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SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese-American Culture

NEWSLETTER # 118

AUGUST 2018

Maj Gen Viet X. Luong: Commanding General US Army Japan & I Corps



Subject: General Officer Announcement, dtd 3 July 2018

The Chief of Staff of the Army announces the following officer assignments:

Major General Viet X. Luong, Deputy Commanding General (Operations), Eighth Army, Republic of Korea to Commanding General, United States Army Japan and I Corps (Forward), Ja-
pan

Democratic Revolution in Vietnam?

<http://www.atimes.com/article/a-democratic-revolution-has-just-begun-in-vietnam/>

Khai Nguyen, July 8, 2018

On June 7, a group of about 300 ordinary Vietnamese in Phan Ri Cua City of Binh Thuan province formed the first rally against a draft law on special economic zones (SEZ). They had trouble before with an ongoing Chinese thermal power plant investment project in their own province and were opposed to more such Chinese investments.

Two days later, tens of thousands of workers at Pouyuen footwear company in Tan Tao Industrial Park, Ho Chi Minh City, went on strike against the SEZ draft law.

The following day, on June 10, many demonstrations sprung up in other cities throughout the coun-
try, including the capital of Hanoi, Nghe An, Da Nang, Khanh Hoa, Dac Lac, Binh Duong, Dong Nai, My Tho, Vinh Long, Kien Giang, and Ho Chi Minh City.

According to the controversial draft law, land in the zones may be leased by foreign investors for up to 99 years. The protesters feared that SEZs will be dominated and controlled by Chinese investors as self-governing zones, ceding sovereignty to Vietnam's giant northern neighbor.

- Many carried anti-China posters, including ones that said "No leasing land to China even for one day," and "Leasing land to China is selling the country to the Vietnamese people's enemies," and "China get out of Vietnam." Several protesters carried American flags and anti-communist slogans such as "Down with communists" and "Down with traitors."

The demonstrators not only protested the SEZ draft law, but also a cybersecurity law that will re-
quire technology companies to store their users' data in Vietnam, to hand the data over to Vietnam-
ese authorities on request and to censor any contentious content.

According to Reporters Without Borders, the law is similar to a repressive Chinese law that took
effect a year ago. The law was passed by Vietnam's National Assembly on June 12 without any
changes and will take effect on January 1, 2019. Its main objective is to protect the Communist Party
of Vietnam, according to Party Secretary General Nguyen Phu Trong.

The demonstration in Ho Chi Minh City was the largest, with tens of thousands participating; like the

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Democratic Revolution in VN...

demonstrations in most other cities, it was generally peaceful. The protest in Binh Thuan province began peacefully but turned violent when police started beating the crowd, arresting protestors and hauling them away.

Protestors turned violent, throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at the police and burning some of their cars, a police station and some local government office buildings.

After the demonstrations ended, police reportedly arrested and brutally beat hundreds of protesters. In some cases, public hospitals required injured protesters to sign a waiver declaring that they were hurt in an accident, otherwise they would refuse them treatment.

Video clips posted on YouTube and pictures circulated on social media showed that many ordinary people from all walks of life participated in the demonstrations: old and young, men and women, workers, peasants, professionals, artists, intellectuals, and even religious leaders. Most of the protesters in Binh Thuan were fishermen and local people.

These protests gained wide and strong support from the masses. Indeed, they were quite different from the demonstrations at Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China 29 years ago, where most of the protesters were students and teachers.

This suggests that Vietnam's communist regime has lost the support of the majority of the country's 95 million-strong population, except those on the government payroll, including five million Communist Party members.

It is telling that these mostly orderly yet massive demonstrations were organized without any dissident leaders. The reason was quite simple: about 200 of the country's most prominent activists and democracy advocates are currently in prison. Others were blocked from leaving their homes by plainclothes police, with some of their homes even locked by authorities from the outside.

