

Nhiều nữ sĩ quan gốc Việt trấn giữ biển Thái Bình Dương



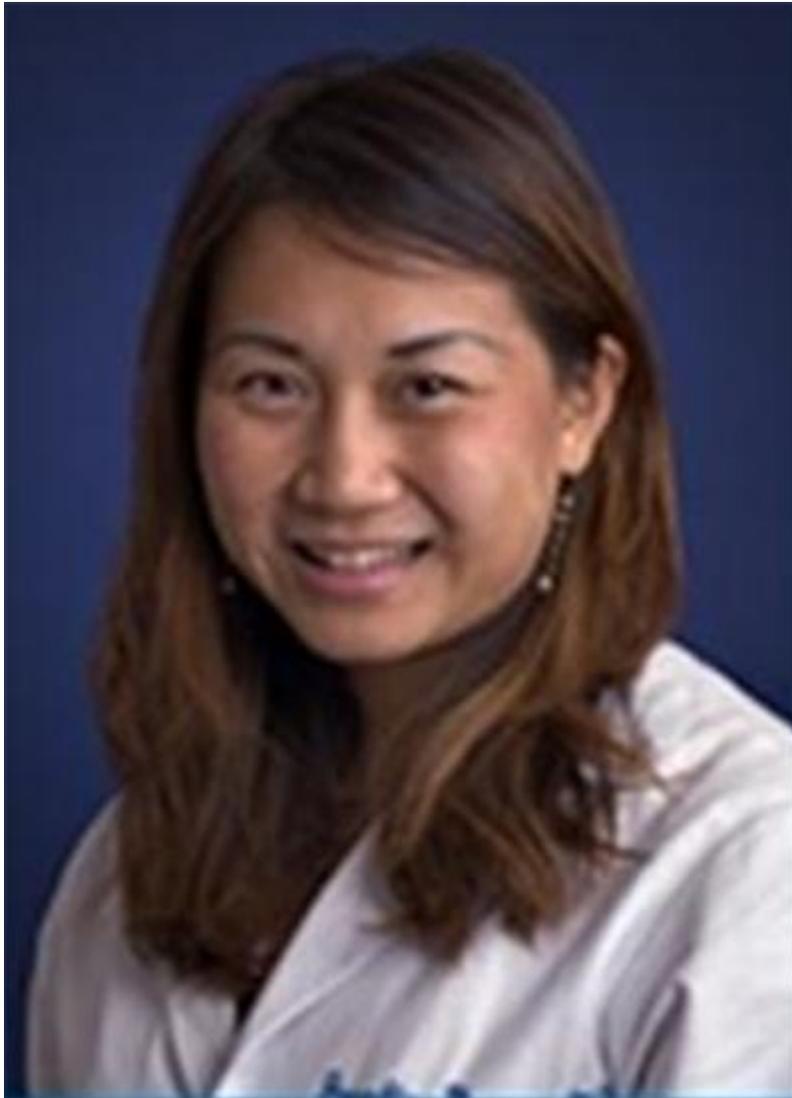
Thiếu tá Elizabeth Phạm trở về hàng không mẫu hạm sau một phi vụ.

Tại Nam Thái Bình Dương Quân Lực Hoa Kỳ không có nhiều căn cứ, sau khi bỏ căn cứ không quân Clark Base và căn cứ hải quân Subic Bay tại Phi Luật Tân thì Hoa Kỳ thấy sự cần thiết phải có lực lượng ứng chiến thường trực tiền phương, tuần hành tại hải phận vùng Đông Nam Thái Bình Dương. Tổng Hành Dinh của lực lượng này đặt tại Yokosuka, Nhật Bản.

Thông thường thì trong hạm đội tuần hành có một hàng không mẫu hạm và các chiến hạm khác bao gồm khu trục hạm, hộ tống hạm, trực lồi hạm, tiềm

thủy đĩnh, các tàu tiếp vận, nhiều loại chiến hạm khác nữa và một tiểu đoàn Thủy Quân Lục Chiến.

Trên soái hạm Kitty Hawk thì trong khoảng thời gian từ 2005 đến 2009 có một bác sĩ quân y phi hành, nhiệm vụ chính yếu là săn sóc y tế cho các phi công thuộc các phi đoàn trên hàng không mẫu hạm.



