SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE

To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese Culture

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- **SACEI Newsletter updates you on the latest news about Vietnamese-America.**
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

In Memoriam: Viet Dung, Radio Host, Human Rights Activist (1958-2013)

http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-viet-dzung-obit-20131220,0,3202147.story#ixzz2oG9Xf9HH

Radio commentator and human rights activist Viet Dung, who dominated the airwaves for decades in Little Saigon and was one of the early voices in the emerging immigrant community, died on December 20, 2013 of heart disease and diabetes. He was 55. Born Nguyen Ngoc Hung Dung, afflicted with polio that forces him to walk with a cane, he fought for human rights in Vietnam. He became well known in the Vietnamese American community for both his singing and his political commentary on Radio Bolsa, an Orange County-based broadcast that reaches Vietnamese listeners across the country.

Viet Dung refused to return to his homeland after communist forces took control in the wake of the Vietnam war. He remembered well the frightening 22 days during which he, at the end of the war and at the age of 17, accompanied by his grandmother struggled at seas trying to reach Singapore from Vietnam aboard an unseaworthy boat filled with 36 other refugees: a trip that should take at most three days. From Singapore, he was sent on another boat to a refugee camp in the Philippines. The sea trip caused him to write these lyrical words in his song "*Evening prayer*":

"The bobbling boat drifted... who knows where.
Will the boat ever reach... a welcoming port?
Is Heaven sad or... does Heaven not care?
Would man let go and drift to the depth of the sea or... would he dream of a grave seeded with a patch of green grass?
Is the sea calm or... is it vengeful?
Is the sea sad or ... does it not care?.....

After completing his high school degree in the US, he traveled

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In Memoriam: Viet Dung ...continued

to Southeast Asia, Europe, and Australia to bring his folk song type messages to Vietnamese refugees irritating the communist government of Vietnam, which condemned him to death in absentia for his anti-communist stance. He also told his listeners that he preferred not to play music by artists from Vietnam because of the country's refusal to import music recorded by Vietnamese Americans. "There should be fair trade," he said.

Viet Dung helped organize concerts in his adopted community of Little Saigon to help register immigrant voters and did public service ads on such things as the dangers of cigarettes, targeting individuals from a country with one of the highest smoking rates globally.

His most famous song was titled, "*A Few Presents to my Homeland*"

.....
I'll send you, mother, some sewing needles
for you to mend my wounded heart.

I'll send you, sister, some fabric.
for you to make a wedding or mourning dress.
I'll send you, brother, lots of candies
to soothe your wretched life.

I'll send you, father, a white shirt
for you to wear once before your firing squad.
I'll send to Vietnam a bucket of tears,
hoping for peace to settle over the country.

I'll send you, sister, a nice wedding ring
for you to sell and buy your way out of the country.
I'll send you, father, some sleeping pills
to soothe your life long jail sentence.....

ARVN and the M-16 Lewis Sorley

No single factor more definitively illustrates General Westmoreland's neglect of the South Vietnamese armed forces than the M-16 rifle, then a new, lightweight, automatic weapon considered ideally suited for the Vietnam environment.

When improved weaponry and other materiel became available, U.S. forces got first call on the M-16 rifle, the M-60 machine gun, the M-79 grenade launcher, and better radios. For much of the war the South Vietnamese were armed with castoff U.S. equipment of World War II vintage, such as the M-1 rifle and the carbine. Meanwhile the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were getting the most modern weaponry their communist patrons could provide, including the famous AK-47 assault rifle. As a consequence, during the Westmoreland years the South Vietnamese were consistently outgunned, with predictable results in terms of battlefield outcomes and morale, not to mention reputation. "Great emphasis was placed on improving the ARVN constantly," claimed Westmoreland, but that was simply not the case.

Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky later recalled bitterly how "the big, strapping American GI carried a light, fully automatic Colt M-16 rifle into combat with hundreds of rounds of ammunition, a match for the enemy's AK-47 assault rifle. Until after the Tet Offensive of 1968, our small soldiers carried heavy, eight-shot American M-1 rifles so obsolete that the U.S. National Guard did not want them." Lieutenant General Ngo Quang Truong, widely viewed as South Vietnam's best field commander, agreed. "In general," he noted of ARVN units during these years, "they were inadequately equipped to respond effectively to operational requirements."

