

## Casualties of War: The Legacy of South Korean Participation in the Vietnam Conflict

Christos G. Frentzos, Ph.D.  
Austin-Peay State University

### Abstract

After the United States, the Republic of Korea sent more troops to Vietnam than any other nation. Approximately 325,000 South Korean soldiers served in Vietnam between 1964 and 1973. Although the Korean military and economy benefited substantially from the conflict, the war also left some deep scars on the national psyche. While the government did not permit public criticism of the war in the 1960s and 1970s, South Koreans have now finally begun to confront their troubled Vietnam legacy. Often referred to as Korea's "forgotten war," the Vietnam Conflict has recently made its way into Korean popular culture through movies, novels and songs about the war. Increased freedom and democracy has created an environment where both the Korean government and the people have begun to openly discuss issues such as Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and alleged wartime atrocities committed by South Korean servicemen. This paper will analyze some of the more controversial aspects of Korea's involvement in the Vietnam War and examine how South Koreans themselves have addressed these issues both officially and within their popular culture during the last few decades.

Keywords: South Korea, South Vietnam, Vietnam War, atrocities, Park Chung-hee, massacre, veterans, Quang Nam Province, Viet Cong, Phong Nhi Hamlet, Phong Nhut Hamlet, William C. Westmoreland, Chae Myung-shin, ROK 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Brigade, *Hankyoreh*

Well, they kind of had a reputation of no fooling around, no taking no prisoners kind of a thing. The VC disappeared out of an area when they were coming in and they wouldn't hesitate to burn a village or do whatever they needed to do and as I said they were tough disciplinarians, [even] using physical violence on their own troops. . . .

Russel Hiett, U.S. Serviceman describing ROK soldiers<sup>1</sup>

Suspects are encouraged to talk by a rifle fired just past the ear from behind while they are sitting on the edge of an open grave or by a swift, cheekbone-shattering flick of a Korean's bare hand. (Every Korean soldier from Commanding General Chae Myung Shin on down practices for 30 minutes each day tae kwon do, the Korean version of karate.) Once, when the mutilated body of a Korean soldier was found in a Viet Cong-sympathizing village, the Koreans tracked down a Viet Cong, skinned him and hung him up in the village. Not surprisingly, captured Viet Cong orders now stipulate that contact with the Koreans is to be avoided at all costs – unless a Viet Cong victory is 100% certain.

*Time Magazine article describing ROK soldiers in Vietnam*<sup>2</sup>

## **Introduction**

The emotional and psychological scars of the Vietnam War are nothing new to students of American history. The conflict profoundly impacted a generation of Americans and forever changed the nation's social and political landscape. What is less well known however is that the war was not exclusively an American and Vietnamese experience. Along with the United States four other nations deployed combat soldiers to South Vietnam: Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and the Republic of Korea (ROK).<sup>3</sup> Of these, the Republic of Korea was Washington's largest and most important third country ally in Vietnam having deployed approximately fifty thousand troops there by 1968. Altogether approximately 325,000 South Koreans soldiers served in Vietnam from 1964 to 1973 and about 5,100 of them were killed in action and another 11,200 wounded in the war.<sup>4</sup> South Korea also dispatched another 100,000 civilian workers to Vietnam to assist the Saigon government with various public works and civic action programs such as dredging ports and constructing roads, bridges, dams, libraries and schools.<sup>5</sup>

In return for their participation in Vietnam, Seoul received a plethora of military and economic concessions from the United States. Washington increased its direct economic, technological and military aid packages to South Korea, and the U.S. agreed to procure as much industrial material and human labor as possible from South Korean businesses and firms.<sup>6</sup> Altogether, the U.S. doled out approximately \$1 billion in payments to

South Korea between 1965 and 1970. It has been estimated that the Vietnam War accounted for anywhere from 7 to 8 percent of Korea's annual GDP and for as much as 19 percent of its total foreign earnings during the period 1966 to 1969. Total Korean earnings attributable directly to the Vietnam War may have exceeded \$4.62 billion. As a result, the Vietnam War was essentially responsible for underwriting Korea's capitalistic economic development in the 1970s.<sup>7</sup>

Many antiwar critics in the United States lashed out at Washington for employing Korean "mercenaries" in Southeast Asia. Reports that ROK soldiers, who were not bound by U.S. rules of engagement, may have committed atrocities against Vietnamese civilians and communist guerrillas, led to increased criticism of America's use of "rented troops" and "hired guns."<sup>8</sup> However, these commentaries could not be found in Republic of Korea in the 1960s and 1970s. During that period South Korea was under the leadership of General Park Chung Hee, who seized power in a military coup in 1961. Although he was subsequently elected president in 1963, his regime evolved into an authoritarian dictatorship which lasted until his assassination in 1979. During those years anyone who dared to speak-out publicly about the negative aspects of South Korea's involvement in the war faced certain imprisonment.<sup>9</sup> Officially the ROK government maintained that South Korea's deployment of troops to Vietnam was a noble crusade designed to defend Southeast Asia from communist aggression.<sup>10</sup> Strict censorship and the threat of jail and torture muted criticism and kept dissidents in the shadows. A popular song of the time roughly translated as "Sergeant Kim Returning From Vietnam" welcomed the ROK soldiers home as heroes.<sup>11</sup> However, since the beginning of real democratic reform in Korea in 1987, there has been a reassessment of the nation's official history and Seoul's involvement in Vietnam. During the 1990s, there was a growth in "truth and reconciliation" projects as the country attempted to come to grips with its authoritarian past. Both official and unofficial commissions of inquiry into "past crimes" were organized across the nation and these inquiries have picked up steam in the last decade as Koreans called for more disclosure about their government's past activities, including the actions of its soldiers in Vietnam.<sup>12</sup>

The issue of Korea's participation in the Vietnam War has now moved to the forefront of the nation's collective conscience. In recent years the war has been the subject of countless movies, books, poems and songs, and a national dialogue has finally developed for the first time regarding

the controversial relationship between the war and South Korea's extraordinary economic and industrial growth in the 1970s. While there is little dispute over the economic transformation that occurred as a result of the war, many South Koreans feel uneasy that it came about as a result of the war in Vietnam. For years they had resented the fact that Japan's post World War II economic recovery was due in large part to the Korean War.<sup>13</sup> Ironically South Korea now found itself in a similar role regarding its relationship to Vietnam. Furthermore, many Koreans were disturbed by allegations that ROK soldiers committed atrocities in Vietnam, brutal acts that again were reminiscent of Japanese actions during the colonial period. Many Korean veterans are now also beginning to publicly demand greater assistance from their government for war related issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, which had long been ignored in South Korea.<sup>14</sup> Another problem concerns veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange, the powerful chemical defoliant used to kill jungle foliage during the war. While many veterans suffered from various illnesses related to the substance, for many years the ROK government neither recognized nor offered treatment for problems associated to Agent Orange. Korean veterans were not even eligible for compensation from the manufacturers of the chemical because the Korean government was not a party to the 1984 court decision which ordered payments to exposed veterans.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Vietnam War in Literature, Film and Stage**

