



## THE 2010 SACEI PERSON OF THE YEAR AWARD

The SACEI PERSON OF THE YEAR will be awarded each year, beginning in 2010, to the person who has shown throughout the years through his work or writing:

1. To have fought for Freedom and Human Rights in Vietnam,
2. or to have contributed to Vietnamese-American arts, culture, & education,
3. or to have greatly benefited the cause of the Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans.

The Award will be presented to the individual and/or organization at the SACEI Annual Meeting.

### 2010 SACEI PERSON OF THE YEAR (9-25-10)



Dr. Vincent Nguyen, SACEI member and President of the Vietnamese Medical Society of Northeast America, reading the citation about the SACEI MAN OF THE YEAR





Dr. Vincent Nguyen and Professor Robert F. Turner

## CITATION

He holds both professional and academic Doctorates from the University of Virginia School of Law. He co-founded the Center for National Security Law in April 1981 and has served as its associate director since then. A veteran of two Army tours in Vietnam, he served as a research associate and public affairs fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace before five years in the mid-1970's as national security adviser to Senator Griffin. He has also served in the executive branch as a member of the Senior Executive Service.

A former three-term chairman of the ABA Standing Committee on Law and National Security, he has taught undergraduate courses at Virginia on international law, U.S. foreign policy, the Vietnam War and foreign policy and the law.

The author or editor of more than fifteen books and monographs and numerous articles in law reviews and professional journals, he has also contributed articles to the major U.S. newspapers.

A former distinguished lecturer at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, he is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Academy of Political Science, and other professional organizations. He has been teaching seminars on the war for more than 20 years at UVA.

Please allow me to introduce to you:

The 2010 SACEI MAN OF THE YEAR

Professor Robert F. Turner



THE 2010 SACEI MAN OF THE YEAR

**DR. ROBERT TURNER**

In recognition of your Outstanding Contributions to Vietnamese  
Arts, Culture, and Fight for Human Rights





# THOUGHTS ABOUT VIETNAM

Professor ROBERT F. TURNER (Oct 9, 2010)

First, Liberal internationalist Democrats were at the forefront of the "Save South Vietnam" drive in the mid-1950s. Sen. John F. Kennedy gave a stirring speech to the American Friends of Vietnam in 1956 about how important it was to defend Free Vietnam. Hubert Humphrey and Mike Mansfield were similarly on board. They deserve credit for this.

By 1964, the American people and both political parties were united in the view that saving South Vietnam was the moral as well as the strategically wise thing for America to do. (The vote on the Southeast Asia Resolution authorizing the use of armed force to protect South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia was by a 99.6% majority of both houses of Congress.)

Then Hanoi and Moscow unleashed a brilliant political /psychological warfare campaign designed to convince Americans that the U.S. was on the wrong side in Vietnam -- blocking free elections, violating the 1954 Geneva Accords, propping up a dictator (Ngo Dinh Diem), and standing in the way of the NLF (which only wanted peace, freedom, and an end to foreign occupation).

Protests by truly clueless American students (most of whom could not have found Vietnam on a map if it was not identified by name, and many of whom clearly were far more worried about not getting drafted and perhaps shot at than they were about preserving "human rights" in Indochina -- witness the fact that the large protests ended as soon as the draft ended) led some members of Congress to turn against the war by 1966, and even more by the late 1960s. The VC often used statements by congressional war critics as part of their psywar campaign against American forces in Vietnam (see the attached leaflet).

I was personally very active in the student debates starting in 1965 until went on active duty as an Army lieutenant in 1969. I wrote a 450-page honors thesis defending the war. I first visited South Vietnam in 1968 as a journalist (more like a tourist with a press card), and immediately volunteered for duty in Vietnam the day I reported for duty. Because of my relative expertise on the war, although I had served (voluntarily) as an infantry recon platoon leader and qualified as an Expert Infantryman, the Army decided I was more useful to the war effort on detail to the American Embassy, and I served both of my Army tours as the (newly-created) "Assistant Special Projects Officer" in the North Vietnamese/Viet Cong Affairs Division of JUSPAO, part of the Embassy (with strategic PSYOPS responsibilities). (One reason for my assignment was that after Ho Chi Minh died on 3 Sept 69 I wrote a paper predicting that Le Duan would emerge as "first among equals" in the leadership struggle, and I explained why Truong Chinh--the pick of DIA and CIA-- would not.)





