



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Vietnam Center and Archive

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Spring 2010 Vol. 17 No. 1

2010 Conference on Counterinsurgency from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan



Conference speakers left to right: Bing West, Richard Hunt, Ed Miller, Rufus Philips, and Marc Gilbert.

Stephen F. Maxner, Ph.D.

Director

This year's Vietnam Center Conference proved to be a significant departure from our past conference events. We were very fortunate this year as we were able to successfully co-host our conference with the Johns Hopkins University Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, D.C. This is the first time we hosted our annual conference in a location other than Lubbock, Texas. This was also the first time we were able to devote a confer-

ence to a discussion of the Vietnam War within the broader context of contemporary conflicts and address whether or not it is possible to learn lessons from Vietnam that might be applicable to current foreign policy challenges. The event was a significant success on a number of different levels.

Our overall success was due, as always, to the hard work and dedication of the staff at the Vietnam Center and Archive. We had six staff travel to the event to support and represent the Vietnam Center and Archive to the nearly 200 participants over the two days of the conference. In addition to their

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50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War



Stephen F. Maxner, Ph.D.

Director
The Vietnam Center and Archive

As surprising as it might seem, we are now within the timeframe that marks the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War. Of course, this greatly depends on when one dates the beginning of US involvement in Vietnam and Southeast Asia as part of a contiguous and defined foreign policy that culminated in war.

Even though the United States was engaged in operations in Vietnam during World War II and the French Indochina War, we might consider that 1960 really marks a turning point in terms of US involvement in Vietnam. Although President Eisenhower continued the Truman administration's policy of endorsing and supporting French colonialism in Vietnam and Indochina, the Eisenhower administration also proved very reluctant to expand that support and was rather conservative regarding US involvement in Vietnam, even in the midst of the French defeat in 1954. While the US did subsequently support the creation of the "Two Vietnams" and lent support to the emerging Republic of Vietnam, this did not translate into any significant US military involvement and President Eisenhower always kept the number of US military advisors serving in Vietnam to fewer than 1,000.

The change in US leadership with the election of President John Kennedy in 1960 marked a significant shift in both the US commitment to the Republic of Vietnam and US military involvement in Vietnam. Within two years, President

Kennedy implemented a sixteen fold increase in the size of the US military commitment with 16,000 US military advisors and Special Forces teams serving there in 1963. In addition, the Kennedy administration increased economic and materiel assistance to Vietnam. Of course scholars still debate whether or not President Kennedy would have continued those levels of involvement had he not been killed and whether or not he was seriously considering a complete withdrawal of US military advisors from Vietnam. We will never know with certainty one way or the other, but the fact remains that President Kennedy's election and subsequent policies in Vietnam escalated US involvement there and this trend continued for nearly a decade.

I am now raising these issues and questions because, during the next fifteen years, we will be in the midst of some important historical anniversaries regarding US involvement in Vietnam.

Essentially, the 50th anniversary of every significant decision and event – from the decision to escalate US involvement under President Kennedy, to the Gulf of Tonkin Incidents and Resolutions, to the Tet Offensives and all the way to the withdrawal of US forces and the defeat of the Republic of Vietnam. Granted, the 50th anniversaries of some very important events have already passed us – to include the anniversary of the first US combat casualties which occurred last year in July 2009. All of this is of particular importance, not only as it marks a half century since these events occurred and how they remain an important part of our history and national identity, but also the US government is taking notice of these events as well.

The Vietnam Center and Archive recently became a proud partner with The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration. This federal organization was officially established by the US Congress in 2008 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War and is a part of the Department of

Defense. Their missions are "to thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war or listed as missing in action, for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans; to highlight the service of the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of Federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the Armed Forces; to pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War; to highlight the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War; and to recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War."

In order to accomplish this, the Vietnam War Commemoration staff and partners will be planning and supporting commemorative events from now until 2025. This will include national level and community based events.

As an official partner of the commemoration, the Vietnam Center and Archive will play several roles. We will work with the staff and other partners to provide historical information and materials, promote commemorative activities, and will highlight the work of the program at Vietnam Center and Archive events. This will include participation at our Seventh Triennial Vietnam Symposium scheduled in March, 2011 (please see the call for papers in this newsletter).

We look forward to working with the commemoration staff in further recognizing and honoring the service and sacrifice of our nation's Vietnam Veterans and in honoring Americans who were active on the home front. Please be sure to watch closely in our future newsletters and on our website for additional information about the Vietnam War Commemoration program and our commemorative events. ★

The Seventh Triennial Vietnam Symposium Call for Papers

March 10-12, 2011
Overton Hotel and Conference Center
Lubbock, Texas

The Seventh Triennial Vietnam Symposium will take place on March 10-12, 2011, and will be held at the brand new Overton Hotel and Convention Center in Lubbock, Texas.