Beginning with the first deployment of ROK combat forces to Vietnam in 1965, the government of Park Chung Hee quickly took control of the narrative by depicting the soldiers as national heroes who were contributing to international stability and peace. All official statements regarding South Korea's participation in the conflict were positive and uplifting. The regime sponsored huge send-off rallies and parades where the public bid farewell to their brave troops being sent to defend freedom in South Vietnam. Many of these grand displays included ornate decorations, flags and patriotic music sung by tearful women and children.<sup>16</sup> A very sophisticated publicity campaign by the government urged the people to support South Korean and American military action in Indochina as events there were "directly related to the safety and well-being of the entire Asian region." Official propaganda even extended into television news broadcasts and short clips presented during movie intermissions all of which emphasized the spirit and courage of South Korean troops.<sup>17</sup> It would be more than a decade before popular culture

and public discourse on the Vietnam War began to reflect a more honest, and at times, critical interpretation.

One of the first novels produced about Korean experiences in Vietnam was *Faraway Song Be River* written by Pak Yong Han and published in 1978. Five years later author Ahn Junghyo wrote the novel *White Badge*, which sparked the first national discourse on the Vietnam War. This controversial work was initially turned down by publishers who feared they would be jailed for printing the story. Two years before it was published in 1985, the South Korean government shut down a radical literary magazine that printed excerpts from the work.<sup>18</sup> Written by a former ROK soldier who had fought in Vietnam, the book represented an attempt by the author to not only come to terms with his own experiences in Vietnam, but to tell Koreans the truth about what went on there. According to Ahn, “Members of the younger generation do not even know that Koreans served in Vietnam . . . Nobody talked about it. What the Government has done is a kind of mass cheating of the people.”<sup>19</sup> The story describes the actions of an ROK platoon and the moral and political dilemmas faced by the young men as they fight a guerrilla war against an elusive, and at times, invisible enemy. Similar to American tales about the coming of age in Vietnam, the book describes how many young Koreans had their innocence and lives destroyed in the jungles of Indochina. Ahn is highly critical of Korean and American actions in Vietnam which he believes took a heavy toll on the people and devastated the countryside.<sup>20</sup> In the book the author noted that the war was “without honor or dignity” and that “we simply murdered our own species in the most despicable, contemptible, dastardly way.”<sup>21</sup> The book created a sensation following its release, and it would eventually be made into a television series.

Hwang Sok Yong published *The Shadow of Arms* in two parts in 1985 and 1988. Focusing less on the combat experiences of individual soldiers, *The Shadow of Arms* detailed the greed, corruption and black marketeering that operated in and around the American PX (Post Exchange) in South Vietnam. This fiercely anti-American story portrayed the war as being driven by U.S. capitalism and imperialism. Simply put, America wanted to exploit the resources of Vietnam and impose its global capitalistic order in Southeast Asia.<sup>22</sup> The work also argued that racism was another factor motivating U.S. aggression. For example, one of the ROK soldiers in the story relates how offended he was when American servicemen referred to the Vietnamese as “gooks.” He noted that this racist term was originally used by U.S. forces during the Korean War to describe his own people.<sup>23</sup>

Hwang also described the brutality of allied soldiers noting that they were often responsible for murdering and raping Vietnamese civilians. In direct contradiction to the official government position, Hwang asserts that the true motive for ROK participation in Vietnam was not to halt communism but rather to earn a profit and expand economic opportunity for South Korean businessmen and industrialists. Hwang's affinity for Marxism led him to secretly travel to North Korea shortly after the book was released. Upon his return he was arrested and sentenced to six years in jail.<sup>24</sup>

The popularity of these works inspired the development of movie and stage plays capitalizing on the growing interest of Korea's Vietnam story. In the early 1990s, the story *White Badge* came to the big screen. Filmed partly on location in Vietnam, the film was budgeted at over \$2.5 million dollars, a high figure for the Korean movie industry. During this same period, the made-for-television movie based on the book *Faraway Song Be River* debuted. This multimillion-dollar film described the relationship between two young Korean soldiers as they came of age in the midst of the Vietnam War.<sup>25</sup> Even the makers of horror films attempted to cash in on the growing interest in the Vietnam War. In 2004 Korean filmmakers produced a movie entitled *R-Point*, which was set in the jungles of Vietnam. It was a story about Korean soldiers who are deployed to an island called R-Point (Romeo Point) in search of an ROK unit that went missing in the area six months earlier. During their search, the team members are mysteriously killed by ghosts on the island. The audience is given the impression that some of the missing soldiers may have been involved in committing atrocities against communist troops and South Vietnamese civilians. Reminiscent of American films, such as *Full Metal Jacket* and *Platoon*, *R-Point* depicts cruelty and violence as an everyday occurrence in Vietnam. When the platoon is assigned a new sergeant named Jin Chang Rok, one soldier asks another, "What's that guy like? I heard you were in the same unit?" The second soldier replies "He's cold-blooded. He's been in Vietnam for three years. I saw a picture of him holding two Viet Cong's heads cut off." Overhearing the conversation a third soldier shouts, "Damn it, who hasn't done that in Vietnam?" The movie went on to become South Korea's highest grossing horror film of 2004.<sup>26</sup>

In 1996 the Korean experience in Vietnam even made it to the National Theater in a play entitled *Blue Saigon*. The story tells the tale of a dying Vietnam veteran, Sergeant Kim Moon Suk, who recalls the suffering he caused as a soldier. Sergeant Kim not only mourns the loss

of his own men who perished in the jungles near Khe Sanh, but he also grieves for the innocent Vietnamese civilians who were caught-up in the “sadness” and “craziness” of war. The story also touches on another little known consequence of Korea’s involvement in Vietnam, namely the issue of Korean-Vietnamese children fathered and then abandoned by Korean servicemen and civilians. According to some figures there were anywhere from 15,000 to 30,000 Vietnamese children fathered by Koreans between 1964 and 1973. At the end of the play, the son that Kim fathered with a Vietnamese bar hostess travels to Korea only to discover that his dad has already passed away.<sup>27</sup>

### **Question of Wartime Atrocities and the Ferocity of ROK Soldiers**

In 1999 an article written by a South Korean graduate student named Ku Su Jeong brought to the forefront the most controversial aspect of the deployment of ROK soldiers to Vietnam, the issue of war atrocities.<sup>28</sup> The article appeared in the weekly news magazine *Hankyoreh 21* (People 21). The periodical along with its sister daily newspaper *Hankyoreh Sinmun* (People News), were progressive papers that during the authoritarian years operated underground as alternative publications to the government-controlled mass media. Jung’s article alleged that ROK forces had killed large numbers of innocent civilians including elderly people, women and children.<sup>29</sup> Soon both papers began a series of exposes based on interviews with Vietnamese witnesses and Korean veterans describing the “slaughter of innocent people.”<sup>30</sup> Many military organizations and veterans groups were outraged by these accounts. Members of the ROK War Veterans’ Association, demonstrated in combat fatigues in front of the headquarters of *Hankyoreh Sinmun*. After chanting angry slogans and throwing rocks through the windows they stormed the building, trashing offices, destroying printing and computer equipment and setting fire to 160,000 pages of documents.<sup>31</sup>