# N. Vietnam leader wants Red flag over all Indochina

(Editor's note: The writer is a reserve Army first lieutenant serving on active duty in Hawaii. Although his present duty does not pertain to Vietnam, he was a specialist in Vietnam studies in the honors program at the University of Indiana. He was graduated from there in 1968 and then spent some time in Vietnam as a free-lance correspondent. His opinions do not purport to represent the views of the Department of the Army.)

By ROBERT F. TURNER  
*Special to the Advertiser*

Before the death of Ho Chi Minh in early September of 1969, very little had been written in the United States about who his successor might be.

About the only thing that seemed certain was that no one would be allowed to take over the reins without a power struggle, which would likely involve the four or five leading contenders for power in Hanoi.

The Advertiser recently featured an article by a British journalist which quoted "highly placed sources in East Europe" as saying that Le Duan, the 62-year-old First Secretary of the North Vietnamese Worker's (Communist) Party, has emerged from a power struggle as the successor to the deceased President Ho.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that it is true, so it behooves us to take a close look at this man and see just who he is, where he stands, and perhaps something of what he is likely to do.

LIKE ALL OF THE CONTENDERS for power in Hanoi, Le Duan has been a member of the Indochinese Communist Party (Dang Lao Dong) since its creation by the Communist International in 1930. He was born in what is now South Vietnam during a time when all of Indochina was under French domination, and his anti-French activities earned him a 10-year jail term.

When Ho Chi Minh (following Comintern instructions) created the Viet Minh in May of 1941, Le Duan was present to play a full role. During the French-Viet Minh war, he became a major figure in Cochinchina (now the southern part of South Vietnam), and from 1949 until he was replaced by his rival, Le Duc Tho, in 1951, he was in charge of all Communist operations in that zone.

Le Duan was one of the many southern Viet Minh who opposed the ceasefire agreement negotiated by Premier Pham Van Dong at Geneva in 1954.

This opposition was predicated on the argument that had the Viet Minh refused to sign the accords and instead continued the war in the South, they might have won a complete military victory and gained control of all of Indochina (a goal the North Vietnamese Communists have had for many years).

AFTER THE 1954 CEASE-FIRE, and in direct violation of the cease-fire agreements which they had signed, the Viet Minh leaders instructed their supporters in the South to hide their weapons and await further instructions from the Party.

The Party was considering sending General Vo Nguyen Giap, the Defense Minister and Army Commander who had masterminded the Dien Bien Phu battle (as well as most other Viet Minh successes), to the South to reorganize the Viet Minh infrastructure for a fight against the Diem regime.

Le Duan opposed the choice of Giap, however, and argued that he, Le Duan, should be sent south instead, as he was a southerner, who knew the area and people far better than Giap. His arguments were accepted, and shortly thereafter he secretly went south and began what has been termed the "Viet Cong" movement (Viet Cong means "Vietnamese Communist").

IT WAS ABOUT THIS time that his first serious attempt at writing was published, as a booklet entitled: "The South Vietnam Revolutionary Path." In it, Le Duan claimed that it was necessary to continue the "national democratic revolution" in South Vietnam and to use force to overthrow the "imperialist" regime of Ngo Dinh Diem.

He remained in South Vietnam until 1958 when he returned North to report to the Party that the revolution was ready to proceed on order.

P. J. HONEY, A BRITISH scholar who is considered by many to be the most knowledgeable man in the West on North Vietnam, explains the close interdependency between Le Duan's future and the success of the Viet Cong movement:

"Throughout N. Vietnam it is common knowledge that the Viet Cong was the creation of Le Duan and the movement's continuing successes have added greatly to his prestige.

