised edition of my paper along with the Wordperfect disc. I think the program is Wordperfect 5.2. I hope this will suffice.

The Strategic Studies Institute values its close relationship with Texas Tech University. I am sure we will be working together again.

My regards to all.

Sincerely,

Earl H. Tilford, Jr., Ph.D.  
Director of Studies  
Strategic Studies Institute

AWCI

April 4, 1995

MEMORANDUM THRU

DIRECTOR, SSI *June 4 April 95*DEPUTY COMMANDANT *Good*FOR COMMANDANT *@*

SUBJECT: Trip Report, SSI/Texas Tech "Summers Thesis Conference"

1. The Strategic Studies Institute and The Center for the Study of the Vietnam Conflict at Texas Tech University co-sponsored a conference examining Harry Summers's thesis twenty years after the fall of Saigon. The Conference took place at the Sheraton Inn in Lubbock, Texas, March 30-April 1, 1995. Approximately 100 scholars, retired military officers, and other officials attended. Attendees and participants included a former head of state (Gen. Nguyen Khanh, Premier of the Republic of Vietnam, 1964-65), Ambassador Bui Diem (South Vietnam's ambassador to the United States during the Nixon administration), General William Rosson (former Deputy Commander, MACV), and Professor Douglas Pike, perhaps this nation's leading scholar on the Viet Cong and People's Army of Vietnam. Colonel Summers had to cancel at the last minute because of unanticipated surgery.

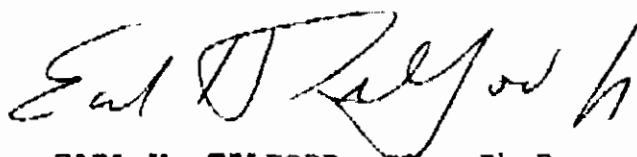
2. Harry Summers wrote his book, On Strategy, while serving at the Army War College and the Strategic Studies Institute. Since publication, the "Summers thesis" has held a controversial but important place in Vietnam historiography. It is also important in the intellectual history of the post-Vietnam War American military, especially the Army. Colonel Summers legitimized criticism by serving officers of the way the Vietnam War was conducted. This was part of the intellectual revival of the Army that fostered its physical regeneration, ultimately providing the climate for leaders like General Sullivan to emerge. More importantly, intellectual curiosity and institutional honesty helped reform the Army into the potent force that served the nation so well in the Persian Gulf, and has provided the institutional foundations for Force XXI. Because of Harry Summers, we are better able to understand that war is, before it is anything else, first and foremost an intellectual endeavor.

3. A total of eight papers and two luncheon addresses were given. I have attached copies of three papers and the outline for Premier Khanh's address. I especially draw your attention to Professor Xiaoming Zhang's paper. Dr. Zhang served in the People's Liberation Army, Navy as a AAA specialist and advisor to the PAVN during the Vietnam War. He recently earned his Ph.D. in International Affairs at the University of Iowa and is pursuing American citizenship. His paper documents a far higher degree of

PRC involvement in North Vietnam than was previously known. My paper, "On Winning and Losing: A Post Neo-Revisionist Perspective," concluded the conference. Professor James Reckner of Texas Tech will edit an anthology to be published by Texas Tech University Press.

4. We brought together the very best scholars in the field for this program. Texas Tech has undertaken a major effort to become the center for the study of the Vietnam conflict and for Indochinese history generally. William Colby and Admiral Elmo Zumwalt are notable among those who have already consigned their professional papers to the archive at the Center for the Study of the Vietnam War. Next month General Westmoreland will be asking H. Ross Perot for \$5 million to establish an H. Ross Perot Chair at the Center. Funding in excess of \$8 million has already been obtained for the Center.

5. The Center resulted from the efforts of Dr. James Reckner. He was hired at Tech as an assistant professor in 1988. Reckner, a Vietnam veteran, is a retired Navy commander with a Ph.D. in naval history from the University of Auckland. The Center has resulted largely through his innovative and imaginative efforts. Ground was broken for the new Center last year. When completed it will house the Douglas Pike Collection, currently being transferred from Berkeley to Texas Tech. The Army War College should endeavor to work closely with Texas Tech in the coming years. The university has the kind of innovative spirit we are trying to capture in the Fourth Army War College and in Force XXI.



EARL H. TILFORD, JR., Ph.D.  
Director of Research  
Strategic Studies Institute

Attachments: Conference Program  
Papers/talk outline (4)