At the time the first article was written, Ku was pursuing a degree in History at Ho Chi Minh University in Vietnam. Her research was initially prompted by an internal Vietnamese document that she uncovered which referenced massacres of civilians by South Korean troops. Shocked by the report, Ku decided to interview survivors in order to confirm if the reports were true. Her investigation led her to conduct more than one hundred interviews with massacre survivors in nineteen different countries. Based on this information and eyewitness accounts contained in Vietnamese war

museums, Ku asserted that anywhere from eight to nine thousand civilians were slain in various massacres throughout South Vietnam.<sup>32</sup>

One of the most sensational and detailed accounts centered on the testimony of retired Colonel Kim Ki-t'ae, former commander of the Seventh Company, Second Battalion of the Korean "Blue Dragon" Marine Brigade. Kim testified to *Hankyoreh* that as a young lieutenant in Quang Ngai Province, he had overseen the murder of 29 unarmed Vietnamese youth on November 14, 1966. His unit had been carrying out a campaign to root out Viet Cong (VC) resistance in their area of operation in central Vietnam. After coming under fire near the village of An Tuyet, his unit came across twenty-nine Vietnamese men in a rice field. The men were arrested and detained as suspected VC guerrillas. Since no weapons were found on the detainees the Koreans were faced with the choice of either releasing the men or turning them over to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). Fearing that the men might cause trouble and unwilling to turn them over to the unreliable South Vietnamese Army, Kim decided to execute the suspects. All 29 people were thrown into a bomb crater and killed with grenades and rifle fire.<sup>33</sup>

Such published accounts were soon followed up by television stories. In February 2000, a 30-minute documentary aired on the state-owned Korean Broadcasting Service that corroborated some of the printed reports. With their faces blurred to protect their identity, several Korean ex-soldiers described the unprovoked killing of civilians. In one story a serviceman stated, "Searching a village we found a young guy . . . with his daughter. My Company commander ordered me to kill him right there next to his girl, who looked 7 or 8. My heart was broken. I couldn't do it. So my commander killed them both."<sup>34</sup> These articles and media presentations represented the first major journalistic treatment of the topic in Korea and the first Korean attempt to substantiate accounts of ROK atrocities through investigations in Vietnam.<sup>35</sup>

Although many Koreans were just becoming aware of these stories for the first time, tales of the ferocity of ROK soldiers was nothing new in the United States. Between 1966 and 1972 dozens of articles appeared in periodicals such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, describing the toughness and lethality of South Korean troops.<sup>36</sup> In addition, many other journals and publications such as the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, *The New Republic*, *Ramparts* and *The Progressive* also ran similar stories during this time period.<sup>37</sup> Accounts often described ROK soldiers cutting off ears

and/or noses of VC to keep a record of the number of enemy killed; removing the hearts of living victims, or skinning and publicly hanging dead VC from trees as a warning to others.<sup>38</sup>

Even American military officers and enlisted men who praised Korean troops for their effectiveness in providing security in their areas of operation, readily admitted that ROKs had a well-deserved reputation for employing heavy-handed tactics. General Creighton Abrams, who served as the commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam from 1968-1972, once compared the Allied war effort in Vietnam to an orchestra. He said “It is sometimes appropriate to emphasize the drums or the trumpets or the bassoon, or even the flute. The Vietnamese, to a degree, realize this and do it. The Koreans, on the other hand, play one instrument: the bass drum.”<sup>39</sup> Major General Rathvon McClure Tompkins, who served in Vietnam as the Deputy Commander of III Marine Amphibious Force, stated that if Korean Marines received fire “or think they’d get fired on from a village . . . they’d divert from their march and go over and completely level the village . . . It would be a lesson to them.”<sup>40</sup> U.S. enlisted men also recounted stories of ROK soldiers mutilating and publicly displaying dead VC and noted that the Koreans “were known to do things like cut off the head of the village chief if they took incoming mortar rounds just to get their attention.”<sup>41</sup>

The Koreans were deployed mainly in the central coastal region of South Vietnam in the I and II Corps Tactical Zones (“I Corps” and “two Corps”). Part of their responsibilities included defending vital sections of Highways 1, 19 and 21 and providing security for a number of bases and ports in the area.<sup>42</sup> Since Vietnam was not a formally unified theater or command, the South Koreans functioned as a separate and independent fighting force. Although they coordinated their operations in conjunction with U.S. commanders, they had their own tactical area of responsibility and were free to determine how best to accomplish their goals.<sup>43</sup> Many American military and civilian personnel noted that ROK forces worked well with the U.S. and ARVN units, and described them as tenacious, meticulous, and very well disciplined. They were best known for their methodical search and destroy operations, which generally left their areas of operation almost totally secure.<sup>44</sup> Because South Korean officials wanted to keep casualties to a minimum, when ROK forces went into an area, they usually did so with overwhelming force.<sup>45</sup> Not known for taking prisoners, Korean soldiers usually wiped out any resistance they encountered. In addition to going in with heavy firepower, ROK soldiers

often operated under the cover of darkness and utilized stealth and hand to hand combat techniques to locate and destroy enemy forces.<sup>46</sup> ROK commanders even employed corporal punishment on their own soldiers, such as whipping and public executions, which only served to reinforce their no-nonsense reputation. For example, two Korean soldiers convicted of raping a Vietnamese woman were tried and shot on the spot and another was executed for sleeping on guard duty. In addition, there were numerous accounts of ROK soldiers being publicly slapped or whipped by their superiors, for minor infractions.<sup>47</sup>

Until recently, American records have revealed little information regarding the question of Korean atrocities. One possible reason may be that since the Vietnam Theater was not a unified command, U.S. forces did not have control or jurisdiction over ROK forces. However if the U.S. did receive information of an alleged war crime, they would initiate an inquiry in order to fulfill their responsibilities as a signatory to the Geneva Conventions. If the preliminary examination uncovered sufficient evidence, the matter would be turned over to the country involved for further investigation.<sup>48</sup> According to newly declassified U.S. documents, in December 1969, U.S. State Department officials received information that the Rand Corporation had uncovered allegations of a series of atrocities committed by ROK Marines in 1968 and 1969. The first case alleged that the 2<sup>nd</sup> ROK Marine Brigade killed 69 civilians, mostly women and children, in the Phong Nhi and Phong Nhut Hamlets in Quang Nam Province on February 12, 1968. Evidence gathered by the U.S. a few days after the incident indicated that villagers had been rounded up and shot, several victims had been stabbed and one woman had her breast cut off.<sup>49</sup> Several U.S. Marine Corps servicemen testified to witnessing the event and photographing dead women and children in Phong Nhi. Corroborating statements were also taken from Vietnamese soldiers and residents of the village.<sup>50</sup> Following established protocol General William C. Westmoreland, head of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), sent a letter to Lieutenant General Chae Myung Shin, the commander of ROK Forces Vietnam, informing him of the findings and formally turning the investigation over to the South Korean military. Westmoreland concluded his letter by stating that “due to the serious nature of possible implications, I will appreciate being advised of the ultimate disposition of this matter.”<sup>51</sup>

