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NILE MILTON

Dr Walter Capps

A few weeks ago I watched with a great deal of interest the 60 Minutes broadcast concerning the course that you are teaching at your university on the Vietnam War. What you are doing takes a great deal of courage but it is something that must be done if America is to learn from its own political mistakes. I would be most interested in receiving a copy of the course curriculum and a brief explanation of how it was set up. Certainly it is an issue or subject that should be considered at other institutes of learning in our country.

As a person who has worked a great deal in the Third World (resume enclosed) I am concerned about several issues that are related to the Vietnam experience. The first is the selective memory of what actually happened in Vietnam (and other countries) as viewed by our political leadership. Our current President refers to Vietnam as a fallen democracy and those fighting the Nansi Regime as "freedom fighters". Similar references have been made about fallen governments and "liberation movements" in Nicaragua, Cuba, Kampuchea and Angola. If democracy existed in any of these American supported dictatorships then it was spelled with a very small "d" and one must have a rather active imagination to think of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge or Somoza's ex National Guard as freedom fighters. Yet the American public seems to take this rhetoric at face value. My greatest fear is that it is not ignorance but apathy but no one seems to be willing to stand up and tell the President, Col North or any of the other power brokers that they are simply liars.

The second concern of mine is the replicability of the Vietnam scenario. The potential of it happening again is real. It may never reach

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the magnitude of Vietnam but whether it involves the loss of one, thousands or no American lives there is an identifiable pattern of failure in our foreign policy. As a Vietnam veteran who has also experienced the fall of the Shah of Iran and the downfall of the Nemeiri Regime in Sudan I can bear witness to this pattern of failure. It begins with America's support of corrupt dictatorships in the name of democracy and generally ends with the death of American servicemen and the creation of a wave of refugees.

The use of the American military has not been a sign of strength on our part but rather a sign of weakness. Often it reflects an inability of our foreign policy to cope in the foreign arena. The "marines are sent in" at the last moment often to cover up foreign policy blunders or ineptness. Often they are given unclear guidelines as to their objectives and faced with an inability to properly defend themselves. The loss of the 420 Marines in Beirut is a classic example of what I am trying to say.

My work in the third world has shown me that clearly the US foreign service has become an empire unto itself. It has to be understood by Americans that American foreign policy and those who serve it do not represent the people of our ~~own~~ country or our philosophy of government. This has doomed us to failure in the developing world. The ability of the foreign service to mature and change is nullified since there is no accountability for failure. Those who orchestrated the Vietnam fiasco were promoted not demoted.

The issue that I mainly want to discuss with you deals with the last chapter of Vietnam - although in some ways I feel this chapter of American history may never be closed. I call this chapter the last lie or the "last body count" of Vietnam - the US Indochinese Refugee Program. This story is not a happy one or an easy one for me to write. In a way I am uniquely qualified to tell the tale. The unit I was in, in the Army was assigned to work with refugees during the war (1969-71); I was deputy and then director of refugee <sup>screening</sup> ~~screening~~ operations in Singapore (1979-81) during the boat people crisis and I helped relocate refugees in upstate New York for the Lutheran Church (1981-82) after my return from Asia and Africa. In a sense I was

made a fool of twice by my own government since I not only volunteered for the US Army and Vietnam but also the US Indochinese Refugee Program. I simply should have known better. I am a man with two sets of ~~ghosts~~ Vietnamese ghosts; one from the war and the other from the refugee program. I half jokingly tell my veteran friends that I worry more about delayed stress from my work in Singapore than Vietnam.

I strongly believe that unless the truth about Vietnam comes out and America honestly attempts to change it, the reality is that 57000 Americans and countless Vietnamese died in vain. The refugee program is part of the story. ~~The~~ It is my belief that the refugee program was simply an extension of the war. The cast of characters essentially remained the same, food and medicine replaced bombs and bullets as weapons as our country developed new ways of killing Indochineses to cover up our failing foreign policy.

It must be understood that America shares responsibility with the Nansi regime for every refugee that drowned on the South China Sea, every woman raped by pirates, every human being killed by mines and gunfire along the Thai border. It is through their suffering that we keep the war going in Indochina. Once Americans accept the honors of a foreign policy that would shove people out onto the South China Sea. A policy that would create or enhance refugees to gain a political advantage - then possibly a healing process could begin. Hopefully this healing would also attempt to reduce the possibility

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for future Vietnams and eliminate the potential for the power brokers to use food and medicine as weapons against innocent people. American developmental assistance and refugee programs should be de-politized as much as possible.

I have included my own short story for your review. I make no claim at being a writer but my words come from the heart and should be read for content not style. Please excuse any errors but my only excuse is that my work does keep me busy. I believe this story gives a good view of what really happened after the fall of Saigon. There is certainly a lot more I could say since it was taken from a 400 page manuscript but I think it does do so well enough. If you care to comment on this or discuss this further please feel free to contact me. I would really like to hear from you.

I am in Africa/Middle East about 25% of the time but I think I have no travel scheduled until after the New Year. I will return from Egypt on or about 1 NOV 87. I do not know how I can be supportive of your work but I would do anything to get the truth out in a public forum.