Still, the SEZ law, cybersecurity law and a fear of China have united people against the Communist Party-led government. A growing number of Vietnamese see government officials and Party leaders as traitors, particularly since they have consistently failed to protect the country's sovereignty and fishermen from China in the contested South China Sea.

They also believe that the government betrayed the soldiers who fought valiantly against China during the border war in 1979 and the Chinese invasion of Johnson South Reef in 1988 by denying them proper memorial services and removing some wording against China on their tombstones. Both moves are seen as kowtowing to Beijing.

The protestors were enabled in part by the internet, Facebook, YouTube, Messenger and wireless cell phones and cameras, tools that protesters used to communicate with each other about where and when demonstrations should take place. People could even watch demonstrations in real time on video-sharing site YouTube.

Despite its best censorship efforts, the government has failed to block the news from major international news outlets and local social media networks.

Hence the authorities' efforts to regain control of these channels via the cybersecurity law, even though its provisions run counter to Vietnam's commitments to the World Trade Organization and the European Union-Vietnam Free Trade Area agreement. Neither requires foreign companies to open offices and data centers in Vietnam.

The protests were widely welcomed by the Vietnamese diaspora, seen in parallel demonstrations by Vietnamese in many countries, including the United States, Canada, Australia, England, Germany, France, Poland, Norway, Finland, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

The time is arguably ripe for a democratic revolution in Vietnam. Domestically, the Party has broken down into two main factions—not on ideological differences, but rather their own vested interests. The Party has largely abandoned socialist ideology since adopting a free market system in 1986 under the so-called *doi moi* reforms. However, until now they still maintain a monopoly on political power.

Vietnam's political apparatus has outgrown its usefulness, becoming heavier and costlier in the hope that it would protect the Party.

Former Party Secretary General Le Kha Phieu said in an interview before the 12th Central Committee's sixth plenum in October 2017 that "the political apparatus must be revolutionized. There is no way for a retreat. It has been sluggish, not to mention the personnel. Many people are doing nothing."

The government now spends about 82.1% of the national budget to pay salaries to government officials, military, police, 205 public security generals and five million Party members. The remaining 17.9% is earmarked for development investments.

With so many people on the government's payroll, their small share of the budget is not enough to live on. Many must find other ways to make extra money to survive. That's why corruption is pervasive: because Vietnam is a one-party system without a free press and no separation of power among the executive, legislative and judiciary branches, it has proven impossible to control corruption.

With rising Chinese investments, Vietnam's communist leaders have grown accustomed to bowing their head to Chinese inter-

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Democratic Revolution in VN...

ventions in their domestic affairs. Indeed, they seem to avoid confrontation with China at all costs, but are still unable to please Beijing. In 1988, for example, Vietnam lost 64 soldiers without a fight in the Johnson South Reef skirmish.

In 2014, China positioned its Hai Yang Shi You 981 oil drilling platform into Vietnam's maritime territory, about 120 nautical miles from Vietnam's Ly Son Island. After unsuccessfully sending ships to disrupt the Chinese oil rig, Vietnam asked the international community for help but no nation—including the US, Japan or India—came to Vietnam's defense. They only urged both sides to be self-restrained and to solve disputes peacefully.

Now, the US, Japan and Australia seem eager to help Vietnam with its economic development, national defense and South China Sea disputes with China. However, Vietnam's poor human rights and religious freedom records have restrained more robust ties at a crucial time of Chinese expansionism.

Recent revolutions in Asia and the Middle East, including the Arab Spring, were born of similar situations now seen in Vietnam. Although there was no organization and no coordination at the outset, Vietnam's democratic revolution is gathering unmistakable pace in an orderly, powerful and patriotic way.

"If poverty was the cause of revolutions, there would be revolutions all the time," Russian revolutionary and Marxist theorist Leon Trotsky once said. While poverty may not be the strongest factor behind revolutions, social injustice and corruption often are. A huge gap between rich and poor is present in Vietnam, within nearly all districts, cities and provinces.