Vietnam Center symposia are open to presentations that examine any and all aspects of the United States involvement in Southeast Asia. This includes activities before, during, and after the war in Vietnam. Papers can examine any aspect of the experience to include early interac-

tion and diplomacy, activities in theater during the war, the international dimensions of the war for all sides involved, activities in the US and elsewhere in support of or in opposition to the war, post-war issues, etc.

We encourage anyone interested in presenting a paper to submit a one page proposal and a short CV for consideration. As always, graduate students are highly encouraged to submit proposals. Please format proposals to resemble an abstract to include the author's name, title/affiliation, and contact information, along with proposed title, thesis/purpose, and main points. Please limit

proposal length to a single page and submit them electronically to:

VietnamCenterConference@ttu.edu.

If you make an email submission but do not receive notification of receipt within seven days, please call 806-742-3742 and ask for Steve Maxner, Ph.D., Director, Vietnam Center and Archive.

The deadline for submitting proposals is October 15, 2010.

Thank you and we look forward to you joining us for this event. ★

- Leave a Legacy - *Information on Planned Giving*

The Vietnam Center and Archive would not exist without your generous support. Your future support of our project will enable us to continue our important work for many years to come.

A Charitable Bequest is among the simplest and most effective giving tools you can use to further the mission of the Vietnam Center and Archive. With a Charitable Bequest, you may leave a portion of your estate to the Vietnam Center and Archive in your will. This could result in significant tax savings for your estate and for your beneficiaries in the future. Please consult your financial advisor or attorney for information specific to your individual situation. The letter on this page (right) provides you with the appropriate language to include in your will should you wish to bequest money or property to the Vietnam Center and Archive. A copy of this letter can be found at the link below.

If you have benefited from our resources in the past or would like to enable us to continue preserving and promoting the history of the Vietnam War, please consider designating a charitable bequest to us in your will. For more information, please visit www.vietnam.ttu.edu/donors/monetary.htm ★



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For questions, please contact:

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Top left: Dr. Larry Berman, Political Science Professor at University of California, Davis. Top right: Dr. Ron Milam, History Professor at Texas Tech.



Bottom right: Michael Vickers, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities



Top left: Bing West. Bottom left: Audience member Thomas Ahern asks a question.

“ While this conference could not answer all of the questions or draw out every possible lesson from Vietnam that might be important for today’s policies and operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere, we believe it to be an excellent contribution to this ongoing national discussion. ”



Top right: A veteran in the audience asks a question. Bottom right: Dr. Ed Miller, Dartmouth College.

LEARNING LESSONS FROM VIETNAM: COUNTERINSURGENCY FROM VIETNAM TO IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Conference continued from page one

many contributions, though, were added the tremendous assistance and work of the staff at SAIS and our incredible co-hosts to include William Wise and Fred Brown. Bill Wise organized the panels which discussed the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. He also arranged to have Assistant Secretary of Defense, Mike Vickers, as our opening speaker. Secretary Vickers’ comments helped to set the stage for our discussion over the two days and how relevant the conference was regarding DOD policy for low intensity conflict and counterinsurgency. Fred Brown was instrumental in helping us to refine the conference topic as we shifted from an initial focus on civil-military operations to a more inclusive discussion of US counterinsurgency policy, past and present.

The slate of speakers was equally remarkable and is the real reason the conference was such a success. The first day of discussions focused on counterinsurgency policy and civil-military operations during the Vietnam War and included a good mix of scholars and researchers as well as military and civilian veterans and practitioners. The speakers discussed a number of important issues to include

the effect of the focus on conventional military operations, the challenges in rural security and pacification, the impact of focused operations like the Phoenix program, and the political and social situation in Vietnam and the United States and their effects on wartime policies and operations. Also discussed were the long-term postwar effects in the US and Vietnam and what the current administration might want to consider from Vietnam when looking at Afghanistan, in particular.

The second day of presentations focused on Iraq and Afghanistan and included a very positive balance of scholars and researchers, war correspondents, government and military officials, and veterans. The first set of speakers did an excellent job of framing questions and discussions about Iraq within the policy, operational, historical and regional con-

texts. They spoke specifically about the evolution of US and Allied policy and operations in Iraq, the local and national political situation there, and the impact of shifts in US and Allied policies, to include the overall effects of the surge, on security and stability in Iraq. While it was accepted that a lot of work remained, there was also recognition that recent policies, operations and tactical success had brought important improvements to the situation in Iraq while strategic success had remained more elusive and much remained to be done to keep Iraq stable and secure.