Sincerely  
Paul J. Mannion

(1981-82) after my return from Asia and Africa. In a sense I was

## THE LAST BODY COUNT

June 1986 - THE WALL - huge rectangular shiny black slabs of marble stretching out of the earth in a V formation. A monument that literally names the human cost of war. America's portion of the Asian "Body Count". The human tally that signified victory or defeat in Vietnam. As I began my haj on the downward path toward the midpoint of the V, I slowly sank under a sea of names. The pressure of the depth, the weight of the bodies brought tears to my eyes.

I knew only one or two names among the entire slab of humanity before me. That fact did not lessen the guilt or pain I felt. They had all died for a lie. The great American foreign policy lie. Over 57,000 of America's youth sent to their deaths supporting a dictatorship in the name of democracy. Who today would give one drop of their blood in defense of the Thieu regime? That one American died was a sin but to see so many, so many who had lost the American dream, was pure murder.

How could our own government lie to us so? And yet not far from this very wall the actor was talking of new battles to be fought. New "democracies" to be defended at all costs. The pattern of failure and betrayal continues as the power brokers remain willing and eager to make our nation's capital a city of V shaped walls.

How could we lie to these souls now? The betrayal of democracy condemned us to political defeat in Vietnam. America had one chance, one hope for these souls not to have died in vain. That was to learn from our mistakes and not let it happen again. But we continued the lie as the pattern of failure in our foreign policy repeated itself in Iran, Nicaragua, Sudan and Lebanon.

It was no accident that this war monument was built by private funds. The Wall, like the returning veterans and the POW/MIA's, was witness to the travesty of justice that was Vietnam. And our government did not need witnesses. I was a witness. Possibly, I had seen more than most. They had died for so little. I had seen firsthand just how little. Looking at the Wall I knew why this trip was so essential to me. I came here to look at myself through all of them. I came to draw from their strength and courage. I needed to go forward with the truth no matter what the cost was to me. I could not lie to these souls nor could I lie to the Vietnamese friends I left behind.

I stood there in my own reflection. A man caught between two countries. A soul who loved both Vietnam and America. I had begun my love affair with Vietnam as a young soldier. I did two tours of duty in that chaos known as the Vietnam War. That experience was the beginning of my long journey.

Since the beginning of the American involvement in Vietnam our government had perpetrated a systematic manipulation of thousands of innocent people and the ruination of a country. Under the banner of democracy our country had allowed a brutal dictatorship to prosper and grow. The Gulf of Tonkin "incident" marked the beginning of the lie. The lie continues with the "freedom fighter" rhetoric of the current administration.

My involvement began with those two tours of duty from 1969 to 1971. I was an Army Public Health Advisor. For much of that time I worked with refugees. Some were refugees fleeing communist insurgency in the South. But what few Americans realized was that the United States and the South Vietnamese military actions were responsible for enormous numbers of refugees as well. Our free fire zones and massive air strikes destroyed whole regions, creating a refugee situation of overwhelming magnitude.

The camps in Quang Nam Province were places of death. Disease and malnutrition reigned supreme. Many Vietnamese suffered and died for lack of the basics in food and medicine. It wasn't that such supplies didn't exist. In most cases corrupt Vietnamese officials got hold of these American donated items and sold them - sometimes on the black market, sometimes to the North Vietnamese. Worse yet, U.S. officials knew of this and did nothing. America would not defend refugees created by a dictator whom we supported.

Refugees in 1969 were not a hot item.

1979 was a different story altogether. America "discovered" refugees. Saving Vietnamese "refugees" fleeing the "horrors" of communism became vogue in America. You couldn't pick up a paper or watch TV without seeing a story concerning the "plight of the boat people." Their situation was real. But no one realized that the stage was being set and that refugees were just one more part of the lie of what had been known as the Vietnam War.

America had collectively chosen to block out our most recent history, myself included. Warning lights should have been flashing in my mind's eye when ten years after the horror of those refugee camps in Vietnam the same US Government agencies were showing such deep concern for the health and welfare of the "boat people" as they floundered on the South China Sea.

I was in Singapore in 1981. I had been deputy and then director of refugee screening operations. My staff and I interviewed refugees as they arrived in the Port of Singapore. It was our job to determine if they were eligible for resettlement in America.

We had staff working what seemed like around the clock trying to stay one step ahead in that neverending and confusing business of "refugees". Many nights I found myself awakened in the middle of the night by the sound of the telephone ringing to let me know another ship was due into Singapore harbor with boat people aboard. When we weren't on ships or in the camp interviewing we were at our desks trying to sort through the insurmountable paperwork and red tape that wrapped itself around the mess in which we had found ourselves enmeshed.

Often we'd find ourselves exasperated, frustrated and asking of ourselves, "Why?" Why were we not feeling the satisfaction which should come with helping people in need? Why did so many of us have this pervasive sense of something amiss, something very wrong?"

I truly cared for the Vietnamese people. I would gladly welcome them into my country. But in Singapore reality was starting to over ride emotion. The facts were displacing what I had wanted and hoped to believe. I had hoped for once we had done something right toward Asians and yet I knew in my heart that it wasn't true.

The facts were that many of the boat people were not refugees. The facts were that the United States government knew this and did nothing. The facts were that the United States government was playing a very deadly game using the boat people as pawns.