The disparity in weapons would become particularly apparent during the 1968 Tet Offensive. Remembered Colonel Hoang Ngoc Lung, South Vietnam's chief intelligence officer, "the RVNAF was equipped with modern weapons only after comparable ones had been employed by the enemy. M-16 rifles were supplied to all RVNAF units only after the 1968 *Tet* Offensive when the enemy employed Communist AK-47s in large numbers." The recollections of Lieutenant General Dong Van Khuyen, South Vietnam's chief logistician, were particularly poignant: "During the enemy Tet offensive of 1968, the crisp, rattling sounds of AK-47's echoing in Saigon and some other cities seemed to make a mockery of the weaker, single shots of Garands and carbines fired by stupefied friendly troops." The M-1 rifle weighed over eleven pounds loaded and was 43 inches long. According to one calculation, the average South Vietnamese soldier stood five feet tall and weighed 90 pounds.

Westmoreland later stated that in 1964 he had asked his deputy, Lieutenant General John Throckmorton, specifically to look into "the feasibility of my asking for M-16's for the Vietnamese forces," and that when Throckmorton recommended against it because of the cost, he

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Colonel Dr. Paul Doan, Physician Andrews AFB

After getting out of Vietnam in 1975, the family of seven settled in Florida, where four of the five brothers, including Doan, worked at a McDonald's restaurant and mowed lawns on the weekends. He graduated from Duke University and attended medical school through an Air Force program.

He became the chief of aerospace medicine at a deployed location and filled the same duties at his home station of Barksdale Air Force Base, La. He is presently a Flight Surgeon Colonel serving at Andrews AFB, MD.

From family physician to flight surgeon, Doan's ambition and accolades have paved the way for many Vietnamese-Americans. He was the first Vietnamese-American to attend Duke University after the Vietnam War. He was the first of his nationality to be an Air Force medical officer at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Md. In 2006, he was selected as the Yale University Johnson and Johnson International Health Physician Scholar. This honor took Doan back to Vietnam, more than 30 years after he was evacuated

Cung Le, Boxer

Cung Le was born May 25, 1972 in Saigon; he was evacuated in 1975 to California where he suffered from early discrimination and bullying. His mother enrolled him in Taekwondo classes at the age of ten.

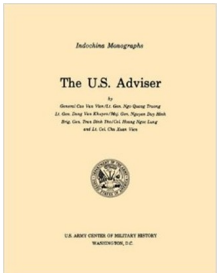
He is an American mixed martial artist, actor, and former Sanshou kickboxer currently competing as a Middleweight in the Ultimate Fighting Championship, holding a record of 2-1 with the organization. In Sanshou (Sanda), he is a former International Kickboxing Federation Light Heavyweight World Champion, having a professional Sanshou record of 16-0 before moving to mixed martial arts (Le also held an undefeated kickboxing record of 17-0).

Aline Dolinh: 2013 National Student Poet

Aline Dolinh wrote her first real story in first grade, about a group of cats that lived together in a small town and solved mysteries. She doesn't write that much about talking animals anymore, but she still loves stories that are a little fantastical. Aline is a sophomore at Oakton High School in Vienna, Virginia, and when she was little she wanted to be the world's first fashion-design-astrophysicist-author. She's been a Girl Scout and has studied ballet, karate, and acting, but reading and writing have always remained constants.

I. immigrant
I miss the fluid feel of my old name in my mouth, my tongue tracing
the soft syllables. It got stolen along the way somehow,
though I don't speak in broken English anymore. Add it to the list of items
we lost, but have to learn to stop missing.
Our bloodlines are still dragging,
those threads tangled vaguely in that space between east and west,
assigned identities not quite fitting. I know they said *the war is over,*
but I still want to fight. -
See more at: *http://www.artandwriting.org/media/132487/#sthash.EwGaKw04.dpuf*

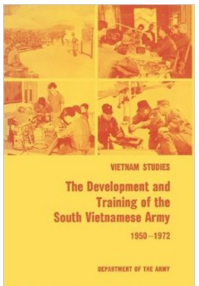
The US Adviser: Cao Van Vien, Dong Van Khuyen, Tran Dinh Tho



Originally published in 1980. This is a volume in the hard-to-find "Indochina Monographs" series published by the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Volumes in the series were written by officers who held responsible positions in the Cambodia, Laotian and South Vietnamese armed forces during the war in Indochina.