Cầm Vân

Vị bác sĩ đó là một sĩ quan gốc Việt có tên là Josephine (Cầm Vân) Nguyễn. Năm 1999, bà đỗ hạng nhì (á khoa) tại Học Viện Hải Quân Annapolis, Maryland; nơi đào tạo với chương trình 4 năm các sĩ quan hiện dịch của quân chủng Hải Quân và binh chủng Thủy Quân Lục Chiến.



Josephine Nguyen, M.D.

B.S.	United States Naval Academy	1999
M.D.	Stanford School of Medicine	2003
Internship	NNMC Bethesda, MD	2004

Vài cựu sinh viên sĩ quan nổi tiếng trong số nhiều vị khác là cựu tổng thống Jimmy Carter (sĩ quan tiềm thủy đình nguyên tử), nghị sĩ John McCain (sĩ quan phi hành trên hàng không mẫu hạm), nghị sĩ Jim Webb (sĩ quan Thủy Quân Lục Chiến).

Theo hệ thống tự chỉ huy của quân trường, bà Cẩm Vân chỉ huy 2 tiểu đoàn sinh viên sĩ quan với quân số 2,000. Mỗi năm Học Viện tiếp nhận một khóa khoảng 1,000 sinh viên và luôn có 4 khoá tại trường.

Bà theo học y khoa tại Stanford University, khi tốt nghiệp thực tập tại Bethesda Naval Medical Center, trung tâm y tế có nhiệm vụ theo dõi và săn sóc sức khoẻ cho các tổng thống đương nhiệm; cố tổng thống Ronald Reagan đã giải phẫu và điều trị ung thư tại đây.

Sau khi theo học phi hành tại Pensacola, Florida; bà được thăng cấp hải quân đại úy với nhiệm sở tại Yokosuka và đi theo hàng không mẫu hạm Kitty Hawk trong vai trò bác sĩ quân y phi hành. Thân phụ của bà là một sĩ quan hải quân QLVNCH.

Trong khi đó, Thiếu tá phi công Thủy Quân Lục Chiến Elizabeth Phạm có nhiệm vụ chỉ huy thiết yếu trong các phi đoàn đóng trên hàng không mẫu hạm nguyên tử George Washington, được gửi đến thay thế Kitty Hawk có nhiệm vụ khác. Thân phụ của vị thiếu tá này là một bác sĩ quân y QLVNCH.

Vì là một lực lượng tuần hành ứng chiến thường trực nên các phi công thay phiên túc trực và sẵn sàng cất cánh ngay khi có lệnh, các vị này tập dượt thuần thục, đều đặn; để nâng cao phẩm chất phi hành và chiến đấu, được săn sóc sức khoẻ chu đáo bởi vị bác sĩ quân y phi hành túc trực trên hàng không mẫu hạm cùng với các phi công.

Tác giả : Song Kim



Elizabeth Pham and The Vietnam Veterans



Nữ Phi Công Elizabeth Phạm Vinh Thăng Thiếu Tá

Bà Elizabeth Phạm, phi công của Thủy Quân Lục Chiến Hoa Kỳ vừa mới được vinh thăng thiếu tá. Bà là phi công lái máy bay F-18, phi cơ tối tân nhất hiện nay của Quân Lục Chiến Hoa Kỳ.

Thân phụ của bà là một cựu bác sĩ quân y QLVNCH, thân mẫu của bà cộng tác đặc lực trong hội hậu phương ủng hộ tiền tuyến tại địa phương cư ngụ, thành phố San Diego. Đó cũng là căn cứ gốc của thiếu tá Elizabeth Phạm

Sau khi tốt nghiệp đại học, vị nữ sĩ quan này đã gia nhập Không Quân; bà đỗ thủ khoa trong khóa học đáp xuống hàng không mẫu hạm, thử thách lớn nhất cho mọi phi công.



Bà đã phục vụ tại lực lượng tiền phương vùng Thái Bình Dương, chiến trường Trung Đông, đặc biệt là tại Iraq, tăng cường hỏa lực, yểm trợ tại mặt trận cho lực lượng TQLC Hoa Kỳ trong các chiến dịch tại đó.