As Americans attempted to bury the Vietnam war in the past, a draconian drama was unfolding on the South China Sea and along the Thai Border. At that point I had no idea of the role the US Government was playing. But instinctively I felt it was playing a very big hand behind the scenes.

There was a hollow feeling in my stomach, one I hadn't felt since Nam - a feeling of being lied to and manipulated. I couldn't pin it down. At the time I knew the reality of the refugee program. Anyone involved in refugee processing, who were willing to face it, knew the truth. Others may have absolved themselves by believing that helping "boat people" was part of a greater good.

The majority of the "boat people" interviewed by my office simply did not fill our own governments definition of the term refugee. To put it bluntly most of the Vietnamese coming out of Vietnam by 1980 were not refugees. Some were. Some were truly fleeing for their lives. These were the refugees the world had promised to help, the ones I had promised to help. These were the people we had a moral obligation to help. Vietnamese who had worked for Americans, who had put their lives on the line, people who found themselves abandoned after the U.S. pullout in 1975. But the vast majority of the Vietnamese on those boats were not those people.

I suppose like the great American crusade inside Vietnam, the US Indochinese Refugee Program started out with good intentions. At the very least the people "in the field" believed in what they were doing. They were as unaware of the manipulation of events before them as the American public.

And the refugee program did have its successes. In 1978 thanks to the dedication and hard work of a handful of Americans and Europeans in Asia during the early days of the program many lives were saved. The refugee program had also come to the aid of our ASEAN allies whose economies could not absorb the flow of refugees displaced onto their soil. And we had at least shown the world that America would come to the aid of a fallen ally and its people. But like the war, under the facade of good intentions, the lie lingered and grew.

Starving victims fleeing horrible Communist persecution - that was the image most of the world envisioned when they read about the boat people. There were some of those. There was the postal worker who choose not to flee in 1975. Why would the Communists bother with him? But they did. He spent five years in a reeducation camp. He was persecuted. In 1980, upon his release, he fled. He was a refugee. But by then he was unique to the program.

And before that there were soldiers, men who had served their country, men who had no choice but to flee as the Communists took over. They were no longer the norm either.

What was the norm? It was people like the two Vietnamese doctors in the Singapore refugee camp who refused to treat their fellow refugees. The reason they gave was that they were now "in a democracy and no longer had to work". Or the Vietnamese who refused to move to another refugee camp in Indonesia to make room for other refugee arrivals. They had learned that moving across a border would mean that they had to pay customs on the new stereo equipment purchased in Singapore. It was the mother who refused family reunification to join her young children in France because she would rather go to America. And it was the man who asked if he could pay extra money for his "free ride" to America so that he could go "first class".

There is no doubt the Indochinese came for a better life. And there is no doubt that life in Vietnam meant hardships. But by 1980 there is also no doubt that our refugee assistance program had become a fraud, one the U.S. Government eagerly helped to initiate and nurture. The American people's collective guilt toward Vietnam made for very fertile ground in which to sow the seeds of this fraud.

I suppose I shared in that guilt. At least, that is how I felt. I had known many fine Vietnamese men and women during my years in Vietnam. As an American I felt the guilt of abandoning them



as I watched the news coverage that April day in 1975, the day Saigon fell. I also felt guilt for the nameless Vietnamese citizens who had been buffeted by years of war. The Vietnamese on a whole are wonderful people; intelligent, compassionate and warm. Our participation in the war helped to destroy their homeland. Oh yes, I felt the guilt. I live with the ghosts that returned home with me. And I still do feel for the Indochinese along with a conviction that the U.S. government owes the Vietnamese a great deal. But not this way. Not with the lie. Not with a refugee program whose mandate had become political revenge rather than humanitarian assistance.

The guilt we felt played right into the hands of Washington, as certain policy makers planned the next phase of the war with Vietnam. The nation, like myself, had to somehow absolve itself. America needed a cleansing. The refugee program became an excellent psychological atonement. Like myself, most Americans would accept the refugee program at face value - not considering any of the ramifications or hidden political motives. The enthusiasm in America for the Asian refugees was overwhelming. Throughout our country church groups, civic organizations, businesses and private citizens would mobilize to welcome, house, educate and employ the wave of Indochinese knocking on the "golden door". This generosity and hospitality showed the beauty of America and its people. Well hidden were the intrigues and motives of those behind-the-scenes policy makers.

In Singapore we interviewed and screened 18,000 boat people over a two year period. We heard many stories and many reasons for the exodus from Vietnam. Some, such as the postal officer from Da Nang, related tales of terror and despair.

But most reported they came because of unemployment, no upward mobility, no chance for higher education, lack of food and a general dislike for their government's policies.

Most of the population in developing countries around the world could state the same thing, but that would not make them refugees. If pressed the Vietnamese would tell the interviewer the "standard" political persecution story. But data I was collecting on the boat people refuted the majority of political persecution stories.

Age was a factor. Most of the people my office interviewed between 1979 - 1981 were too young to have fought in "our war" except as low echelon enlisted men. The interviewees came from occupations with low political profiles such as farmers, fishermen and street merchants. Over 50% of them claimed to be students. This was obviously an inordinately high percentage. Communist Vietnam could not be educating that many students. What did it mean? It meant a lie.