The poor are ordinary and powerless people; the rich are government officials, high-ranking Party members and their cronies who not long ago claimed to belong to the proletariat. The Vietnamese people supported the communists in their victory against foreign oppressors, but they are ready to move on.

Nguyen Minh Chau - Distinguished Vietnamese Comrade in Arms

William Haponski



[The following is a description of Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Minh Chau, District Chief of Di An District, Republic of Vietnam, 1967-75 by William C. Haponski, Colonel, U S Army, Retired. The association of Chau, then a major of Marines, and Haponski, then a lieutenant colonel commanding 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division, came about during January - July 1969 when one of Haponski's missions was to work closely with Chau in pacification and Vietnamization of Di An District, about twelve miles northeast of Saigon. The district comprised over thirty hamlets and villages, and totaled about 50,000 people.]

I knew Chau by reputation a month or so before I met him. His third wound, sustained in combat near the DMZ in 1966, had left him crippled on the right side, and he leaned on a cane. His fourth wound came in October 1968 just outside the American compound at Di An, two months before we met. An assassination attempt left an AK 47 bullet lodged in his lung, nearly finishing him.

Major Chau was highly respected by senior American and Vietnamese military and civilian officials as a thoroughly honest, compassionate, effective district chief. I heard he was the best in over two hundred districts in Vietnam and was soon to discover first-hand why he was so highly lauded. On my first full day in command, 6 Jan 69, while he was still in pain and recovering from his latest wound, Chau led a district force against a Viet Cong contingent and captured a high-ranking VC official, an action I observed and for which he received the U S Bronze Star for Valor.

My letters, tapes, and journals of the time reflect often on this extraordinary person. For example, 16 Jan 69: "Major Chau came to see me today. Limping, twisted by his wounds, he is an inspiration. He leads his people, protects them, helps them. From 19 Feb 69: "One of the great satisfactions in this job is working with Major Chau and his forces. We have a very close cooperative arrangement, and he is a fine man, one of the greatest I've known."

During the six months he and I worked together his district gained noticeably in prosperity due to his efforts. The VC infrastructure was virtually eliminated, schools and roads were built, businesses flourished, and life for his people stabilized. The Vietnamese admired him, and he devoted himself to them. He deeply loved his wife and six children who lived with him in the district compound at Di An.

Able to find out nothing about him after the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, I feared the worst and for twenty-four years had presumed him to be dead. He, of course, would have been one of the first targets for revenge by the conquerors. In June of 1999, however, I was astonished to discover he had survived, and we talked by phone several times. I learned that during those last d Chau was commanding his forces, prepared to defend district. The main enemy attack on Saigon, however, bypassed Di An, and when Saigon fell on 30 April 1975 he was ordered by his commander to surrender his district. In a letter to me Chau said, "It was

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Nguyen Minh Chau ...

the somber day of our life." Fortunately for him he was taken by NVA troops rather than the local VC, and he spent three terrible years in prison camps in North Vietnam, barely surviving starvation, disease, and mistreatment. He said, "During the time in concentration camps I thought that I would never meet my American friends. Because of my handicap they released me after 3 years." He made his way back to his family in Thu Duc, just outside Saigon. Chau wrote, "But, 2 months later the local communists came to my home to take me to prison again. I believed that they would do a terrible revenge on me because I had destroyed many of their soldiers and infrastructures. I was sure they would kill me that time. I had no way to escape, so I decided to make a suicide by taking an overdose of medication." He fell immediately into a coma and the squad of soldiers said they would "take care of him." His wife and neighbors created such a fuss, though, that the squad let them take him to a local hospital. The details of his subsequent escape cannot be revealed because of potential danger to those who helped him, but the essence is that after several days he awoke from the coma, eluded his guards, and made his way into the civilian populace which shielded him for eighteen months, moving him from place to place weekly. He said, "It was a very difficult and depressed time for me and my family." His courageous and resourceful wife finally was able to arrange his escape by boat to Thailand, and six months later she got herself and their six children out by boat to Malaysia. The family eventually reunited in California in 1980.