Sau một thời gian phục vụ tại Bộ Quốc Phòng tại vùng thủ đô Hoa Thịnh Đốn, nhiệm vụ mới của tân thiếu tá Elizabeth Phạm sẽ là phi công trong lực lượng ứng chiến thường trực tiền phương của Quân Lực Hoa Kỳ tại Thái Bình Dương, căn cứ tại Nhật Bản với hàng không mẫu hạm.

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Two Generations, One Aspiration



After April 30, 1975, millions of Vietnamese citizens were forced to leave their homeland in order to avoid living under a Communist regime. They became refugees, scattered throughout the free countries around the globe. In the United States, there were nearly two million Vietnamese, many of whom were former military personnel as well as government employees of the Republic of Vietnam. First-generation immigrants became actively involved in their new communities and successfully integrated into American society. To date, nearly 35 years after the exodus, Vietnamese refugees have contributed a great deal to the development and success of their adopted countries. In the United States, the contribution of the Vietnamese refugees is evident in vital areas such as economics, politics, science and medicine. For example, Mrs. Duong Nguyet Anh is a scientist who developed the payload for a new weapon, now known as the thermobaric bomb. Engineer Doan Chinh Trung, who is one of the vice presidents of Micron Corporation in Boise, Idaho, has been granted 132 patents. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Mr. Nguyen Tue has achieved an extraordinary record: he graduated with 5 Bachelor's degrees in Physics, Mathematics and Electrical Engineering, and ultimately received a Master's degree and Ph.D. in Nuclear Engineering. He earned seven degrees within seven years from one of the top and best-known technical universities in the US. Currently, there are an estimated 4,200 Vietnamese-American physicians in the United States, or four doctors for every 1,000 Vietnamese refugees. Many Vietnamese-American families

have children graduating as doctors and engineers, professions considered to be highly desirable in the United States.

In the military, the achievements are even more prominent, perhaps because many who are serving are descendants of former military personnel of the Republic of South Vietnam. They followed their fathers' footsteps and continued their fathers' aborted careers. The second generation of immigrants joined the U.S. military forces and achieved great success.

A young Vietnamese-American by the name of Tran Nhu Hoang was mentioned in a speech by President WJ Clinton as a great example of the accomplishments of the Vietnamese in America. Hoang graduated as class valedictorian from the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. Later, he was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship - a renowned scholarship - and went to England before returning to complete his studies and graduated as a medical doctor from Harvard University. Currently, he is a doctor serving in the U.S. Air Force, specializing in micro-surgery in San Antonio, Texas. His wife is also a medical doctor. In 1999, Nguyen Thi Cam Van made the news. That year, she graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD, second in a class of 737 midshipmen.

Not long ago, we heard that a female pilot, Lieutenant Elizabeth Pham, USMC, was the first Vietnamese-American female in the history of the United States Air Force to pilot a modern F-18 Hornet. She served in the Marine All Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242, with over 130 combat missions. These fighter pilots are known for their accuracy, and can sometimes destroy targets just a few hundred yards from friendly forces. In 2005, Pham was promoted to Captain and will no doubt rise even higher in the ranks.

On February 5, 2009, Colonel Luong Xuan Viet of the U.S. Army became the first Vietnamese-American Brigade Commander of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division. Earlier, when he was still a Lt. Colonel, he was a Battalion Commander of the 2nd Battalion of the 82nd Airborne Division. His father, Major Luong Xuan Duong, served in the Army of the Republic of South Vietnam. He and his family left Vietnam in 1975 and settled in the United States. Colonel Viet and his wife and three children currently reside in Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

Recently, we received good news, that Commander Le Ba Hung, USN, was newly appointed as the commanding officer of USS Lassen (DDG 82). The change of command ceremony was held on April 23, 2009, at the U.S. Naval Base in Yokosuka, Japan. The appointment is an important evolution in the United States Navy; for the first time, a Vietnamese-American has become the commanding officer of a modern warship in the world's most powerful navy. This historic appointment deserves further discussion.