ROK military officials conducted an investigation into the incident and a little over a month later, General Chae summed up the findings and

included the report in a letter to General Westmoreland. Chae began by asserting that he had always stressed to his troops the importance of maintaining good relations with the people of South Vietnam and the importance of protecting their lives and property. For this reason he took these allegations very seriously and conducted a thorough examination of the facts. He and his staff concluded that while one company of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Brigade had conducted operations near the Phong Nhut hamlet, ROK Marine units did not enter Phong Nhi hamlet, which was in the opposite direction of their line of advance. He went on to note that testimony from the District Chief of Dien Ban District, had revealed that the Viet Cong had operated in the area on numerous occasions “disguised in the camouflaged uniforms similar to those normally worn by ROK Marine troops.” Based upon the evidence, he concluded the massacre was not carried out by South Korean soldiers but by Viet Cong forces masquerading as Koreans.<sup>52</sup> In their report, the South Koreans noted that in the past the Viet Cong in the region had “incited and agitated the inhabitants of the area to demonstrate against the dispositions and operations of ROK Forces.” And that they had “tried to break up the good relationship between the Vietnamese people and the ROK Forces” by spreading stories of Korean troops mistreating Vietnamese women and children.<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, there is corroborating evidence of the VC disguising themselves in ROK attire. For instance during the Battle of Tra Binh Dong in mid-February 1967, U.S. and ROK forces killed several communist infiltrators wearing Korean Marine uniforms.<sup>54</sup>

Muddying the waters even further are contradictory accounts regarding the behavior of ROK soldiers toward Vietnamese civilians. In 1972 Japanese war correspondent Katsuichi Honda found that although the ROK army was extremely unpopular in Saigon, the vast majority of Vietnamese who actually interacted with Korean soldiers usually held them in high regard. After traveling extensively throughout both North and South Vietnam, Honda concluded that the ROK soldiers appeared to sympathize with the Vietnamese people and were generally much more courteous and respectful than their American counterparts. Although highly critical of the actions of U.S. troops, his interviews with villagers throughout the countryside led him to conclude that most of the stories about Korean atrocities were “purely fictitious.” According to Honda, “It seemed to be generally true that the more frequent and closer the contact between the ROK Army and the people in a district, the more popular the ROK became. Their ill repute was directly proportionate to their distance

from the people.”<sup>55</sup> Lending credibility to this theory were reports that on several different occasions, in various areas across Vietnam, that the local population actually protested *against* the redeployment of Korean troops to other areas.<sup>56</sup>

### **The Relationship Between South Korea and Vietnam Today**

Today the relationship between Vietnam and South Korea is quite different than it once was and both governments have moved forward into a new era of economic reconciliation. After normalizing relations in December 1992 both countries began to promote developmental trade and financial cooperation.<sup>57</sup> Officially, the Vietnamese government’s position was to “close the past and open the future,” meaning that they believed it was in their best interests to focus on increasing economic growth and integrating themselves into the global market.<sup>58</sup> Not only was Vietnam a leading recipient of aid from Seoul, but South Korea was also one of Vietnam’s top foreign investors. During the 1990s Seoul aggressively encouraged Korean businesses to trade and invest with Vietnam, leading to a huge trade surplus of \$1.68 billion at the beginning of the twenty first century. In 2013 trade between the ROK and Vietnam reached \$27.3 billion. Two years later the two nations signed a free trade agreement which is expected to boost bilateral trade to \$70 billion by 2020.<sup>59</sup> While Vietnam has generally practiced a policy of “shutting out past affairs and opening to the future,” sensitivity remains regarding Korea’s military participation in Vietnam. In June 2017 during a Memorial Day speech, South Korean President Moon Jae In praised ROK soldiers for their bravery and sacrifice in Vietnam which he said, “laid the foundation for the country’s economic growth.” In its “first-ever official waring” regarding alleged Korean wartime massacres, the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded with a press release stating “We ask the Korean government not to talk or behave in a way that hurts the feelings of the Vietnamese people and has a negative influence on the two countries’ friendship and cooperation.” While two former ROK Presidents, Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun both apologized to Vietnam for the suffering endured by the Vietnamese people during the conflict, the South Korean government has never officially acknowledged any wartime atrocities perpetrated by its soldiers.”<sup>60</sup>

Although the governments of Vietnam and South Korea would like to put the past behind them, many of their people are not quite ready. Beginning in the late 1990s the Korean House for International Solidarity

(KHIS), a non-profit membership organization for peace and human rights, launched a people-to-people reconciliation between the two countries. In 2000 they helped organize a goodwill mission to Vietnam in which Korean dentists, doctors and other medical professionals volunteered to treat Vietnamese villagers and their descendants who were affected by the war.<sup>61</sup> In small communities across Vietnam, farmers and peasants continue to erect war memorials to honor family and friends allegedly killed by Korean soldiers. Large pagodas made of marble slabs can be found throughout central Vietnam with the names of those killed on one side and a brief narrative of the events on the other.<sup>62</sup> In Korea the absence of a formal official apology has led a number of community organizations and veterans groups to reach out to Vietnam in a more personalized way. A number of musicians and folksingers have popularized a song entitled “Forgive Us, Vietnam.” Some ROK veterans traveled to Vietnam where they met with relatives and survivors of those killed in the war and asked for forgiveness. Many of them even donated money to construct a “memorial of reconciliation” to honor the lives lost on both sides of the conflict.<sup>63</sup> In April 2018 a citizens’ peace court was held in Seoul to investigate possible South Korean atrocities in Vietnam. Organized by the Preparatory Committee for the Citizens’ Peace Court to Learn the Truth About the South Korean Army’s Massacres of Civilians during the Vietnam War, the three day unofficial investigation was timed to coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack on the villages of Phong Nhi and Phong Nhut.<sup>64</sup>