The panel discussion on Afghanistan accomplished many of the same things as the panel on Iraq and these speakers also did excellent work in placing current US policy within the broader contexts of Afghan history as well as local and regional issues. Some particularly

helpful discussion occurred in distinguishing Afghanistan from Iraq in that the insurgency in Afghanistan is not as fragmented, is far more rural than urban, is surrounded by other countries that provide sanctuary, and the lead insurgent group, the Taliban, is based on a decades old (or older) tradition dating back most recently to the Mujahedeen. As a result, US policy and operations have had to change dramatically from the fighting in Iraq. Also of interest, some of the conference speakers believed that the tribal nature of social and political life in Afghanistan has created unique challenges in that the tribal leaders must play a role in defeating the Taliban but the Taliban can only be truly defeated if neutral national institutions can be created, maintained, and accepted within Afghan politics and society – and by the tribal leaders as well. All the while,

many tribal leaders who work with the US and the Karzai government also work with the Taliban.

It was probably within the discussion of the ongoing insurgency in Afghanistan that a good number of rather striking parallels with the war and insurgency in South Vietnam became most apparent. While this conference could not answer all of the questions or draw out every possible lesson from Vietnam that might be important for today’s policies and operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere, we believe it to be an excellent contribution to this ongoing national discussion. *

Videos of all presentations from this conference can be viewed here:
www.vietnam.ttu.edu/2010sessions.htm

Photos can be viewed on our facebook page (no account required):
www.facebook.com/vietnamTTU

Update from the Oral History Project

Kelly Crager, Ph.D.

Head of the Oral History Project

The first quarter of 2010 has been a very busy and productive one for the Oral History Project at the Vietnam Archive. Since the beginning of the year we have conducted 32 interviews with American Vietnam veterans and others who experienced the war firsthand. The following is a list of the interviews we have completed lately and that are available on the Virtual Vietnam Archive:

OH0735 Raymond Jankowski discusses his experiences in Vietnam as an artillery officer. Jankowski served two tours in Vietnam. From 1965-1966, he served with the 1st/21st Field Artillery supporting the 1st Air Cavalry Division. During his second tour, 1968-1969, he served with the 3rd/319th Field Artillery supporting the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

OH0736 Robert Caron discusses his experiences as a rotary- and fixed-wing pilot in the U.S. Army in Vietnam. Caron also relates his experiences as a helicopter pilot with Air America in Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, including his role in the evacuation of Saigon in April 1975.

OH0737 Col. Pat Clifton (USAF, Ret.) discusses his experiences in Vietnam from September 1967 to September 1968. Clifton was officer in charge of a photographic interpretation section in Saigon, serving with 6470th RTC and 460th RTS of the 460th TRW.

OH0738 Col. Carl King (USA, Ret.) served as chaplain with the 23rd Field Artillery Group out of Phu Loi, 1969-1970. In this interview, Col. King discusses his time providing spiritual guidance to American soldiers, as well as his evolving spirituality.

OH0739 Robert Szul served in the Air



From the Pat Clifton Collection (Oral History #OH0737). Jet ink photo of aerial view of Saigon.

OH0740 Jerry Goller discusses his experiences in the U.S. Marine Corps in Vietnam, 1966-1968. Goller served as an infantryman with Kilo Company, 3/3 Marines, and later served in Combined Action Platoons Poppa 5 and Romeo 5 and 6. Goller also participated in the Battle for Cam Lo during the Tet Offensive of 1968.

OH0741 Dan Johnson discusses his experiences in Vietnam with the US Marine Corps, 1968-1969. Johnson served in Danang with the 1st Marine Air Wing Headquarters.

OH0742 John Faber served as an infantryman with A Company of 2/7 Cav from December of 1967 until January of 1968 when he was wounded by stepping in a punji pit.

OH0743 Chester Starke served as a Fire Direction Officer with the 5/4 Field Artillery at Quang Tri Combat Base from September of 1969 until March of 1970.

OH0744 Mike Kozakewich, a member of USMC 1st Force Reconnaissance Company, discusses his time in Vietnam from 1968-1969. Kozakewich served as intelligence chief, and later worked in counter-intelligence before returning to Parris Island and serving as a drill instructor.

OH0745 Charles Baker was a Birddog Pilot with the Army's 199th Recon Air Company in the Mekong Delta. Baker served in country with the 199th from July of 1967 until July of 1968 and experienced the Viet Cong attack on Vinh Long City during the Tet Offensive.