Today, many people would agree that the U.S. Navy is the most powerful naval forces in the world, with many new and modern warships operating across the oceans and in remote parts of the globe. Like the "empires" of Spain, Portugal and England long ago, the United States can uphold its powers, protect its rights and quickly intervene at any hotspot in the world, thanks to its powerful navy . In addition to modern ships and aircrafts, the United States Navy has highly experienced officers, non-commissioned officers and well-trained sailors.

In the process of selecting commanding officers, only a very small number chosen and trained for that duty, especially COs of Aircraft Carriers, Cruisers, Destroyers and Nuclear Submarines. According to naval tradition, the commanding officer of a warship is believed to be a warlord on his or her ship, only behind God; a CO's badge has the Latin words "Magister Post Deum" (Powers only after God) imprinted upon it. Therefore, only the best officers are selected to be commanding officers of warships. This position is the only effective path for a possible promotion to Admiral in the future, so it is an excellent opportunity for a career naval officer.

Here we write about the Change of Command Ceremony of USS Lassen (DDG 82). We will present profiles of Commander Le Ba Hung and his father, Commander Le Ba Thong, a former naval officer of the Republic of South Vietnam Navy. Finally, we will discuss the Le family tradition and go into more depth about the USS Lassen.

According to official documents of the United States Navy, Cdr. Le Ba Hung took command of USS Lassen (DDG82) on April 23rd, 2009, in a ceremony held at the U.S. Naval base of Yokosuka, Japan. The Change of Command Ceremony was held between Cdr. Anthony Simmons, former CO, and Cdr. Le Ba Hung, new CO, and presided by Commodore Kevin Donegan, Commander, Task Force 70/75 and 5th Fleet Forces Command of the Seventh Fleet. LASSEN is currently forward-deployed to Yokosuka, Japan and is part of Destroyer Squadron FIFTEEN.

The duties of the U.S. 7th Fleet warships are patrolling for security in the Pacific region, including the South China Sea, which is a hotspot with disputes between China and other Southeast Asian countries, especially with Vietnam in the archipelagos Hoang Sa and Truong Sa. Cdr. Le Ba Hung and USS Lassen may be sent to operate in the waters of Vietnam, where his father's naval career started nearly half a century ago.

In his short inaugural speech, Cdr. Le Ba Hung thanked the U.S. Navy for giving him the opportunity to become the commanding officer of USS Lassen (DDG 82) and gave special thanks his father, former Navy Commander Le Ba Thong of the Republic of South Vietnam, to whom he always referred as his personal hero.

Japan's widely circulated newspaper, Asahi Shimbun, featured a special article, in which it praised Cdr. Le Ba Hung for being a Vietnamese-American assuming the first major command of a large warship of the United States. Japanese newspapers quoted Cdr. Le Ba Hung saying that he likes Japanese culture and to command a ship based in Yokosuka is "his dream". On this occasion, the media expressed sympathy and admiration for the outstanding successes of the Vietnamese refugees who had to leave their country in search of freedom.



With regard to Cdr. Le Ba Hung's biography, we know that Commander Le Ba Hung is a native of Hue, Vietnam and was raised in Northern Virginia. He earned his commission in 1992 from the U.S. Naval Academy, graduating with

merit with a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics. Cdr. Le Ba Hung's initial sea tour was on USS TICONDEROGA (CG 47) in Norfolk, VA, where he served as Auxiliaries Officer and First Lieutenant. Subsequent assignments included tours as Fire Control Officer in USS WASP (LHD 1) in Norfolk, VA; Weapons Officer and Combat Systems Officer in USS HUE CITY (CG 66) in Mayport, FL; and Executive Officer in USS CURTIS WILBUR (DDG 54) in Yokosuka, Japan.

His staff assignments included tours in the Requirements, Policy, and Experimentation (N8/9) directorate at U.S. Second Fleet and in the Joint Training (J-7) directorate at U.S. Joint Forces Command. Cdr. Le Ba Hung has a Master of Science degree in Operations Research with distinction from the Naval Postgraduate School and a Master of Business Administration degree summa cum laude from Touro University International. He is a graduate of the Naval War College Nonresident Seminar Program and a graduate of the Joint Forces Staff College. Cdr. Le Ba Hung's personal decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medal (four awards), and the Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal (two awards).