In 2003 South Koreans sponsored the construction of a peace park in southern Vietnam. The readers of *Hankyoreh 21* donated more than \$100,000 for the park located in Phu Yen province. The newspaper described the opening of the park as “a symbolic gesture to reflect a deep-rooted grief over what happened during the Vietnam War.” Although the South Korean government was not affiliated with the creation of the park, which was a completely private initiative, these actions had a profound impact on Seoul. As if prompted by these grassroots movements, in 2008 the ROK government began to support the construction of schools and hospitals across southern Vietnam.<sup>65</sup> In 2016 the Korea-Vietnamese Peace Foundation, a non-governmental organization established to raise public awareness of Korean misconduct during the Vietnam War, sent a statue to the people of Vietnam. Known as *Vietnam Pieta – The Last Lullaby*, the bronze statue housed in the Da Nang Museum depicted a woman embracing her child and was designed to commemorate the

countless mothers and babies victimized during the war. The Peace Foundation has urged the South Korean government to take responsibility for its actions during the conflict. As a symbol of apology to Vietnam for massacres committed during the war, the foundation erected a *Vietnam Pieta* on Jeju Island, South Korea in April 2017 to commemorate the 42<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the end of the war in Vietnam.<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusion

Forty-three years after the Vietnam War, South Korea is still grappling with the legacy and consequences of its military involvement in Southeast Asia. The economic benefits of the war clearly contributed to the “Miracle on the Han River” and helped propel Seoul to become one of the most powerful industrial nations in the region, but it was achieved at a great price. Thousands of ROK soldiers lost their lives fighting against communism and tens of thousands more bear the physical and psychological scars of war. Although at the time, the nation did not experience the social and cultural turmoil the war brought to American society, democratic reform and political openness have now made it possible for the nation to have a meaningful and frank discussion about the conflict. The question of alleged wartime atrocities continues to be very controversial, and additional research in the United States, Vietnam and South Korea must be completed before any definitive conclusions can be reached. Nearly half a century later, the people of South Korea are finally beginning to write the closing chapter on their Vietnam War experience.

## Notes:

---

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Russel Hiett, 9 May 2001, Russel Hiett Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University.

<sup>2</sup> “Other Guns,” *Time* July 22, 1966, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,836074,00.html>, accessed March 16, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the international support provided to the Republic of Vietnam during the Second Indochina Conflict, see Lieutenant General Stanley Robert Larsen and Brigadier General James Lawton Collins, Jr., *Allied Participation in Vietnam* (Washington, D.C., 1985); Robert M. Blackburn, *Mercenaries and Lyndon Johnson’s “More Flags”: The Hiring of Korean, Filipino and Thai Soldiers in the Vietnam War* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Many of these figures vary slightly depending upon the source; however these numbers represented the most recent information based on South Korean sources. See Tae Yang Kwak, “The Anvil of War: The Legacies of Korean Participation in the Vietnam War,”

---

(Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2006), 13. For other earlier figures, see: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle* (New York, 1986), 333, Appendix A; U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Republic of Korea: Part 6, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad*, 91<sup>st</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., February 24, 25, 26, 1970, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), 1544, (hereafter cited as *Republic of Korea, Hearings*); Willard J. Webb, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970*, (Washington, D.C., 2002), 33; Larsen and Collins, *Allied Participation in Vietnam*, 23; Kil J. Yi, "Alliance in the Quagmire: The United States, South Korea, and the Vietnam War, 1964-1968," (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1997), 2; Charles K. Armstrong, "America's Korea, Korea's Vietnam," *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 4 (2001), 532; Craig R. Whitney, "Korean Troops End Vietnam Combat Role," *New York Times*, 9 November 1972, sec. 1, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Kwak, "The Anvil of War: The Legacies of Korean Participation in the Vietnam War," 22; T.C. Rhee, "South Korea's Economic Development and Its Socio-Political Impact," *Asian Survey* 13, no. 7 (July 1973), 679; U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, *Free World Assistance to Vietnam: A Summary* (Pamphlet HC Vietnam 198, 1966), 21, 23; Republic of Korea, Ministry of National Defense, *Pictorial War History of ROK Forces To Vietnam* (Seoul, South Korea, 1970), 152-159. Korea also served as a major supplier of building materials to South Vietnam – plywood was South Korea's major export in 1968. Ian Stewart, "War Spurs Economies of a Struggling Asia," *New York Times*, 19 January 1968, sec. 1, p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> For more detailed information regarding the relationship between South Korea's economic and military growth and the war in Vietnam, see, Christos G. Frentzos, "From Seoul to Saigon: U.S. – Korean Relations and the Vietnam War," (Ph.D. diss., University of Houston, 2004); Kwak, "The Anvil of War: The Legacies of Korean Participation in the Vietnam War"; Yi, "Alliance in the Quagmire"; Blackburn, *Mercenaries and Lyndon Johnson's "More Flags"*; *Republic of Korea, Hearings*.

<sup>7</sup> Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 321; Yi, "Alliance in the Quagmire," 203; Kwak, "The Anvil of War: The Legacies of Korean Participation in the Vietnam War," 22. Congress estimated that just between 1966 and 1970, the United States provided \$927 million in economic and military assistance to South Korea as compensation for their participation in Vietnam. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on International Relations, *Investigation of Korean – American Relations, Report of the Subcommittee on International Organizations*, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., October 31, 1978, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978), p. 393, (hereafter cited as *Investigation of Korean – American Relations, Report*).

<sup>8</sup> For example, see Frank Baldwin, "America's Rented Troops: South Koreans in Vietnam." *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 7, no. 4 (October-December 1975), pp. 33-40; Diane and Michael Jones, "Allies Called Koreans: A Report from Vietnam," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 8, no. 2 (April-June 1976), 58-72; James Otis, "Seoul's Hired Guns," *Ramparts* 11, no. 3 (September 1972), pp. 18-20 and 56-57.

<sup>9</sup> Izumi Sakurai, "South Koreans rushed to the Battlefield of Vietnam War," *Asahi.com*, March 3, 2008, <http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/IHistory/TKY200803020111.html>, accessed October 29, 2008.

