

OUR “PRE-SPONSE”

**A SUPPLEMENT TO
THE TTU- NARA**

CONFERENCE

ON VIETNAM

IN THE YEAR 1963



**Originally: Vietnam Veterans
to Correct the Myths**

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***Dedicated
to
Dr. Stephen F. Maxner,
Director of the Vietnam Center and Archive
At Texas Tech University,
Without whose Leadership and Inspiration
This Project
Could not have been Completed.***

“The intellectual objectives of this conference are to examine the year 1963 as it has long been viewed as a watershed in both the history of the Vietnam War and in the evolution of the United States’ intervention in that conflict. The Battle of Ap Bac, the “Buddhist crisis” and the self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc, the abortive “Kennedy withdrawal” of U.S. military advisors from South Vietnam, the overthrow and death of Ngo Dinh Diem in the Saigon coup of November, the Kennedy assassination that same month, the Ninth Plenum of the Vietnam Worker’s Party—all of these events and many others shaped the subsequent escalation of the Vietnam War and contributed to its transformation into a major international conflict. This conference (which will take place during the fiftieth anniversary year of these events) will highlight recent research on various aspects of 1963 in Vietnam. In addition, we expect the conference to use 1963 as a means to explore the larger themes and trends running throughout the history of the Vietnam War. This conference will bring together specialists in the history of the Vietnam War, U.S. foreign relations, international history, the Cold War, and Vietnamese studies.”

From the Texas Tech University Vietnam Center website

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INTRODUCTION

Why This Book Was Produced

Vietnam Veterans conceived of and founded the Vietnam Center at Texas Tech to document their experiences of the war in which they had fought and to archive those documents, memorabilia, audio and video interviews of Veterans, diaries, war journals and other items from the war that they had preserved. These data reveal a war that is significantly different from the war described by much of academia. The archival material provides the researcher and other interested parties with valuable first hand eyewitness source material not found anywhere else that often rebuts the so-called “orthodox” view of the war.

Support for the Center came from many Vietnam Veterans, who, while not being founders, shared their comrades’ goals. The Center has had a long succession of conferences in which multiple voices of the issues involved were given an opportunity for expression and debate.

It is important to understand that one can examine two very different narratives about the war. The better known or “orthodox” narrative is includes major elements such as the war was essentially a civil war, with the North fighting from nationalist principles to unite the country, was really none of America’s business, and was basically unwinnable from the beginning.

The other narrative, referred to as the “revisionist” view, is that it was a war of communist aggression, part of the Cold War between the Allies and the Soviet bloc, important in barring the spread of communism in SE Asia, and not only winnable, but essentially won by 1972, only to be lost subsequently by the refusal of the USA to live up to the commitments made when we withdrew from direct involvement in the fighting.

This “revisionist” view is held by the great majority of veterans and many outstanding historians, some of whom are veterans themselves.

In 2012, no conferences were scheduled. Instead, a planning session was held for the 2013 conference. Several veterans, including this writer, expressed an interest in attending and were told that it would be a closed session.

When the agenda for the 2013 conference was released, a number of Veterans were seriously concerned that the conference appeared to lack balance between the different views of the war and might tend to institutionalize the so-called “orthodox” academic version of the Vietnam War to the exclusion of the Veteran’s experiences and viewpoints. This became more worrisome in light of the commencement of the Fiftieth Anniversary Commemoration of the Vietnam War