"His appointment as First Secretary of the Lao Dong Party in 1960 was directly connected with his establishment of the Viet Cong . . . in part a reward for his successful accomplishment of the task, and, in part, a move to fill this key post with a man thoroughly familiar with resistance war in S. Vietnam.

Dr. Honey went on to observe that:

"Strong as Le Duan's position was, it was not impregnable; for it rendered his succession to the overall leadership of North Vietnam dependent upon the success of the Viet Cong in the South, and it committed him to a policy identical with that of Communist China.

"Should the Viet Cong fail to annex South Vietnam, should the war end in the conference room and South Vietnam's independence be guaranteed, or worse still, should the Viet Cong suffer a military defeat, then Le Duan would have been proven guilty of major political errors . . .

"In these circumstances he could scarcely hope to escape



After leaving the Army in Dec. 71 I became a fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution, where I wrote the first major (over 500 page) history of Vietnamese Communism. Here is a link to a short monograph I did in 1972 for the American Friends of Vietnam: <http://www.virginia.edu/cnsl/pdf/Turner-Myths.pdf>

Then I went to Washington on a Hoover fellowship, and spent 5 years working as national security adviser to a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. So I got to see the last two years of the war from the perspective of the Senate.

Jimmy Carter was never a friend of Vietnam and denounced the war as a presidential candidate. One of the first things he did after taking office was to pardon the anti-Vietnam protesters who had run off to Canada or hidden from the draft within the United States. Carter gave a talk at I believe it was Notre Dame University around March 1977 in which he declared that America's biggest problem was an "inordinate fear of Communism," and had he had his way we might well have LOST the Cold War. To his credit, shortly before leaving office he finally realized that the Soviets were NOT the good buddies he thought they were -- and he actually started supporting the Afghan opposition and sending arms to help El Salvador in his final weeks in office. In terms of his understanding of world affairs, I have rarely encountered an adult whose incredible arrogance was less justified than JC (although he has done some fine work since leaving office building houses for the poor).

Ted Kennedy was in my view perhaps the worst of the anti-Vietnam senators. I remember sitting on a couch in the back of the Senate chamber in 1974 and listening to him denounce the State Department for suggesting that the National Liberation Front was controlled by Hanoi. He opposed assistance to South Vietnam, and I remember hearing him in early 1975 announce that the South Vietnamese didn't NEED any more aid, because they had (I don't remember his figure, but it was in the billions of dollars) of equipment already. The fact that those tanks, artillery, and helicopters were virtually worthless because Kennedy & Co. would not let us give South Vietnam the spare parts, fuel, and ammo necessary to defend themselves from Hanoi's aggression did not come up.

I visited Con Son prison in May 1974 with a group of congressional staff members. The doctor in the infirmary called me aside and asked me to explain why Senator Kennedy hated the Vietnamese so much. Kennedy had introduced an amendment that prohibited all U.S. assistance to the South Vietnamese prison system, in the process cutting off virtually all medicines and medical supplies to prison infirmaries -- causing tremendous suffering for the prisoners. This, in the name of "human rights."

Kennedy and his staff were totally deceived by Hanoi's propaganda, and that was true of the overwhelming majority of Democratic legislators by 1974. Although the commitment had been made under Eisenhower (SEATO Treaty), Kennedy (pledge to "oppose any foe" for the cause of human freedom), and LBJ (SEA Resolution in Aug. 1964), when Nixon became President in 1969 it became easy for most Democrats (but not all) to declare it was "Nixon's War" and to try to undermine it.