OH0746 Gordon Swenson served as an infantryman with D Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Cav of the 1st Cav Division. Swenson was in country from December of 1969 until June of 1970 when he was injured during the Cambodian incursion.

OH0747 Stephen Kobelas discusses his experiences as a Caribou pilot in Vietnam. Kobelas served with the 457th Tactical Airlift Squadron out of Cam Ranh Bay from June 1967 through June 1968.

OH0748 Earl Lewis discusses his experiences as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam from 1967-1969. Lewis served with the 155th, 189th, and 120th Assault Helicopter companies.

OH0749 Donald Pepe discusses his experiences as an O-1 Bird Dog pilot with the 220th Recon Aviation Company

in Vietnam. Pepe served in Vietnam from December 1967 to August 1969.

OH0750 Col. Kenneth Moll (USAF, Ret.) discusses his experiences with the 466th Tactical Recon Wing at Tan Son Nhut from 1965 through 1966. Noll was also a veteran of World War II and the Korean War, and served in Strategic Air Command from 1961 through 1965.

OH0751 Lee Waters served as a C-7A pilot in Vietnam from March of 1967 until March of 1968. He was a member of the 535th TAS and flew missions out of Vung Tau.

OH0752 Jim Ford discusses his experiences in Vietnam from 1969-1971. Ford served two tours of duty in Ban Me Thuot with E Company, 361st Signal Battalion, 1st Signal Brigade as a fixed station technical controller.

OH0753 Douglas Young served two tours as an infantry officer in Vietnam. During his first tour Young served as a lieutenant with B Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry, 199th Light Infantry Brigade in 1966. Young returned to Vietnam for a second tour of duty in 1969 and served as company commander of C Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry, 1st Cav Division. In addition to describing his experiences during these tours, Young also describes his experiences in returning to Vietnam in 2003.

OH0754 Billy Quinn discusses his experiences as a C-7 Caribou pilot in South Vietnam, 1968-1969. Quinn served with the 537th TAS in Phu Cat, and was involved in the resupply of Ben Het during a siege in 1969.

OH0755 Robert Garcia served with a number of units during his tour in Vietnam, 1966-1967. Originally assigned to the 101st Airborne, Garcia served on temporary duty with the 4th Infantry Division and with the 5th Special Forces.

OH0756 Roy Walton served as a scout and gunship pilot with C Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cav of the 1st Cavalry Division from 1967 to 1968.

OH0757 Kim Delevett is a Vietnamese American woman who came to the US as a baby just before the fall of Saigon. In 1994 she returned to Vietnam to reconnect with her past and discovered her long lost family.

OH0758 Dr. Vernon Wagner served as flight surgeon with the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing in Ubon, Thailand, in 1968 and later with the 327th Combat Support Group in Nha Trang, Vietnam in 1970.

OH0759 Gen. Michael Hagee (USMC,

Support Squadron in Vietnam from March 1967-March 1968. Jones also served as air liaison officer and supported the 101st Airborne Division during the Tet Offensive of 1968.

OH0762 Richard Barnett served as a pilot with Continental Air Service and transported men and material throughout Southeast Asia from 1965 to 1970.

OH0763 David Willson served as a stenographer and clerk with the Inspector General's Office in USARV headquarters in Saigon and later in Long Binh. He is the author of the books *In the Army Now*, *REMF Diary*, and *The REMF Returns*.

OH0764 Jerry Williams served as Marine with Battery B, 1st Battalion, 13th Marines as an artilleryman from March of 1967 until April of 1968. While in country, Williams participated in engagements at Con Thien and Khe Sanh.

OH0765 Christopher Hicks served two tours in Vietnam with the U.S. Navy, from 1968-1969 and 1969-1970. Hicks served aboard the USS Winston during his first tour, and returned to serve with a PBR support base as a radio operator out of Thui Nhon.

OH0766 Andrew Antippas is a Korean War veteran who served as a diplomat in the US Embassy in Saigon from February of 1968 until February of 1970. Antippas's responsibilities focused on monitoring border incidents between US forces and communist forces in Cambodia. In 1970, Antippas was transferred to the US Embassy in Cambodia where he monitored the progress of the war in the field from a political and economic perspective. *

We want to express gratitude to our Oral History participants. Without them, our efforts to help document the war in the words of those who were there would be impossible. If you would like to participate in an oral history interview, or if you know someone who may be interested, please contact us at 806-724-9010, or by email at vahoralhist@ttu.edu.



From the Dean Jones Collection (Oral History #OH0761). Top: Duc Pho - Ammo Dump Explosion. Bottom: Duc Pho - Awards Ceremony.



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The Vietnam Center and Archive has a facebook page, a news and updates page, and a listserv. For more information, please visit these links:

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