Available on Amazon
http://www.amazon.com/Adviser-Military-History-Indochina-Monograph/dp/1780392605/

South Vietnamese Army: BG James Collins



First published in 1975. From the preface: ""In 1954 the Army of South Vietnam was a collection of former French colonial troops with little command experience and no support forces worthy of mention. Gradually and despite a considerable degree of political and social instability, the Army, with strong American assistance, was molded into an effective fighting force by the efforts of Vietnamese leaders. After 1960 the South Vietnamese Army also acquired a counterinsurgency capability, but by 1965 increased political turmoil had undermined its effectiveness and necessitated the intervention of strong US combat forces.
http://www.amazon.com/Development-Training-South-Vietnamese-1950-1972/dp/1780392419/

ARVN ...continued

had approved that recommendation, although "with some reluctance." A year later, after the initial large-scale battles in the Ia Drang, said Westmoreland, "I decided that the M-16 was essential, not only for the American troops but for the Vietnamese. I made such a request in December 1965." But, Westmoreland had to admit, "upon my departure in the summer of 1968, only a fraction of the Vietnamese forces had been equipped." Of course they had been relegated to last priority for the new weapons, and there had been influential officials who opposed giving them modern weapons at all, so that result was predictable.

In April 1968 *Time* magazine reported that the new Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, had announced "a dramatic increase in the U.S. production of the M-16 so as to equip all ARVN units by midsummer." That was something Secretary of Defense McNamara had never agreed to, and that Westmoreland made only sporadic and at best half-hearted efforts to advocate, evidence of his belief that U.S. forces could come in and do the job for the Vietnamese without the necessity of ever equipping them to do it for themselves.

Charles MacDonald did considerable interviewing of others to obtain background for Westmoreland's memoirs, for which he was the ghostwriter. One of those with whom he talked was General Harold K. Johnson, Army Chief of Staff during 1964-1968. MacDonald laid out his problem: "In talking with General Westmoreland from time to time," he said, "I've gotten his story of having recommended the M-16 for the ARVN as early as the [word(s) inaudible: Ia Drang?] fight back in the fall of 1965. And I have also asked him on occasion, 'Well, why has this only recently been fulfilled?' And the only answer he could give me was—said probably production difficulties in the United States. Can you shed any light on that at all?"

General Johnson could and did. He did not remember exactly when General Westmoreland's initial request for the rifles came in, he said, "But you will find—this is a personal view, and one in which I am perhaps being too candid—General Westmoreland has a request to cover every contingency. He has a magnificent file as far as Vietnam is concerned."

General Frank Besson was at that time commanding the Army Materiel Command, and he remembered the Westmoreland request for 100,000 M-16 rifles. "I also recommended that we give it to the Vietnamese, the South Vietnamese," recalled Besson, "because I felt we ought to give our allies the best we could. But they said, 'No. We can't give it to the South Vietnamese because it will undoubtedly be captured by the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese and will be used against us.' The honest-to-god fact—that is what they said."

It was not until March 1967 that an allocation of M-16 rifles for the South Vietnamese was reinstated, the first shipments arriving the following month. "But," said Brigadier General James Lawton Collins Jr., "until 1968 there were only enough to equip the airborne and Marine battalions of the General Reserve."

In his debriefing report upon leaving Vietnam in August 1968 General Fred Weyand emphasized the effects: "The long delay in furnishing ARVN modern weapons and equipment, at least on a par with that furnished the enemy by Russia and China, has been a major contributing factor to ARVN ineffectiveness."

To the last Westmoreland sought to evade responsibility for the longstanding failure to properly arm the South Vietnamese, and appears never to have even considered giving them the M-16 rifle and other advanced weaponry *before* similarly equipping U.S. forces. He was reinforced in this view by the similarly uncomprehending General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who at one point cabled to tell Westmoreland: "You will readily perceive the sensitive public relations issues which would be raised if we provide M-16 rifles to non-U.S. units while U.S. combat units are issued less preferred rifles." Thus: "I must request that you defer equipping non-U.S. units with the M-16 rifle until we can sort out the rifle situation."