The Role of Shame -- Senators and Congressman who betrayed America's commitment to defend the people of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia -- starts off with names like Ted Kennedy (who totally betrayed his older brother's noble promise), J. William Fulbright (who introduced and was floor manager for the 1964 AUMF), Frank Church, Mike Mansfield (whom I personally heard assure other Senate leaders near the entrance to the Senate chambers that he had personally spoken with Sihanouk and been assured that if we allowed Cambodia to be captured by the Khmer Rouge "only a handful" of people like Lon Nol would be executed -- whereas the death toll was more like 1.7 million (see <http://www.yale.edu/cgp/>) -- and also included several republicans like Clifford Case and Jacob Javits. But overwhelmingly, opposition to the war was led by Democrats.

Now, to be sure, one can make an argument that Americans of Vietnamese ancestry owe a great debt to Ted Kennedy and Jimmy Carter. By betraying John Kennedy's pledge (and America's solemn pledge by the SEATO Treaty and the 1964 AUMF) to protect the people of South Vietnam from Communist aggression, they "snatched defeat from the jaws of victory" and set the stage for more than a million South Vietnamese

to flee their homeland and come to America. So if you think life in America is better than it would have been in Vietnam under a democratic government, then perhaps rewarding the Democrats makes sense.

There is an old expression: "Politics and the art of the possible." Both President Nixon and President Ford WANTED to keep South Vietnam (and Cambodia) from falling into the hands of the Communists. They both tried hard. But Congress was in the hands of the Democrats, who refused to provide the levels of military and economic aid necessary to permit those countries to survive given the tremendous amounts of military equipment and other assistance being given to Hanoi by Moscow and Beijing.

A LOT of American experts who followed the war closely concluded that by 1972 (if not before) the US and South Vietnam had essentially won the war in the South. The Viet Cong had virtually ceased to exist, the Communists held one province (Quang Tri) and some largely uninhabited mountain areas and swampland, and the overwhelming majority of the population in South Vietnam lived in government-controlled areas. The Linebacker II bombing in December broke Hanoi's will, and led to their return to Paris and the signing of the Paris Accords. Nixon and Kissinger expected to enforce the peace agreement by the use of B-52 bombers if necessary. But then Fulbright, Kennedy, and other Democrats passed an Amendment in May 1973 that made it UNLAWFUL for the president to spend any money on combat operations in North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia. (And as a constitutional scholar who has been writing about war powers for several decades, it is my considered judgment that the statute was unconstitutional.) Soon thereafter, Pham Van Dong declared "The Americans won't come back now even if we offered them candy." And Hanoi sent virtually its entire PAVN army (saving only the 325th Division to protect the Hanoi area) behind columns of Soviet-made tanks to conquer its neighbors by armed force. (We could have had a field day blowing those tanks to Hell and strafing the PAVN forces if Congress had merely permitted President Ford to use American air power, but that, too, was unlawful.

Put simply, Nixon did not "decide" to withdraw from Vietnam. He was strongly committed to stopping Communism and protecting South Vietnam. But Hanoi and Moscow had effectively spread lies and half-truths throughout America that were sucked-up by clueless college professors and students, who in turn pressured Congress into abandoning a noble cause. If you want to understand Nixon's views on Vietnam, read his book "No More Vietnams." One of the reasons he was driven from office was that congressional Democrats were outraged over his efforts to protect South Vietnam and Cambodia.

It is true that Nixon began a withdrawal from Vietnam, but by 1969 the American people had been so misled (and were so frustrated by LBJ's and McNamara's "no-win" strategy) that Nixon had no other choice. He cleverly combined the troop withdrawal with the Cambodian incursion of 1970 (like the Tet Offensive a TREMENDOUS ARVN/US success) and the Linebacker II bombing.

Had Congress not "thrown in the towel," I continue to believe that South Vietnam and Cambodia had a good chance of surviving even without large numbers of U.S. troops in Southeast Asia.

**The views expressed above are entirely personal** (written after work hours on my own computer), and I should emphasize that I am not a partisan person. I have not taken part in support of any political candidate in more than 40 years, nor have I been a member of any party or (to the best of my recollection) attended any event sponsored by the Republican or Democratic party (or any fringe party). I've never given a penny to any candidate for federal office or any political party or PAC. There are a lot of issues about which I could spend some time criticizing the Republicans. (I don't think EITHER party understands that the interests of the Nation ought to be more important than the interests of either party.)