- 
- <sup>10</sup> Armstrong, "America's Korea, Korea's Vietnam," 531.
- <sup>11</sup> Don Kirk, "Confronting Korea's Agony in Vietnam," *International Herald Tribune*, the Global Edition of the *New York Times*, 28 September 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/28/style/confronting-koreas-agony-in-vietnam.html>, accessed May 3, 2018.
- <sup>12</sup> Armstrong, "America's Korea, Korea's Vietnam," 527, 531; Hyun Sook Kim, "Korea's 'Vietnam Question': War Atrocities, National Identity, and Reconciliation in Asia," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, 9, no.3 (Winter 2001), 622.
- <sup>13</sup> For more information on how Japan benefited financially from the Korean War see, William S. Borden, *The Pacific Alliance: United States Foreign Economic Policy and Japanese Trade Recovery, 1947-1955* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1984), 6; Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York, 1997), 322; Chalmers Johnson, *MITI And The Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975* (Stanford, California, 1982).
- <sup>14</sup> Kwak, "The Anvil of War: The Legacies of Korean Participation in the Vietnam War," p. 261.
- <sup>15</sup> James Sterngold, "South Korea's Vietnam Veterans Begin to Be Heard," *New York Times*, 10 May 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/05/10/world/south-korea-s-vietnam-veterans-begin-to-be-heard.html>, accessed May 3, 2018.
- <sup>16</sup> Eun Seo Jo, "Fighting For Peanuts: Reimagining South Korean Soldiers' Participation in the Wollam Boom," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 21, (2014), 59-60; 76.
- <sup>17</sup> Eun Seo Jo, "Fighting for Peanuts," p. 78 and 81.
- <sup>18</sup> Kwak, "The Anvil of War: The Legacies of Korean Participation in the Vietnam War," p. 262.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Richard C. Kagan, "Disarming Memories: Japanese, Korean, and American Literature on the Vietnam War," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 32, No. 44 (2000), 29.
- <sup>21</sup> Quote from the novel *White Badge* cited in Kagan, "Disarming Memories: Japanese, Korean, and American Literature on the Vietnam War," 30.
- <sup>22</sup> Kagan, "Disarming Memories: Japanese, Korean, and American Literature on the Vietnam War," p. 31; Theodore Hughes, "Korean Memories of the Vietnam and Korean Wars: A Counter-History," *The Asia-Pacific Journal, Japan Focus*, April 2, 2007; Vol. 5; Issue 4, pp. 2-3.
- <sup>23</sup> Hughes, "Korean Memories of the Vietnam and Korean Wars: A Counter-History," pp. 6-7.
- <sup>24</sup> Kagan, "Disarming Memories: Japanese, Korean, and American Literature on the Vietnam War," p. 31; Hughes, "Korean Memories of the Vietnam and Korean Wars: A Counter-History," pp. 2-3.
- <sup>25</sup> James Sterngold, "South Korea's Vietnam Veterans Begin to Be Heard," *New York Times*, May 10, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/05/10/world/south-korea-s-vietnam-veterans-begin-to-be-heard.html>, accessed May 3, 2018. This article cites the preliminary title of the television movie as "Farewell to Songba River." This may be the actual title or a mistranslation of the original *Faraway Song Be River*.
- <sup>26</sup> *R-Point*, Producer, Kang-Hyuk Choi; Executive Producer, Youn-Hyun Chang, Director, Su-Chang Kong; Screenplay, Su-Chang Kong; Writers, Su-Chang Kong and Yeong-Woo Pil, (Seoul, South Korea, CJ Entertainment and C& Film Production, 2004), Film.

- <sup>27</sup> Kirk, "Confronting Korea's Agony in Vietnam"; Kwak, "The Anvil of War: The Legacies of Korean Participation in the Vietnam War," p. 267.
- <sup>28</sup> "Ku Su Jeong" is sometimes spelled "Koo Soo Jung" in English publications. See George Wehrfritz, Ron Moreau and B.J. Lee, "South Korea's Vietnam," *Newsweek* 135, no. 15 (April 10, 2000), p. 36; Sakurai, "South Koreans rushed to the Battlefield of Vietnam War," <http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/IHistory/TKY200803020111.html>, accessed October 29, 2008.
- <sup>29</sup> Clare Arthurs, "South Koreans Atone For Vietnam War," *BBC News*, January 21, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2679007.stm>, accessed April 16, 2018; Armstrong, "America's Korea, Korea's Vietnam," 529; Izumi Sakurai, "South Koreans rushed to the Battlefield of Vietnam War," *Asahi.com*, March 3, 2008, <http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/IHistory/TKY200803020111.html>, accessed October 29, 2008.
- <sup>30</sup> Kwak, "The Anvil of War: The Legacies of Korean Participation in the Vietnam War," 270; George Wehrfritz, Ron Moreau and B.J. Lee, "South Korea's Vietnam," *Newsweek* 135, no. 15 (April 10, 2000), p. 36.
- <sup>31</sup> Aidan Foster-Carter, "The Koreas, Pyongyang Watch, North Korea in Southeast Asia: Comradeship Bombs," *Asia Times On Line*, July 18, 2001, <http://www.atimes.com/koreas/CG18Dg03.html>, accessed May 3, 2018; Armstrong, "America's Korea, Korea's Vietnam," p. 536; Eun Seo Jo, "Fighting for Peanuts," p. 61.
- <sup>32</sup> Sakurai, "South Koreans rushed to the Battlefield of Vietnam War," *Asahi.com*, March 3, 2008, <http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/IHistory/TKY200803020111.html>, accessed October 29, 2008; George Wehrfritz, Ron Moreau and B.J. Lee, "South Korea's Vietnam," *Newsweek* 135, no. 15 (April 10, 2000), p. 36. Eight to nine thousand possible civilian deaths are most often cited. See Steven Borowiec, "Allegations of S. Korean Atrocities Arising 40 Years After Vietnam War," *LA Times*, May 16, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-korea-vietnam-20150516-story.html>, accessed May 7, 2018 and Ock Hyun-ju, "Time to Apologize for Korea's Wen War Crimes in Vietnam," *The Korean Herald*, November 9, 2017, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20171109000945>, accessed May 7, 2018.
- <sup>33</sup> Armstrong, "America's Korea, Korea's Vietnam," pp. 529-530.
- <sup>34</sup> George Wehrfritz, Ron Moreau and B.J. Lee, "South Korea's Vietnam," *Newsweek* 135, no. 15 (April 10, 2000), p. 36.
- <sup>35</sup> Armstrong, "America's Korea, Korea's Vietnam," p. 533.
- <sup>36</sup> "Teaching Teacher," *Newsweek* 69, no. 15 (April 10, 1967), pp. 42-43; Glenn C. Troelstrup, "A Korean General Tells How to Beat the Viet Cong: Interview with General Chae, Korean Commander in Vietnam," *U.S. News & World Report* 62, no. 20 (May 15, 1967), 56-57; "Letters Raise Question of U.S. Responsibility for Allied Atrocities," *New York Times*, February 13, 1972, sec. 1, p. 4; Craig R. Whitney, "Korean Troops End Vietnam Combat Role," *New York Times*, November 9, 1972, sec. 1, p. 3; Charles Benoit, "Korean Troops Accused of Slaughtering Viet Villagers," *Washington Post*, September 10, 1972, sec. A, p. 25; Marjorie Hunter, "Laird Disclaims Koreans' Acts," *New York Times*, 12 January 1970, sec. 1, p. 3.
- <sup>37</sup> Baldwin, "America's Rented Troops," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 33-40; Diane and Michael Jones, "Allies Called Koreans," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 58-72; "Money for Men," *The New Republic* 165, no. 15 (October 9, 1971),

---

cover, 7-9; Otis, "Seoul's Hired Guns," *Ramparts*, 18-20, 56-57; "The Politics of Vietnam: How to Buy Allies," *The Progressive* 30, no. 4 (April 1966), p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Armstrong, "America's Korea, Korea's Vietnam," 534; "The World: South Viet Nam," *Time* 88, no. 4 (July 22, 1966), 26; Interview with James Calbreath, 28 November 2001, James Calbreath Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, p. 27.