After a difficult time in the U S at first, and one month after his arrival in November 1979, Colonel Chau was able to get work with a refugee resettlement organization. Since 1991 until he retired in January 2000 he had his own immigration consultant business, and since 1981 Mrs. Chau has been a medical translator at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center. All six children, four girls and two boys, received degrees from California colleges in computer, electronics, chemical, and aviation engineering and are high tech professionals in Silicon Valley. The whole family is proud to be American.

In Di An so many years ago, I knew Chau to be a sweet, gentle man who was a courageous, determined, respected field commander and civic government official. My life has been enriched by him. He said in a letter to me, "I am always appreciating the noble sacrifice of all Vietnam veterans who were fighting the war in the dense jungles of Vietnam for our freedom. My wife and I understood that the American GIs must leave their loved ones behind in their country to go fighting a very difficult war very far from their homeland. My wife always advised me to love the American soldiers as we love soldiers. She understood that all American wives and children were suffering too much as she and other Vietnamese wives were, when we left our families at Saigon to go fighting in 4 regions of South Vietnam. She and my children suffered a lot every time I got a deadly wound."

Colonel Chau, I thank you for what you did for your country, for me and my troops, my family, and for America. I am proud to have been your comrade-in-arms, and to be your friend.

Fort Hood, Texas, 1 April 2000

Additional information on Nguyen Minh Chau:

American medals: Silver Star

Bronze Star "V"

Army Commendation Medal

Reprint with permission of the Vietnamese Marine Corps <http://www.tqlcvn.org/>

Vietnamese Art: Jul 7-Sep 27, 2018



Vietnamese Art: An Overview

Ái Lan
 Ann Phong
 Bé Ký
 Dương văn Hùng
 Duyên Hà
 Đỗ Lê Minh
 Hồ thành Đức
 Nguyễn Khai
 Nguyễn Đồng
 Nguyễn Phước
 Nguyễn Thị Hợp
 Nguyễn Văn Trung
 Trương Đình Uyên
 Văn Mịch

Invitation

Viet Art Group cordially invites you to our exhibition of paintings and antiques.

Vietnamese Art: An Overview

Salz-Pollak Atrium Gallery

Paulina June & George Pollak
 Library
 California State University, Fullerton
 800 N. State College Blvd. Fullerton

Saturday July 7, 2018 through
 Thursday September 27, 2018

Opening Ceremony:
 July 7, 2018 at 11AM

On behalf of Viet Art Group:

Artist Văn Mịch
 (858) 337-4692

Artist Đỗ Lê Minh
 (714) 256-4423

Artist Duyên Hà (Lê Phục Thủy)
 (858) 212-4530
 thuy@ucsd.edu

Part 1. Vietnamese Ancient Art:
 Đông Hồ and Hàng Trống original wood block prints.

Antiques: porcelain statues, wood carvings, and other ceramic artifacts.

Part 2. Period of Western Art Influence - School of Fine Arts of Indochina (Hanoi, 1924-1945): artists Lê Phổ, Tạ Tỵ, Tú Duyên, Mai Trung Thứ (original paintings).

Part 3. In the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) (1954-1975): Members of the Young Vietnamese Artists Association (artists Nguyễn Khai, Hồ thành Đức, Nguyễn Phước, Nguyễn Đồng, Nguyễn Thị Hợp, sculptor Dương Văn Hùng) and artists Văn Mịch, Đỗ Lê Minh, Duyên Hà, Bé Ký, Nguyễn Văn Trung (original paintings and sculptures).

Part 4. Vietnamese Art in the United States (1975-present): artists Ann Phong, Ái Lan, Trương Đình Uyên (original paintings).