But as someone who followed these issues VERY closely from 1964 to 1975 (I published my first commentary on the war in the European Edition of the New York Times in August 1964, and last left Vietnam as part of the Final Evacuation on April 28, 1975 while trying to rescue orphans), I can assure you with great confidence that neither Ted Kennedy nor Jimmy Carter were friends of the Republic of Vietnam or its people. And because Kennedy and his colleagues prevailed in preventing Republican presidents from continuing to oppose Hanoi's aggression, millions of good people lost their lives and tens of millions were consigned to a Stalinist tyranny that the distinguished human rights group Freedom House listed as among the "Worst of the Worse" and the "Dirty Dozen" human rights violators in the world for decades after the fall of Saigon.

Respectfully,

Bob

<http://www.law.virginia.edu/lawweb/Faculty.nsf/PrFHPbW/rft3m>

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Following from Robert Turner, Staff Aide to Senator Griffin of Michigan quote If any orphans available for release still remain in Phnom Penh I would be interested in visiting there to investigate possibility of bringing them out (on back haul of rice delivery aircraft). The State of Michigan has declared an "open door" policy on orphans unquote. Turner requests your comments/concurrence regarding his proposed visit.

MARTIN

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## **TURNER: Not a massacre but a mistake**

### **New evidence indicates source of gunshots that triggered shootings**

By Robert F. Turner

The Washington Times 5:09 p.m., Tuesday, October 12, 2010

High-tech forensic audio analysis last week of a recently discovered audiotape of the May 4, 1970, anti-Vietnam War protest at Kent State University may shed new light on the genesis of the tragedy that shut down colleges and universities across America. During a campus confrontation, Ohio National Guardsmen fired into rock-throwing student protesters, killing four - two of them mere passers-by - and wounding nine others. The incident is of more than historical interest because the "Kent State massacre" played a major role in undermining U.S. support for the Indochina war and thus facilitated a far greater human tragedy.

The audiotape reveals that shortly before the guardsmen began firing, protesters may have surrounded and threatened the life of a young man named Terry Norman (a Kent State student, like many of the guardsmen) who was taking photographs for law enforcement agencies.

According to Friday's Cleveland Plain Dealer, the tape captured the command "Retreat!" As the guardsmen moved back up Blanket Hill, pursued by rock-throwing protesters, photographer Norman was left behind - apparently too busy taking pictures to realize the guardsmen were pulling back - and quickly was in the midst of angry protesters.

The tape captures one voice saying: "They got somebody," and a few seconds later, male voices shout: "Kill him!" "Kill him!" There is then the sound of a .38 caliber revolver shot, followed by a female voice: "Whack that [expletive]!" Three more handgun shots ring out at about five-second intervals, and soon thereafter - in just 13 tragic seconds - 29 of the 77 guardsmen fire a total of 67 rifle shots that are to help seal the fate of the non-communist people of Indochina.

Mr. Norman later admitted carrying a .38 Special revolver because his life had been threatened repeatedly during earlier protests, and a TV reporter at the scene stated he saw Mr. Norman hand the weapon to a police officer and say, "I was afraid they were going to kill me, so I took out my revolver, and I fired it into the air and into the ground."

The tape doesn't have all of the answers. But the Ohio National Guard adjutant general later alleged there had been "sniper fire" at the guardsmen, and many of the guardsmen later testified they had been in fear for their lives.

By way of background, the guard had been mobilized following violent protests against President Nixon's "illegal" decision to send American troops into Cambodia to attack North Vietnamese sanctuaries, from which communist forces had been crossing regularly into South Vietnam to attack U.S. troops and the South Vietnamese. Over a period of four days, bonfires were built in Kent streets, beer bottles and rocks were thrown at

passing vehicles and through storefront windows, and more than 1,000 students surrounded the ROTC building, cheering as it burned.