<sup>39</sup> William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, New York, 1976), 257.

<sup>40</sup> Jack Shulimson, Leonard A. Blasiol, Charles R. Smith and David A. Dawson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968* (Washington, D.C., 1997), 614.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Michael Horton, undated, Michael Horton Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, p. 20.

<sup>42</sup> Christos G. Frentzos "From Seoul to Saigon: U.S. – Korean Relations and the Vietnam War," (Ph.D. diss., University of Houston, 2004), 266-267; "Another My Lai?" *Time* September 18, 1972, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,906388,00.html>, accessed October 29, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> MACV Command History 1965, Record Group 472, Records of United States Forces in Southeast Asia, Headquarters Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), Secretary of the Joint Staff (MACJO3), Military History Branch, Annual Command Histories, Command History 1965, box 2, folder: "228-01 Command History 1965 T-61-74 Permanent File," National Archives II, College Park, Maryland (hereafter cited as National Archives 2), pp. 72-73; Richard A. Hunt, "America's Allies in Vietnam: Problems of Recruitment and Command, 1965-1968," *Asian Perspective* 6, no. 1 (1982), 123, 127-129; Larsen and Collins, *Allied Participation in Vietnam*, 134-135; Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, p. 134 and 256; Dale Andrade, "Tigers, Blue Dragons and White Horses," *Vietnam* (December 1989), p. 49.

<sup>44</sup> "The World: South Viet Nam," *Time* 88, no. 4 (July 22, 1966), 26; Ronald R. Rasmussen, "ROK Operations in Central Vietnam," *Military Review* 48, no. 1 (January 1968), pp. 54-55; Larsen and Collins, *Allied Participation in Vietnam*, 154-156; Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 257; Korea Plays Valiant Role in Vietnam to Safeguard Security of Free Asia, Korean Report, January-March 1966, The Personal Papers of Bernard Fall, box, RM-14, folder: "Korea General," John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, Massachusetts (hereafter cited as JFK Library), pp. 8-9; Memorandum for the Deputy Secretary of Defense, From Lt. General Stanley R. Larsen, Subject: Informal Statistical Progress Report on II Corps Tactical Zone, Vietnam, from August 1965 to July 1967, NSF, Country File, Vietnam, box 67 [2 of 2], folder: "Vietnam 2B 7/67-12/68, II Corps (Central SVN)," Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as LBJ Library), 3. For additional statements from U.S. personnel regarding the effectiveness of ROK forces, see, Outgoing Department of State Telegram, July 14, 1967, NSF, Country File, Vietnam, box 211, folder: "Vietnam Manila Nations Conference Clifford/Taylor Trip Aug., 1967 [2 of 2], LBJ Library; Department of Defense Telegram, From General Westmoreland, COMUSMACV, to General Bonesteel, CINCUNC Seoul, April 28, 1968, NSF, Country File, Vietnam, box 91, folder: "Vietnam 5D (3) 1967-1969, Allies: Troop Commitments; Other Aid (Alphabetically: Korea – United Kingdom)," LBJ Library; Transcript, Bruce C. Clarke Oral History Interview, 1/14/1970, interview by Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri, (hereafter cited as Truman Library); Transcript, William B. Rosson Oral History Interview, Senior Officer's Oral History

---

Program, Project 81-5, Vol. II, 1981 – Korea, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 383-386, (hereafter cited as Carlisle Barracks).

<sup>45</sup> Transcript, William B. Rosson Oral History Interview, Senior Officer's Oral History Program, Project 81-5, Vol. II, 1981 – Korea, Carlisle Barracks, 385-386; Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 257; Hunt, "America's Allies in Vietnam: Problems of Recruitment and Command, 1965-1968," *Asian Perspective*, 130; Larsen and Collins, *Allied Participation in Vietnam*, 152-155.

<sup>46</sup> "Teaching Teacher," *Newsweek* 69, no. 15 (April 10, 1967), 42; Rasmussen, "ROK Operations in Central Vietnam," *Military Review*, 54; Glenn C. Troelstrup, "A Korean General Tells How to Beat the Viet Cong: Interview with General Chae, Korean Commander in Vietnam," *U.S. News & World Report* 62, no. 20 (May 15, 1967), 57; Interview with Dominick Cirincione, 19 April 2000, Dominick Cirincione Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, p. 28; Robert C. Michael, II, interview by author, oral history questionnaire, 22 June 2003; Korea Plays Valiant Role in Vietnam to Safeguard Security of Free Asia, Korean Report, January-March 1966, The Personal Papers of Bernard Fall, box, RM-14, folder: "Korea General," JFK Library, 8-9.

<sup>47</sup> "The World: South Viet Nam," *Time* 88, no. 4 (July 22, 1966), 26; Interview with Mike Cisco, undated, Mike Cisco Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, p. 5-6; Interview with David Holdorf, 28 March 2001, David Holdorf Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, p. 28; Interview with Russel Hiatt, 9 May 2001, Russel Hiatt Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, p. 14-16.

<sup>48</sup> Letter from General William C. Westmoreland, U.S. MACV Commander to Lieutenant General Chae Myung Shin, Commander ROK Forces, Vietnam, April 29, 1968, Record Group 472, Entry P 17, File: MIV-60-69 Alleged Atrocity Committed by ROK Marines on 12 Feb. 1968 (C of S Action 4984-69) (S), National Archives 2. This report can be viewed online at the Voices of Vietnam Website, [http://vietnamvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/US-Army-IG\\_ROK-Marines\\_Report\\_1969.pdf](http://vietnamvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/US-Army-IG_ROK-Marines_Report_1969.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> Disposition Form from Colonel Sam H. Sharp, Deputy Inspector General, to Chief of Staff, December 23, 1969, Subject: Alleged Atrocity Committed by ROK Marines on 12 February 1968; Chronology of 12 February 1968 Incident, page 2. Both of these documents are contained within Record Group 472, Entry P 17, File: MIV-60-69 Alleged Atrocity Committed by ROK Marines on 12 Feb. 1968 (C of S Action 4984-69) (S), National Archives 2.