We knew that the student classification was a lie for two reasons. First those fleeing Vietnam were trying to maximize their welfare benefits in America. They had heard that the student classification would ensure their free education. Secondly and more ominous to me was the fact that a large percentage were young males trying to avoid the fighting in Kampuchea.

They were deserters, ex-North Vietnamese Infantry and Viet Cong. This could not be statistically proven but in interviews I conducted with an admitted Viet Cong he claimed that there were many more "like him" in the refugee camps or planning to depart Vietnam. The unusually large percentage of males in the boat people population added weight to what my Viet Cong friend was saying.

I felt no animosity toward these men. I could even sympathize with their not wanting to fight an unwinnable war but America was resettling its former enemies. What an irony - that those who fought against us in the rice fields of Asia would actually receive a warmer welcome and better benefits in America than my brother Vietnam veterans.

There were other corroborating statistics that could shed some light on this insanity. For instance during 1980 upwards of 60% of the boat people arriving in Hong Kong were from North Vietnam - the side that fought against us. My office received a State Department cable to be on the "look out for computer trained North Vietnamese". I myself interviewed a North Vietnamese civil servant who had a four year degree in economics from a university in Russia. The bottom line was that the lure of America was too great. America was just too good of a deal to pass up.

The carrot was dangled before them - the promised land - America - and they grabbed for it.

I began to get an inkling of something being "rotten in Asia" a short time after my arrival in Singapore. The unique regulations involving refugees arriving in Singapore, quite different from other refugee processing centers, helped to bring the problem to light. Refugees could only come to Singapore if they were rescued at sea by merchant or naval vessels. These refugees would be resettled within 90 days to the home country of the ship that had rescued them. Under this system Indochinese rescued by a British ship would go to Britian, those on Dutch ships would go to Holland and so on. Refugees could come to America from Singapore if they were rescued by an American owned ship or if the refugee had an immediate family member living in America.

In Singapore, my office was often deluged by irate Vietnamese from the refugee camp. The complaint? They would have never considered leaving Vietnam had they known they would end up in

Europe. This sent my mind reeling. My image of a refugee was that of a person willing to accept shelter in any country, anxious to escape oppression. But these people were out shopping for a country.

I was not alone in my feelings. In 1980 the US Immigration Service, the agency which approves all immigration into America, began rejecting large numbers of Indochinese as not qualified as refugees. United Nations representatives during this period made several statements alluding to the feeling that Indochinese rather than being bona fide refugees, were economic migrants.

The host countries of the ASEAN federation began to put pressure on the US. Their concern was that these enormous numbers of Indochinese economic migrants contributed to both internal and external destabilization in the region. They no longer cared to be part of what they perceived as a Vietnamese migration program.

Beyond the refugee question was the fact that the refugee program, supported by federal funds, had become rampant with US immigration and welfare fraud.

Vietnamese arriving in refugee processing centers through out S.E. Asia knew exactly what to say when interviewed. Many knew what to claim to increase their chances of resettlement in America and to maximize their welfare benefits once inside America. In one sadly humorous example Vietnamese guided their craft with navigational maps that had been purchased in Singapore by other boat people. These "refugees" even knew the names of the people on my staff who would interview them. The pipeline for this advance knowledge was a simple one - the U.S. postal service. After the fall of Saigon mail and parcel post service resumed immediately. In time it even became possible to cable and telephone into Vietnam. Vietnamese who had resettled in America would simply send information on the American welfare system and refugee processing procedures to people inside Vietnam.

In these letters they would include lists of pseudo "relatives" who were living in America. Those "relatives" could be claimed as family living in the United States, thus ensuring resettlement in America under the "family re-unification program". Since most boat people could state that they had lost all identification, such as birth certificates in Vietnam or in transit, interviewers, unable to prove otherwise would have to accept the interviewee at face value. Once inside America the Vietnamese would often admit their lies but there was little or no federal punishment and therefore no incentive to stop the lies.

The fraud was common knowledge among refugee workers. Some tried to report it. The information never got to the American people. Instead the web of lies continued. It would turn out

that the trail of lies would lead directly to the Oval Office and the man who held the highest political office in the land today.

President Reagan during his early tenure in the White House received two classified cables originating in Asia from US Indochinese Refugee Processing Centers on the reality of the refugee program. One originated from my office and the second came from a US refugee processing office in Thailand. The cable that I worked on outlined the massive immigration and welfare fraud in the program and made recommendations on how to scale down the program.

(By then the United Nations had negotiated an Orderly Departure Program with Hanoi. This program's task would be to coordinate emmigration efforts inside Vietnam. It would require a cooperative effort with both the US Government and Vietnam. The program could do much to eliminate the fraud and disorder of the refugee system but neither government showed much willingness to talk.)

My Vietnam experience should have prepared me for the scenerio that would follow. A few days after the President received the Singapore cable all US refugee processing centers received a response. It came under the title of "PRESS GUIDANCE CABLE" signed by then Secretary of State, Alexander Haig. This cable, in detail, spelled out the responses refugee officers should give if questioned by the media about the legitamacy of the program. Implied were the responses we should not give.

Reading the cable, freshly off the telex, I felt as if I had been struck by lightning. I read it a second time. My entire body shook. I could not believe my own eyes. To me it was the Vietnam War revisited. Once more the government was ignoring the truth received from its own field officers. Once more America was in the business of counting bodies.

During the war we counted dead enemy soldiers as an indicator for victory on the battlefield. Now in the face of defeat America was counting living Asian bodies escaping Vietnam as an indicator for victory on the diplomatic front. The refugee program had simply become the last body count of the Vietnam War.

Not only was diplomacy at stake but, as in the war, the government was creating a huge infrastructure to maintain this body count. This time it fed not on killing the enemy but on the movement and resettlement of human beings. As it would later be alluded to in Senate testimony, America had created a "Refugee Industry". With jobs, policy and careers depending on the refugee program, America was going to resettle refugees, no matter how much of a lie it was or how many Asians would die.

I did not care about the North Vietnamese communists part in the flight of Indochinese. The fact that America was implicated at all sickened me. I had come to realize that the journey out of Vietnam was no longer the desperate flee of individuals from communist oppression as pictured but rather a dash to the wealth and power of America. We invitingly swung open "the Golden Door" and beckoned a large portion of S.E. Asia inside. It was capitalism at its best. American citizenship for the price of one perilous boat ride. American foreign policy in an attempt to atone for its failures had created a new "gold rush" and like the early 49'ers of our West, the 79'ers from the East would be willing to risk the journey for the safe haven of California.

In 1981 I left S.E. Asia to work with another refugee program in North Africa. Strangely at this point, with all I knew, I could have still accepted the Indochinese Refugee program. I still felt that we owed something to the people of Indochina. Unfortunately for me my emotions dimmed my sense of reality. I had yet to truly open my eyes to the policy implications and other potential impacts of American refugee policy. I was still confused.

As I began my long trek home through Africa the question of "why" still lingered with me. Our government had never shown much compassion for the peoples of Asia. The program had limited political value and by now the policy makers certainly knew the truth. Yet the program continued! I couldn't get the question out of my head. Over the years as my experience grew, the truth became clearer to me and much uglier.

I could have accepted the fraud and wrongdoings had the "boat people" crisis and the subsequent refugee program been just an isolated attempt by a people and a nation to relieve the guilt of our involvement in a corrupt war. Refugees are a natural occurring phenomenon after the violent overthrow of any government. Historically, there were refugees after our own American Revolution in 1776. But our Indochinese Refugee Policy was an attempt to entice Asians to depart their homeland. It was done to cover up the lies, fabrications and failures of our foreign policy - especially our Vietnam Policy.

Although aware of Hanoi's part in the flight of Indochinese from Asia I still had to wonder how much punishment the Vietnamese people really deserved. When weighing the atrocities committed on Americans by its enemies in the twentieth century and counterbalancing this with human rights violations perpetuated by US supported dictators, the North Vietnamese were hardly in the big leagues. After the Second World War we forgave our enemies and helped them rebuild their nations but North Vietnam had made a fatal mistake. They won the war. In an attempt to oust one of the worst dictatorships in Vietnamese history the North Vietnamese wounded the pride of the United States, a country that could not admit its mistakes or accept defeat.

The war in Vietnam would not end because America would not let it. The war with Vietnam after 1975 would simply take on new forms. The predicted communist "bloodbath" against former members of the fallen Thieu regime never occurred and American foreign policy experts became desperate to find flaws in the communist governments policies in order to justify their own failed policies. Our government needed to prove that what we had wrought in S.E. Asia was not in vain. The power brokers in Washington had to show America, the world and themselves that the 57,000 dead Americans and the countless numbers of physically and mentally wounded souls had been worth the failed crusade. Vietnam had exposed the terrible weakness and impotency of our foreign policy and America had to scramble to cover up that weakness.

The Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, the New Economic Zones, Re-education camps, POW/MIA'S and refugees became the new weapons in an antagonistic war of words against the Hanoi Regime. Our government counted on the short term memory of its citizens and won. As a person who had worked in the refugee camps inside Vietnam and Thieu's political prisons during the war, fifteen years after the fact, I took little comfort in our new found compassion for the oppressed. As a young Army medical advisor in Vietnam I had vainly tried to treat those women and children tortured to insanity in Thieu's political prisons. I attempted to feed those helpless refugees in Quang Nam Province who were left to starve by the "democracy" America supported.

And yet from our glass house we were throwing rocks at the North Vietnamese. Forgotten was the fact that America had also illegally invaded Kampuchea. No one seemed to see the black humor of an American administration showing such concern about missing MIA'S while at the same time showing such little compassion for those Vietnam veterans known to be alive and suffering within America.

Even before the war of words had begun America had set into motion a devastating weapon that would be unleashed against the innocent people of Vietnam. The weapon was much more destructive than any B-52 bomber attack and a great deal less selective. America during its ten years of warfare in Indochina had managed to defoliate much of South Vietnam through the use of chemical sprays. Our aircraft, artillery and naval gunfire had dumped massive amounts of ordnance into rice fields and irrigation systems in both North and South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese in capturing the spoils of war also captured what was spoiled by war. South Vietnam without the massive amounts of US aid was a country in economic ruin. Essentially South Vietnam was an agricultural country with little industry. Upwards of 60% of the people were unemployed living in cities or refugee camps.

The South Vietnamese in this situation were ripe to be manipulated by external events. American policy makers had to understand the desperation of the situation. Where was the compassion for these people, our allies, when the decision was made to cut-off medical and food assistance heading for the South after the fall of Saigon? From that point on we embargoed Vietnam and pressured our allies to do the same. In America numerous church groups and voluntary agencies pleaded with our government to show mercy for the Vietnamese people but in vain. In an effort to prove that the South Vietnamese could not live under communism we used food as a weapon and starved Indochinese out onto the South China Sea.

America sat back and waited like vultures on a fence. To no one's surprise Vietnam experienced crop failures in 1976 and 1977. By 1977 Vietnam was 2 million tons short of rice and by 1978 the figure reached 3 million tons. America's conscience was certainly absent during those years. Who did our policy makers think they would be hurting with a food and medicine embargo? The Russians would certainly not feed South Vietnamese and the Northern Vietnamese would not give up what little food they had to feed their former Southern adversaries. Our former allies, the South Vietnamese were the ones to suffer and starve.

It was little wonder that the second massive wave of refugees occurred in 1978. From this point on America poured gasoline onto the refugee fires. Our normalization of relations with the Peoples Republic of China sealed the fate of thousands of Sino-Vietnamese who now had to leave Vietnam as the Hanoi Regime attempted to rid itself of a potential Fifth Column within its borders. With Chinese troops attacking from the North and the Khmer Rouge attacking from the West, Hanoi invaded Kampuchea in an attempt to eliminate the potential of a two front war. The Kampuchean incursion created more refugees both inside Vietnam and along the Thai-Kampuchean border. Our indirect and possibly direct support of a Kampuchean rebel coalition (including the Khmer Rouge) keeps refugee camps filled along the Thai border to this very day. In a total loss of conscience and humanity America cast the deciding vote that gave the exiled mass murderer Pol Pot a Kampuchean seat in the United Nations.

On the diplomatic front the American Government enhanced refugee departures by speeding up the required processing procedures for Asian refugees to resettle in America. Citizenship restrictions were loosened, funds were allocated for educating and training the resettled Indochinese and quotas concerning the numbers of Indochinese allowed into America were drastically increased. The intake reached 168,000 Indochinese per year by 1980. America became a bargain basement commodity as our State Department began to give away American citizenship. In early 1979 the U.S. Seventh Fleet was stationed off the coast of Vietnam to act as a seagoing mass transit system for escaping Vietnamese. Voice of America (VOA) and the British Broadcasting System (BBC) acted as our public relations firm with Vietnamese

radio broadcasts indicating the presence of the US fleet and changes in US refugee policy into Vietnam. Boat People interviewed at this time by New York Times correspondence admitted that their departure from Vietnam was enhanced by the presence of the US Navy. They reported that their source of information was the VOA radio broadcasts.

Funding for the departure of Indochinese also became an American proposition. In failing to stop mail shipments into Vietnam, our government allowed huge amounts of luxury items to be shipped into Vietnam by resettled Indochinese. To this day a large black market flourishes in Vietnam including such items as; medicines, radios, tape players, liquors, perfumes and American cigarettes. The import and sale of these items not only is a source of revenue for the communist government in the form of taxes and kickbacks but it also helped fund the supplies needed for Vietnamese "boat people" departures.

In 1978 the US Treasury Department enacted an unusual law that permitted Vietnamese living in America to send money to their relatives in South Vietnam "for the purpose of emigration." The law was diplomatically unusual since the US government had no formal governmental relations with the communist government of Vietnam. No diplomatic relations meant that there was no US Embassy or US Consul in Vietnam. Therefore there was no possibility for legal migration procedures to America. At that time the only type of immigration possible was of a clandestine illegal nature. America had secured the funding necessary to feed the refugee industry. (Later America would work out an agreement with the Hanoi Regime for the Orderly Departure Program [ODP] but processing was so slow and departures so few that the only logical recourse for most Vietnamese was the sea).

As for the ever opportunistic Vietnamese communists the refugee program was used totally to their advantage. The program became an economic/political pressure release valve for a strained economy. Functioning like a human vacuum cleaner the communists used our refugee program to sweep the country of all those who did not fit into their society. The Chinese were the first to be "encouraged" to go followed by the unemployed, political activists and dissidents, war widows and children, merchants and welfare recipients. The Peoples Republic of China was allowed to send their ships to Vietnamese harbors to pick up the now unwanted Sino-Vietnamese. Hanoi even created it's own refugee program. They created a secret office that had processing centers all along the Vietnamese coast. For a fee they "assisted" those Vietnamese seeking a clandestine departure from Vietnam.

The communists used their departure program to sweep the country of hidden private gold reserves. The "fees" or bribes charged by government officials to look the other way as the Vietnamese escaped were accepted only in gold. This not only became another source of income for Hanoi but at a time when the



communists were attempting to put new restrictions on private business they were able to effectively neutralize the private wealth of the country.

If there was ever a glimmer of hope for a revival of South Vietnamese nationalism, our refugee policy, managed to flush it out of the country and onto the sea. For the short term publicity of showing Southeast Asians "voting with their feet" our policies actually strengthened the grip of communism in Indochina by ridding the country of anyone who might fight the Hanoi regime.

Standing at the WALL, the thousands of names watching me silently, I wondered what had become of America. By 1986 the "Empire" had struck back and with a terrible vengeance. Devastated by the guilt of defeat in Vietnam and the humiliation of the Iranian hostage crises, America had hired itself an actor to be its President. Americans wanted to hear good news and we needed to feel strong again. In what seemed like an instant the pendulum had swung back to pre-Vietnam America. Once more our government was playing "policeman of democracy" but this time in the Middle East. The murder of over 400 American boys in Lebanon was dismissed as patriotism. Hometown America had not learned the simple fact that the use of our military power was not a sign of strength but a sign of American weakness. All too often America would "send in the Marines" to shore up a failed foreign policy.

And most Americans seem to approve of the mining of Nicaraguan harbors and the killing of Nicaraguan civilians by US supported Contra rebels. American troops would invade Grenada and American college students would actually celebrate the event. The bully on the block had just beat up the blind kid and Americans applauded from their front porches. Sabers rattled and flags waved throughout the nation as Rocky and Rambo became the celluloid representation of our foreign policy. Punch drunk and psychotic America internationally seemed determined to thrash Russians and machine gun Asians and Latin Americans. Our labeling of the Contras in Latin America and the Khmer Rouge in Asia as "Freedom Fighters" would make this term synonymous with murder and terror.

In this scenerio where do refugees fit in? My experience in the world has taught me to no longer look at events as isolated incidents but as part of a whole picture. Refugees have become a serious component of a failing foreign policy - the last lie - the last body count. They have become a human distraction to shift public attention away from our governments failures in the third world. US refugee policy is America treating sypmtoms rather than disease. In the case of Vietnam it could even be aimed like a weapon at a particular group of people. Whether our government is extracting masses of people as in Cuba, Vietnam or Kampuchea or small entourages as in the case of

Somoza or Marcos the aim is always more political than humanitarian.

The policy is also cruelly selective. In 1980 during a period when America was eagerly resettling 168,000 Indochinese refugees under the same program guidelines America could only resettle 3000 refugees from the entire continent of Africa - a region that claimed 25% of the worlds refugees. Africans were simply the wrong refugees, with the wrong color skin, fleeing the wrong communist dictatorships.

Those relief workers who were in Africa in 1981 could have easily predicted the coming catastrophic cycle of disease and starvation that would be witnessed on American TV in 1984. American government officials knew of the coming disaster as well but chose to let the wound fester and infect. The family of man in North Africa was victimized not only by the forces of nature and civil war but also by the forces of U.S. foreign policy. The sight of women and children starving under a communist flag makes for very good press.

In 1985 our government came riding to the rescue in Africa , like the 7th Cavalary in a western movie, and we could not understand why Ethiopians did not stand on wobbly legs to applaud our entrance. If North Africa got too little too late those poor souls fleeing various forms of political terror and human depravity in places such as Haiti, El Salvadore and Nicaragua got nothing at all. It was not their time before the "golden door", not their time because there is no advantage to recognizing their existence or their needs.

I noticed that my brow was sweating and I found myself staring at myself in the somber reflection of the Wall. I turned to see the figures looking down at me from the ridge. I saw them as if they had appeared for the first time. They couldn't be real but ghosts of my past. A black, a hispanic and a white dressed in full battle gear. Some say they came to the Wall in search of friends. I know now they had come in search of America and the truth. They were three wise men frozen in time. If they could talk they would tell us that America was worth the sacrific. But defense begins with truth. They and I knew that the Wall was there because of the ignorance and indifference of American citizens.

My thoughts turned to another "body count" and another country - a country I had left in war so many years ago - a country still at war. I thought of the people who had lived in that country and their warmth and kindness to me. Like the Vietnam veterans the Vietnamese certainly deserved better from America. I wondered if in time they would ever truly realize what America had done to them.

During the war we bombed, pillaged and raped the nation of Vietnam. Our "development programs" created a nation of drug addicts, prostitutes and those dependent on US aid for survival. Turning our backs on true democracy we had given that nation over to the criminal elements of the Thieu regime making defeat inevitable. After the fall America set into motion a chain of events that pull the Asian from his motherland.

Our government did not care about the issues that lingered after the war. We were not a nation able to admit our past mistakes. We had no interest in seeking a peaceful solution with Vietnam. Instead we took a darker course and continued the lie by continuing the war. We did not seek or want solutions concerning our MIA'S, the Amerasians, Agent Orange or the boat people. We wanted them to be our new weapons.

Where had our national conscience gone? As long as Americans retained those in power who would be willing to lie to us about our simplest of philosophies, as long as we embraced their lies and accepted the false sense of power, then defeat would be our destiny and walls and refugees would be the devastating results.

I glanced to the West, toward the direction of Vietnam as if I could see the farmland that had been left unplowed, the fishing boat that no longer could be navigated and the ancestor who could no longer be worshiped. I felt sorrow for the Indochinese. I felt sorrow for myself, for the loss of innocence and pride. I looked to the Wall, to the silent questioning names. I felt sorrow for my long suffering comrades. The lies would not allow us to sleep in peace. But most of all I felt a great fear.

A chill ran down my spine as I wondered when the body count would begin again.



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# PAUL JOSEPH GIANNONE, M.P.H.

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## Professional Objectives:

An administrative or sales position dealing with program planning, development or personnel management.

## Areas of Expertise:

- International/National project design and planning
- Skilled in interviewing techniques
- Personnel recruitment and training
- Community workshop presentation
- Statistical analysis
- Budget planning
- Interagency project coordination
- Cross cultural relations
- Grant writing
- Job development
- Family counseling
- Research project initiation and monitoring

## Professional Experience:

- 1985-Present     **Program Coordinator for Africa and the Middle East.**  
Family Health International  
Position based in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. Responsible for the planning, administration and evaluation of family planning research projects and institutional development programs in assigned region. Activities include; planning and development of regional strategies for contraceptive technology research; initiation and monitoring of research trials, recruitment and training of research investigators; budget development and monitoring; proposal development and writing; coordination of activities with international agencies, foreign ministries and US government agencies; dissemination of information and the resupply of study materials to field investigators; maintenance of records and data concerning area of responsibility; travel to the field as required. Countries of responsibility include; Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Yemen Arab Republic and Turkey.
- 1985             **Relief/Health Coordinator**  
League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS)  
Position based in Khartoum, Sudan. Responsible for the coordination, monitoring and supply of LRCS field teams operating in drought affected areas of Sudan. Coordinated LRCS activities with all governmental and non-governmental agencies involved with drought relief operations. Formulated LRCS standard operating procedures, plan operations and performance evaluations. Responsible for a staff of 70 people and a budget of over \$10 million.
- 1983-84         **Writer - Professional Sabbatical**  
Researched and wrote a 400 page manuscript on U.S. refugee policy, designed to give an objective view of American refugee policy showing its use as a component of foreign policy and the impact of refugee policy nationally and internationally.
- 1982             **Refugee Resettlement Coordinator**  
Lutheran Services for Refugees (LSR)  
Position based in Rochester, New York. Responsible for the resettlement of refugees from Asia, Africa and Europe. Involved in all phases of the resettlement process including grant writing, program development, the coordination of activities between state and voluntary agencies as well as career and personal counseling. Also responsible for the supervision of a refugee halfway house used for temporary quarters.
- 1981             **Refugee Consultant**  
International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)  
Position based in Sudan, Africa. Responsible for the planning and development of a refugee screening and processing system in Sudan and Djibouti for Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees eligible for U.S. resettlement. Assisted in coordination of refugee aid projects involving voluntary agencies, the United Nations and the Sudanese Government. Recommended to ICMC the type of projects needed to assist those refugees relocating in Sudan.

1979-1981

**Project Director/Deputy Director**  
International Catholic Migration Commission

Position based in Singapore under United States Department of State contract. Responsible for the development of an efficient program for the screening of Vietnamese refugees upon arrival in Singapore. Developed new standard operating procedures and interview forms; recruited and trained both voluntary and full time staff; supervised and conducted interview sessions with refugees to determine U.S. resettlement eligibility; developed and monitored a case processing system for refugees eligible to resettle in the U.S.; coordinated activities between United Nations and Singaporean Government counterparts; analyzed statistical data and reported findings to the U.S. embassy; advised in budget planning and auditing and wrote all statistical and narrative reports.

1979

**Health Educator**  
Project Concern International

Position based in North Sulawesi, Indonesia. Advised and counseled Indonesian Government Public Health personnel at district level on methods to improve health care through health education; recommended improved methods of administration and interagency coordination.

1978-1979

**Health Specialist**  
The Near East Foundation

Position based in Ahwaz, Iran. Administrative/planning position on the University of Teheran's Schistosomiasis Research Project. Responsible for training team members on the use of statistical information generated by the project to plan, initiate and monitor swamp drainage projects.

1977

**Environmental Planner**  
Cayuga County Planning Board

Position based in Central New York. Advised an Environmental Management Council, a citizens committee, on environmental issues and interpreted Federal and State environmental legislation. Researched environmental issues and developed implementation plans to environmental laws at the request of the county legislature. Planned and conducted workshops on how the community was to comply with environmental legislation and improve environmental quality. Developed the annual budget and wrote informational brochures on environmental issues.

1969-1971

**Public Health Advisor**  
29th Civil Affairs Company, U.S. Army

Position based in Vietnam attached duty U.S.A.I.D. Supervised and monitored medical construction projects. Advised Vietnamese Public Health on areas of need for rural health care delivery. Developed and improved communication and supply system between district and provincial health. Coordinated activities between allied military medical programs. Assisted in emergency medical evacuations and emergency assistance to isolated rural populations including refugees.

**Education:**

Masters of Public Health	University of Michigan	Population/Family Planning
Bachelor of Science	State University of New York, Brockport	Community Health
Credit	IKIP University, Malang, Indonesia	Language Training

**Awards:**

Cum Laude Graduate, State University of New York  
Special Purpose Trainee Fellowship, University of Michigan  
Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal, U.S. Army  
Public Health Award, South Vietnamese Government

**Personal Data:**

Married, U.S. citizen, excellent health  
Lived in Vietnam, Iran, Indonesia, Singapore, Sudan  
Extensive travel including United States, Europe, Africa, Middle East and Asia.