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So relentless was Westmoreland in giving first consideration to American forces, last to the South Vietnamese, that those priorities even extended to munitions. "For a while during 1966 ammunition stocks were low, forcing me to limit ARVN artillery to two rounds per day per gun," said Westmoreland in his memoirs, "but no American unit ever wanted for necessary ammunition."

Meanwhile the enemy was energetically and effectively improving virtually the entire arsenal of his forces. "During 1966," stated a communist history of the war, "many new types of weapons and implements of war were sent to the battlefield, increasing the equipment of main force and local force units." The upgrades included both more weapons and improved ones, to include B-40 and B-41 rocket launchers. "AK assault rifles were issued to units down to the local force level." And new and better models of recoilless rifles, mortars, and anti-aircraft machine guns were issued down through provincial local force battalions.

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ARVN ...continued

South Vietnam's armed forces were criticized by many during these years, including some Americans who served in Vietnam. But General Fred Weyand tied the admitted deficiencies of those forces to the paltry support Westmoreland was giving them. "The reason why some ARVN battalions, as well as RF and PF units, never operated at any distance from their fortified bases in 1965 and 1966," said Weyand, "was that they were quite literally surrounded by a strong, but well-hidden enemy and these lightly armed, under-strength units simply did not have the capability to deal with them."

This disparity in resources, especially weapons, persisted throughout Westmoreland's tenure in command in Vietnam. Ambassador Bunker noted it in a reporting cable to the President only weeks before Westmoreland's departure. "The enemy has also been able to equip his troops with increasingly sophisticated weapons; they are in general better equipped than the ARVN forces, a fact which has an adverse bearing on ARVN morale," said Bunker in a 29 February 1968 message.

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These wasted years—when the South Vietnamese could have been developing in terms of leadership, combat operations experience, and skill in utilization of more modern weaponry—had cascading effects in the years of American withdrawal. Many of Westmoreland's senior associates understood, at least in retrospect, the negative consequences of ignoring the South Vietnamese armed forces during these years, and they said so. In Douglas Kinnard's survey of Army general officers who commanded in Vietnam he included a list of actions which, given another chance, they would most like to see given more emphasis. Ninety-one percent of the respondents (the highest percentage opting for any of the eight items on Kinnard's list) selected "improving the ARVN."

Ambassador Maxwell Taylor put it succinctly in describing the Westmoreland years: "We never really paid attention to the ARVN army," he said. "We didn't give a damn about them."

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When Creighton Abrams had been in Vietnam for only a month (during the period when he was deputy to General Westmoreland), in early June 1967, he sent a significant message to General Harold K. Johnson, the Army Chief of Staff. "It is quite clear to me," said Abrams, "that the US military here and at home have thought largely in terms of US operations and support of US forces." Thus: "ARVN and RF/PF are left to the advisors." Added Abrams, "I fully appreciate that I have been as guilty as anyone. The result has been that shortages of essential equipment or supplies in an already austere authorization has not been handled with the urgency and vigor that characterize what we do for US needs. Yet the responsibility we bear to ARVN is clear." And finally: "The ground work must begin here. I am working at it."

Westmoreland all along had given priority to U.S. forces for modern weapons and combat force multipliers such as close air support, B-52 missions, artillery, and helicopters. Bringing in large numbers of additional U.S. forces to compete for such assets would inevitably move Vietnamese armed forces backward, not ahead, in their ability to take over the primary role in defending their nation against the communists.

Westmoreland saw to it that his American forces—already far superior to the South Vietnamese in almost every respect—received the new M-16 rifles, the M-60 machine guns, the M-79 grenade launchers, the best modern equipment, before the South Vietnamese. The Americans already had a cornucopia of armed helicopters, close air support, artillery and mortars of every description, and a plentitude of ground and air mobility. Meanwhile the RVNAF, treated as poor relations, were up against VC and NVA forces that had for years been equipped with the latest infantry weaponry of Soviet design.

Given Westmoreland's single-minded focus on the main force war, and on his personal conduct of it using American units, it apparently never occurred to him that the wiser course of action would have been to give all the good modern gear to the South Vietnamese first, then to U.S. units if there was any left over.