<sup>50</sup> See Statements of First Lieutenant J.R. Sylvia, USMC; Staff Sergeant R.T. Secrest; Corporal J. Vaughn, USMC; Nguyen Chua; Nguyen Xa, Tran Thi Duoc and Nguyen Thi Nu, Record Group 472, Entry P 17, File: MIV-60-69 Alleged Atrocity Committed by ROK Marines on 12 Feb. 1968 (C of S Action 4984-69) (S), National Archives 2.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from General William C. Westmoreland, U.S. MACV Commander to Lieutenant General Chae Myung Shin, Commander ROK Forces, Vietnam, April 29, 1968, Record Group 472, Entry P 17, File: MIV-60-69 Alleged Atrocity Committed by ROK Marines on 12 Feb. 1968 (C of S Action 4984-69) (S), National Archives 2.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from Lieutenant General Chae Myung Shin, Commander ROK Forces, Vietnam, to General William C. Westmoreland, U.S. MACV Commander June 4, 1968, Record Group 472, Entry P 17, File: MIV-60-69 Alleged Atrocity Committed by ROK Marines on 12 Feb. 1968 (C of S Action 4984-69) (S), National Archives 2. Also see

---

Memorandum to Ellsworth Bunker, American Ambassador to the Republic of South Vietnam, from Major General Walter T. Kerwin, Jr., U.S. MACV Chief of Staff, Subject, "Alleged Atrocity by Republic of Korea Forces in Phong Nhut and Phong Nhi on 12 February, 1968." Record Group 472, Entry P 17, File: MIV-60-69 Alleged Atrocity Committed by ROK Marines on 12 Feb. 1968 (C of S Action 4984-69) (S), National Archives 2.

<sup>53</sup> "Investigation Report," included in Letter from Lieutenant General Chae Myung Shin, Commander ROK Forces, Vietnam, to General William C. Westmoreland, U.S. MACV Commander June 4, 1968, Record Group 472, Entry P 17, File: MIV-60-69 Alleged Atrocity Committed by ROK Marines on 12 Feb. 1968 (C of S Action 4984-69) (S), National Archives 2.

<sup>54</sup> James F. Durand, "ANGLICO Marines at Tra Binh Dong," *Leatherneck*, Vol 100, Issue 2, (February 2017), 28.

<sup>55</sup> Katsuichi Honda, *Vietnam War: A Report Through Asian Eyes* (Tokyo, Japan, 1972), 239-244. Similarly, some U.S. military officials in South Vietnam noted that "the Koreans seemed to have made very good impression on the Vietnamese public in areas where they were stationed . . ." See MACV Command History 1966, Record Group 472, Records of United States Forces in Southeast Asia, Headquarters Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), Secretary of the Joint Staff (MACJ03), Military History Branch, Annual Command Histories, Command History 1966, box 3, [no folder], 90-91, National Archives 2.

<sup>56</sup> According to a South Vietnamese newspaper, hundreds of locals protested against the removal of ROK troops from Tuy Hoa in June 1968 and again in 1970. There were also protests in Binh Khe and Song Cau in 1969 when Korean troops relocated to other areas. This information appeared in a front-page editorial of *Tien Tuyen*, on January 20, 1971. The entire article can be found in, Chan-Shik Lee, ed., *Korean Forces in Vietnam: 6 Years for Peace and Construction* (Seoul, Korea, 1971), 13.

<sup>57</sup> Kwak, "The Anvil of War: The Legacies of Korean Participation in the Vietnam War," 265; Kim, "Korea's 'Vietnam Question': War Atrocities, National Identity, and Reconciliation in Asia," pp. 630-631.

<sup>58</sup> Kim, "Korea's 'Vietnam Question': War Atrocities, National Identity, and Reconciliation in Asia," p. 631.

<sup>59</sup> Clare Arthurs, "South Koreans Atone For Vietnam War," *BBC News*, January 21, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2679007.stm>, accessed April 16, 2018; Kim, "Korea's 'Vietnam Question': War Atrocities, National Identity, and Reconciliation in Asia," 631; Steven Borowiec, "Allegations of S. Korean Atrocities Arising 40 Years After Vietnam War," *LA Times*, May 16, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-korea-vietnam-20150516-story.html>, accessed May 7, 2018. In 2017 Korea became Vietnam's biggest foreign investor and second largest donor of official development assistance. See Ock Hyun-ju, "Time to Apologize for Korea's Wen War Crimes in Vietnam," *The Korean Herald*, November 9, 2017, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=201711090000945>, accessed May 7, 2018.

<sup>60</sup> Ock Hyun-ju, "Time to Apologize for Korea's Own War Crimes in Vietnam," *The Korean Herald*, November 9, 2017, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=201711090000945>, accessed May 7, 2018; Choi Ha-young, "Vietnam Criticizes Korean Leader for Honoring War Veterans," *The Korean Times*, June 13, 2017, accessed May 7,

---

2018; Steven Borowiec, “Allegations of S. Korean Atrocities Arising 40 Years After Vietnam War,” *LA Times*, May 16, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-korea-vietnam-20150516-story.html>, accessed May 7, 2018.

<sup>61</sup>Katherine Moon, “South Korea-U.S. Relations,” *Asian Perspective* 28, no. 4 (2004), 51; Izumi Sakurai, “South Koreans rushed to the Battlefield of Vietnam War,” *Asahi.com*, March 3, 2008, <http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/IHistory/TKY200803020111.html>, accessed October 29, 2008.

<sup>62</sup> For more detail regarding these types of monuments, see Kim, “Korea’s ‘Vietnam Question’: War Atrocities, National Identity, and Reconciliation in Asia.”

<sup>63</sup> Kim, “Korea’s ‘Vietnam Question’: War Atrocities, National Identity, and Reconciliation in Asia.” Kim’s article discusses some at length of the difficulties not only in creating these memorials, but also on the naming and symbolic meaning of them. Both Vietnamese and ROK veterans have different perspectives on the events that transpired and how they should be memorialized. Also see, Clare Arthurs, “South Koreans Atone For Vietnam War,” *BBC News*, January 21, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2679007.stm>, accessed April 16, 2018.

<sup>64</sup> Ko Han-sol, “Citizens’ Court to Investigate Vietnam War Atrocities Committed by South Korean Troops,” *Hankyoreh*, November 22, 2017, [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/820199.html](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/820199.html), accessed May 8, 2018; James Griffiths, “The ‘Forgotten’ My Lai: South Korea’s Vietnam War Massacres,” *CNN*, February 23, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/23/asia/south-korea-vietnam-massacre-intl/index.html>, accessed May 8, 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Clare Arthurs, “South Koreans Atone For Vietnam War,” *BBC News*, January 21, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2679007.stm>, accessed April 16, 2018; Izumi Sakurai, “South Koreans rushed to the Battlefield of Vietnam War,” *Asahi.com*, March 3, 2008, <http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/IHistory/TKY200803020111.html>, accessed October 29, 2008.

<sup>66</sup> Saigoneer, “South Koreans Apologize for Country’s Role in American War,” October 19, 2016, accessed May 7, 2018; Korea – Vietnam Peace Foundation, About Us, <http://kovietpeace.org/p/page09?ckattempt=1>, accessed May 7, 2018; Huh Ho-joon, “Vietnam Pieta: A Last Lullaby for Peace in Vietnam, on Jeju Island,” *Hankyoreh*, April 27, 2017, [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/792542.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/792542.html), accessed May 8, 2018.