DANH VO: An Artist at the Crossroads of History & Diary

By Robert Smith March 7, 2018

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/07/arts/design/danh-vo-guggenheim-review.html>



A detail from Danh Vo's "We the People," a model hand from his replica of the Statue of Liberty, in a survey of his work at the Guggenheim Museum. Credit Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

The work of the Danish-Vietnamese artist Danh Vo operates at the intersection of art, global history and personal diary, that is, his own life as a gay man and as an émigré whose family's existence was radically disrupted by the war in Vietnam.

Artist is perhaps not quite the right word. Mr. Vo is not a maker of original objects but a hunter-gatherer who collects and sometimes alters artifacts, furniture, mementos, photographs and documents whose histories reflect aspects of his triple narrative.

Some of his finds work better than others, as demonstrated by "*Danh Vo: Take My Breath Away*," a nonetheless inspiring mid-career survey at the Guggenheim Museum. With a subtitle redolent of both desire and death, the show presents around 100

DANH VO: An Artist ...

objects or fragments that Mr. Vo has reclaimed as art; most are accompanied by extended wall labels.

Mr. Vo took the top half of a wooden Virgin Mary and fused it with a Greek marble sarcophagus. Credit Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

The first impression is of singular oddness. Not much looks like art, even by today's standards. At times the museum feels almost empty, like the tail end of some deeply eccentric yard sale. But ultimately the items spiraling up the Guggenheim ramp encircle us with entwining histories of love, loss, power, violence — and the post-colonial anger of belonging to a culture long on the receiving end of history. So much here speaks of displacement, damage, even dismemberment.

"Lot 20. Two Kennedy Administration Cabinet Chairs," from 2013, a disassembled chair from the personal collection of Robert S. McNamara. Credit Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

The show has been organized by Katherine Brinson, the museum's curator of contemporary art, working closely with Mr. Vo. Some of its inclusions are passive witnesses, like the deconstructed chairs used by American leaders while making decisions with global repercussions. Others are personal, like the white wood cross that temporarily marked his grandmother's grave in a Copenhagen cemetery. Some are tiny but have an outsized impact, like the pen tip used to sign the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, escalating America's military involvement in the Vietnam War. Mr. Vo was born in Vietnam in 1975 and fled with his family by boat in 1979. After several months in a refugee camp in Singapore, they ended up in Denmark, which is where Mr. Vo grew up, studied art and, around age 30, began his meteoric rise to art stardom. Among the tributes to this transition is "Oma Totem," from 2009, a sculptural stack of items that his grandmother received from relief organizations when she settled, initially, in Germany: a washer-dryer, a small refrigerator and a television set affixed with a wood crucifix. A testimony to Western values, it resembles the architectural model of a European cathedral tower.

"Oma Totem" (2009) made from a television, washing machine, refrigerator and a wooden crucifix. Credit Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

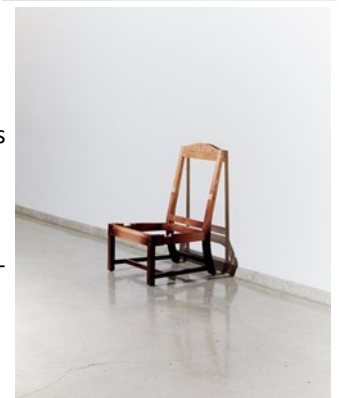
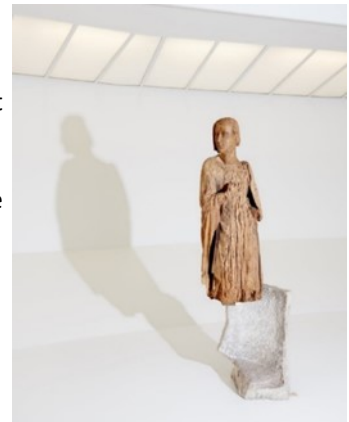
Others pieces relate the frequent fate of non-Western countries: the debilitating progression of missionaries, colonization, military occupation and economic exploitation. Mr. Vo made an early splash by gilding castoff cardboard boxes used for shipping beer, cereal or condensed milk. By covering the logos and printed elements with gold leaf, he beautified a lowly object, rendering it valuable (and collectible). For "Promised Land," a 2013 box here, Phung Vo — the artist's father, a skilled calligrapher and frequent collaborator — repeatedly wrote the work's title in a Fraktur-like font on its interior. "Massive Black Hole in the Dark Heart of Our Milky Way," a large new piece dangling from the museum's stairwell, extends the gold leaf to early American flags applied to the blank backs of flattened beer boxes. They hang among rusty 19th-century farm tools and hunting traps — the artist's tribute to Manifest Destiny.

"Promised Land," a cardboard box inscribed with gold leaf. Credit Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

A view inside "Promised Land." Credit Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

Mr. Vo, 42, has expanded the definition of art by minimizing the role of the artist as a maker of original objects. He is equally a curator, collector, exhibition designer, photographer, historian, archivist and scourer of auctions and antique emporia.

At the same time, with maximum faith in the ability of modest objects to carry meaning, he extends the tradition that began with Duchamp's deadpan ready-mades. Some of Mr. Vo's works are unaltered ready-mades. Others are transformed by being taken apart or joined with foreign objects to form startling hybrids. The sculptures Mr. Vo began making



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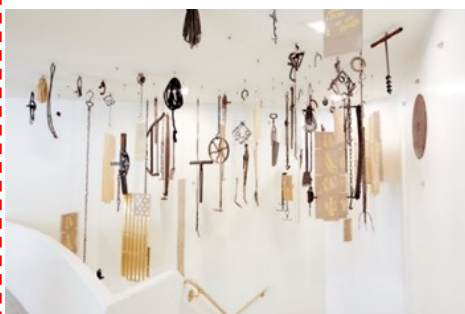
DANH VO: An Artist ...



in 2015, for example, combine fragments of Roman marble statuary with slices of Medieval figures, especially wood images of the Madonna and Child eroded nearly beyond illegibility. With these jarring clashes of civilizations and faiths, Mr. Vo returns the favor of the cultural vandalism that is a colonialist privilege. The best examples of found objects broken down — and full of righteous anger — are the nine sculptures each titled “Lot 20. Two Kennedy Administration Cabinet Chairs.” They resulted from dismembering two sturdy arm chairs that Mr. Vo bought at an auction of the personal memorabilia of Robert S. McNamara, the defense secretary under John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson who led the U.S. into what was sometimes called “McNamara’s War” in Vietnam.

“Massive Black Hole in the Dark Heart of Our Milky Way,” made from gold leaf on cardboard, iron tools and rope. Credit Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

The series begins in the show’s opening gallery with a bare mahogany chair frame so stripped as to be both victim and instrument of torture. Moving up the Guggenheim ramp, we find the chairs’ black leather upholstery and muslin innards drooping from the wall, like flayed skins; the chairs’ disassembled arms huddle in a corner.



Mr. Vo’s process of breaking down and remaking is supersized in “We the People” (2011-2016), an epic sculptural project that helped solidify the artist’s reputation. Fabricated in China, this replica of Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi’s Statue of Liberty consists of about 300 individual pieces of repoussé copper. Properly assembled, they would form a full-size copy, but Mr. Vo intends to disperse them across the globe. The parts at the Guggenheim include an enormous thumb, a possible ear and two hands.

Detail from “We The People,” a model finger of the Statue of Liberty. Credit Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

A few years back “We the People” would have signaled America’s imperial presidency, from Kennedy to George W. Bush. Today the work seems to conjure a country fracturing from within, betraying its foundational principles, especially those regarding immigration, and shattering its international standing.

Some labels help you see, and think. “Christmas (Rome) 2012,” from 2013, for example, consists of swaths of a faded brown velvet wallcovering once used in the Vatican’s museums. Darker areas indicate dense hangings of artworks and crucifixes. The pieces of fabric become slow-motion photograms, ghostly physical evidence of the church’s great wealth and its doctrinal fixity.

“Christmas (Rome) 2012,” made in 2013, from velvet wallcovering once used in the Vatican’s museums. Credit Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

You don’t need a label to remind you, as Henry Kissinger once told The New York Times, that “power is the ultimate aphrodisiac.” A series of 14 letters from Mr. Kissinger, when he was Richard Nixon’s secretary of state, to Leonard Lyons, a columnist at The New York Post, are set in wall vitrines like relics. The luxurious White House stationery matches Mr. Kissinger’s syrupy thanks for complimentary tickets to Broadway plays or the ballet.

You may recall these minor flexes of power, when you encounter three spectacular 19th-century chandeliers that hung in the ballroom of the Hotel Majestic in Paris during the Peace Accords between the Americans and Vietnamese, negotiated over five excruciating years and extended in part by Mr. Kissinger.

But labels overwhelm some objects, like a key chain signifying the apartment Mr. Vo once shared with an ex-partner and the Alfa Romeo that the man gave him. Spare us.

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DANH VO: An Artist ...

"She was more like a beauty queen from a movie scene" (2009), a 13-star American flag Mr. Vo bought at auction, adorned with military accessories and musical instruments marking the first centennial of the Declaration of Independence.

Credit Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

Some of Mr. Vo's works came to him already altered, like a 14th-century steel sword used in the Crusades, incised with Christian and Muslim symbols as its owners changed.

But the most effective altered ready-made is just passing through: an imposing pre-Columbian plumed serpent's head lent by the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The label recounts an embarrassing tale of American gaucheness: how the Mexican government gave Paramount Pictures the head in 1926 to display in its new Times Square theater; how the ancient artifact was too large to display; and how a huge chunk was cut from the back of the serpent's head. Mr. Vo places the gaping excision — and diplomatic insult — in full view.

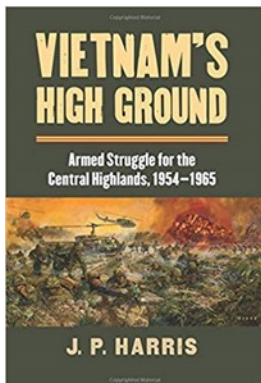


Vietnam's High Ground: J. P. Harris

During its struggle for survival from 1954 to 1975, the region known as the Central Highlands was the strategically vital high ground for the South Vietnamese state. Successive South Vietnamese governments, their American allies, and their Communist enemies all realized early on the fundamental importance of this region. Paul Harris's new book, based on research in American archives and the use of Vietnamese Communist literature on a very large scale, examines the struggle for this region from the mid-1950s, tracing its evolution from subversion through insurgency and counterinsurgency to the bigger battles of 1965.

The rugged mountains, high plateaus, and dense jungles of the Central Highlands seemed as forbidding to most Vietnamese as it did to most Americans. During 1954 to 1965, the great majority of its inhabitants were not ethnic Vietnamese. Ngo Dinh Diem's regime initially supported an American counterinsurgency alliance with the Highlanders only to turn dramatically against it.

As the war progressed, however, the Central Highlands became increasingly important. It was the area through which most branches of the Ho Chi Minh Trail passed. With its rugged, jungle-clad terrain, it also seemed to the North Vietnamese the best place to destroy the elite of South Vietnam's armed forces and to fight initial battles with the Americans. For many North Vietnamese, however, the Central Highlands became a living hell of starvation and disease. Even before the arrival of the American 1st Cavalry Division, the Communists were generally unable to win the decisive victories they sought in this region.



Harris's study culminates with an account of the campaign in Pleiku province in October to November—a campaign that led to dramatic clashes between the Americans and the North Vietnamese in the Ia Drang valley. Harris's analysis overturns many of the accepted accounts about NVA, US, and ARVN performances.

Available on Amazon:

<https://www.amazon.com/Vietnams-High-Ground-Highlands-1954-1965/dp/0700622837/>