At the very end of Westmoreland's tour in Vietnam, half a year after he claimed he had come up with the scheme to Vietnamize the war, an approved priority list for providing equipment to the South Vietnamese refuted such a claim. Priority 1 was U.S. forces in Southeast Asia. Priority 2 was U.S. forces deploying to Southeast Asia. Priority 3 was the training base in the United States. Priority 4 was U.S. forces in Korea. Priority 5 was U.S. reserve forces called to active duty. Not until Priority 6 were South Vietnamese forces so much as mentioned, and even then it was to be materiel dribbled out over time: "Equipment for time-phased modernization of the RVNAF. Equipment for the unprogrammed Civilian Irregular Defense Group improvement and modernization." There were three lower priorities on the list, and last place was also instructive. Priority 9: "Equipment for RVNAF expansion in FY 1969."

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ARVN ...continued

General Richard Stilwell provided a definitive view of the actual situation: "I think one of the most significant differences between the Westmoreland tenure and that of Abrams is that, under the former, overriding priority was given to the buildup and sustainment of US forces. And the training, equipment, mothering, helping the ARVN forces took a relative back seat—until Abrams got there." Asked in Douglas Kinnard's survey about Vietnamization efforts "beginning in 1969," 73 percent of responding Army generals who had commanded in Vietnam said that program "should have been emphasized years before." Said South Vietnam's top soldier, General Cao Van Vien, after the war: "The U.S. and the RVN wasted seven valuable years since 1961 by developing the RVNAF in a half-hearted way."

The JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff) History, tells the true story: "The United States had included the strengthening of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) among its objectives since the beginning of its involvement in South Vietnam, but in the period 1965 through early 1968, major US attention was devoted primarily to the conduct of combat operations. It was only after the 1968 Tet offensive, when President Johnson ruled out a further US troop increase in South Vietnam, that the United States undertook serious preparations for eventual South Vietnamese assumption of the combat effort." By that time Westmoreland was on his way home.

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i. Westmoreland marginal note in the copy of Douglas Kinnard's book *The War Managers* sent to him by Kinnard, then extensively marked up by Westmoreland and returned to Kinnard, p. 23.
ii. *Buddha's Child,* p. 336.
iii. Truong, *RVNAF and US Operational Cooperation and Coordination,* p. 166.
iv. Lung, *Strategy and Tactics,* p. 73.
v. Khuyen, *RVNAF Logistics*, p. 57.
vi. Westmoreland dictated notes, Box 41, WPSCL.
vii. Westmoreland, "General John Throckmorton," material dictated for memoirs preparation, Box 41, WPSCL. Wrote former Army Chief of Military History Brigadier General James Lawton Collins Jr., "After 1965 the increasing U.S. buildup slowly pushed Vietnamese armed forces materiel needs into the background. In December 1966 the Secretary of Defense directed that the issue of M16's to South Vietnam Army and Republic of Korea (ROK) forces be deferred and that the allocations previously planned for these forces be redirected to U.S. units." *The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army,* p. 101.
viii. *Time* (19 April 1968).
ix. Gen. Harold Keith Johnson CMH interview, 20 November 1970.
x. Ibid.
xi. Gen. Frank S. Besson Jr. Oral History, MHI.
xii. Collins, *Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army,* p. 101.
xiii. Weyand, Debriefing Report, Headquarters, II Field Force, Vietnam, 4 October 1968, Box 15, WPCMH.
xiv. Message, Wheeler to Sharp and Westmoreland, JCS 6767-66, 4 November 1966, Box 4, WPCMH.
xv. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, p. 243.
xvi. Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Official History*, p. 193.
xvii. Weyand, Debriefing Report, Headquarters, II Field Force, Vietnam, 15 July 1968.
xviii. Kinnard, *The War Managers,* p. 176. More than one response could be chosen, and an equal number—ninety-one percent—also chose "defining the objectives."
xix. As quoted in Andrew F. Krepinevich, "Vietnam: Evaluating the Ground War, 1965-1968," in Showalter and Albert, ed., *An American Dilemma*, p. 99. Krepinevich cited a 17 June 1982 interview with Taylor.
xx. Message, Abrams to Johnson, MAC 5307, 040950Z June 1967, CMH.
xxi. Army Chief of Staff's *Weekly Summary* (21 May 1968).
xxii. Stilwell interview, 26 January 1989.
xxiii. Kinnard, *The War Managers,* p. 144.
xxiv. Vien and Khuyen, *Reflections,* p. 80.
xxv. JCS History 1969-1970, p. 177.

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