Responding police and firemen were pelted with rocks and bottles, and fire hoses were slashed. Gov. James Rhodes called out the guard to restore order.

Though a Gallup Poll reported 58 percent of Americans blamed the protesters and just 11 percent blamed the guard, the Kent State incident was a great and inexcusable tragedy no matter who was primarily to blame. But its consequences in the years that followed proved far more catastrophic.

Perhaps the greatest irony is that the angry students - as so often was the case throughout the war - had their facts wrong. Going into Cambodia was not "illegal." Like South Vietnam, Cambodia was one of the "protocol states" the United States had solemnly pledged to defend against communist aggression when the Senate in 1955 consented to the ratification of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization agreement with but a single dissenting vote. Cambodia, like South Vietnam, was similarly incorporated by reference in the 1964 statute, by which 99.6 percent of Congress authorized the use of military force to carry out our SEATO obligations.

The hated Richard M. Nixon had nothing to do with the Kent State shootings by frightened guardsmen. For the benefit of younger readers, in those days, joining the National Guard was one of the safest legal ways to avoid service in a war zone. And rather than "widening" the war, the Cambodian incursion was a tremendous victory that largely broke the back of communist forces in the Mekong Delta. (I was there at the time.)

But the angry protests made it very difficult for any but the most courageous legislators to continue supporting the war, and in May 1973, Congress enacted a new statute - of very dubious constitutionality - making it illegal for the president to spend money on U.S. military involvement in "hostilities" anywhere in Indochina. As Yale's distinguished diplomatic historian and professor John Lewis Gaddis observed a few years back in Foreign Affairs, "Historians now acknowledge that American counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam were succeeding during the final years of that conflict." Sadly, under pressure from the "peace movement," Congress snatched defeat from the jaws of victory.

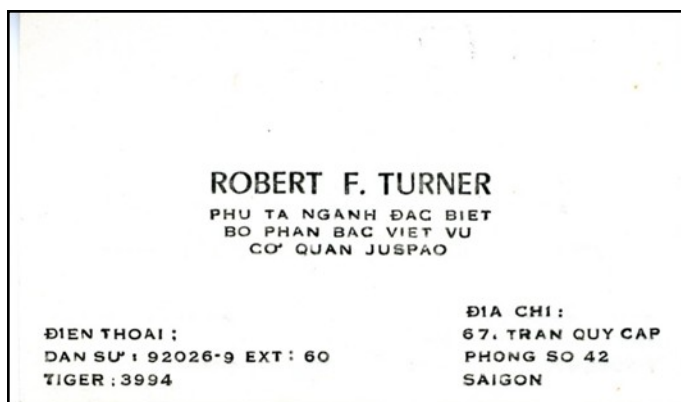
Reassured by the American Congress, North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong declared that the Americans would not come back "even if we offered them candy," so North Vietnam sent virtually its entire army to conquer its neighbors behind columns of Soviet-made tanks in flagrant acts of conventional armed international aggression.

The student protesters who may have believed they were struggling to end the suffering in Indochina were sadly mistaken. During the three years following the communist conquests of South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, more people died violently than had been killed in combat during the previous 14 years throughout Indochina. According to the Yale University Cambodian Genocide Project, in tiny Cambodia alone, more than 20 percent of the population - an estimated 1.7 million human beings - lost their lives. A 2003 story on the Cambodian "killing fields" in National Geographic Today captured a snapshot of this tragedy by noting that, to save bullets, small children were murdered by being battered against trees.

It didn't have to happen.

Robert F. Turner served twice in Vietnam as an Army officer. He is author or editor of several books on the Vietnam War and has taught seminars on the war for more than 20 years at the University of Virginia. The views expressed are personal.

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#### LECTURES:

<http://www.virginia.edu/cnsi/pdf/Turner-US-Abandonment-Vietnam-2010.pdf>

<http://www.virginia.edu/cnsi/pdf/Turner-Myths.pdf>



## BOOKS about Vietnam and Fight against TERROR:

