

“A War That Could Never Have Been Won”

From August 1969 until July of 1970 I was an Infantry Lieutenant in Vietnam near the Cambodian border in Trang Bang. The U.S. Army had sent me to Vietnamese language school at a program to train Advisors at Fort Bragg. I was part of a program called Mobile Advisory Teams or MAT Teams. My Team consisted of one Officer - me and three Non Commissioned Officers or N.C.O.s. Their specialties were Medic, Communications and Artillery.

We were attached to, lived with and fought with the Vietnamese Military. They were part of the Regional and Popular Defense Forces of South Vietnam. We bought our food on the open market and when we went on combat operations and ambushes it was with the South Vietnamese military we were attached to. I well remember the first time we were ambushed. We were on a night ambush and, as we were setting it up, we were ambushed. Of the 30 South Vietnamese 12 were wounded and needed a medical evacuation by helicopter or what was called a " dust off ".

I remember my radio call on the PRC 25 to the nearest U.S. Military base in Cu Chi. The voice on the other end after hearing our predicament said "what do you need ? " I responded, "everything " and he said "it's on the way." It wasn't long before we got Helicopter Gunships and Medevac or Dust Off for the wounded an Artillery support.

I remember another ambush when the Vietnamese who were with us ran and left us - two Americans and our interpreter - alone. U.S. soldiers came and got us. It was precarious for a while. It was also obvious, sadly, that the Vietnamese were not able to fight that war on their own and could never win. Sadly it cost us many, many American lives before we figured that out and left. I knew than in 1969 and don't think we finally left Vietnam until 1974 or 1975.

It pains me to see us still in Afghanistan sixteen years after entering that war and increasing our troop presence. With all due respect to Generals, who set our policies - I never saw a General where I was in Vietnam. Had

they been there they would have realized, as I did, the Vietnam War could not ever be won. The fact that it took us until 1974 or 1975 to figure that out cost us 58,000 precious lives all of whose names are on the Vietnam Memorial. The fact that we are doing it again in Afghanistan is a tragedy.

— *William, Stanfordville*