In an interview, Cdr. Le Ba Hung said: "Certainly I've got my family to thank for their love and support. Also, I've got to thank all the leaders and Sailors with whom I've worked through my 17 years, without them I wouldn't be here." "My father, he's my hero," said Cdr. Le Ba Hung. "He was a South Vietnamese navy commander and his career was cut short because of the war, so I wanted to follow in his footsteps as an officer."

He also said his sense of patriotism to the country that welcomed him and his family also influenced his decision to join the Navy. "I wanted to give back to the United States and give service to my country," he said. "We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the United States."

With those words, the new commanding officer proved that he is a thoughtful gentleman and inevitably those childhood days with his father, who lived in the VN Navy barracks stationed at the northern frontier, had influenced his later naval career. So who is his father, the former Commander in the Republic of South Vietnam, mentioned highly and respectfully by the new commanding officer of USS Lassen?



We had a bit of luck in knowing Commander Le Ba Thong at the VN Naval Academy in Nha Trang in early 60s. He was a midshipman of class 10 naval officers in charge of the two midshipman companies of class 10 and class 11 naval officers. When we met for the first time, we immediately recognized him as an ideal naval officer. He was tall, handsome, intelligent and he graduated as valedictorian of his class. During the graduation ceremony of class 10, he received the Sword of Leadership personally presented by President Ngo Dinh Diem, witnessed by Captain Ho Tan Quyen, Chief Naval Officer (CNO) of the Republic of Vietnam Navy. After graduation, he served on several ships; as valedictorian, he could have been transferred to units that were relatively safe. Instead, he volunteered to join the most dangerous combat

missions, and brought about many important victories.

The following is a summary of his biography.

Commander Le Ba Thong attended the South Vietnamese Naval Academy as a class 10 naval officer in Nha Trang, graduating in 1962. He was then sent to the United States to receive Landing Ship Mechanized (LSM)- Hai Van Ham Hau Giang HQ 406 - in Seattle, USA in 1963. Back in Vietnam, he continued his naval career, serving as executive officer of Mine Sweeper Coastal (MSC)- HQ 116 in 1964, only two years after his graduation. This was an achievement that only a few naval officers could accomplish.

In 1965, he abandoned the safety of serving on a ship at sea and volunteered to join the Coastal Security Service (CSS), a covert special naval operations unit of the Strategic specialists conducting covert operations north of the 17th parallel. There, he was appointed as Captain of PTF-6 which was a new and modern Patrol Torpedo Fast (PTF) at the time.

He continued to serve in the Coastal Security Service until he was appointed Commander of Task Group "Sea Tiger" operating in the Cua Dai, Thu Bon river, Hoi An. It was a very heavy and dangerous task because they were required to use small gunboats to patrol and protect many waterways controlled by the enemy. In 1970, he served as commanding officer of Da Nang naval base. In 1972, he was appointed Deputy Commandant of the Military Instruction Directory of the National Military Academy in Dalat. This position was particularly important in the training of cadets to become great leaders of the nation in the future. As a naval officer, he held a military position normally assigned to army officers, at the military college known as Dalat Army Military Academy; he showed great talent and an especially high capacity for this job. He then held many key positions such as Deputy Chief of Staff of Operations at the Sea Operations Command in Cam Ranh bay; Commanding Officer 32nd Coastal Assault Group in Hue ; Commanding Officer Cua Viet Naval Base; Commander Task Group 231.1 in Thuan An. He fought until the last minutes in Nha Be Naval Support Base, his last unit at which he served as Deputy Commander. He escaped with his family to the United States on the afternoon of April 30, 1975.

Reading the life history and navy career of the former Commander Le Ba Thong, we see him as an outstanding officer who undertook many important staff as well as combat and command positions.

Young Le Ba Hung, while still in Vietnam, certainly absorbed many of his father's talents, and is now a young commanding officer with a bright future in the U.S. Navy. "Two generations, one aspiration", the aspiration for freedom, success, and adventure at sea !!! Sincere congratulations to "Sea Tiger" Le Ba Thong and Cdr Le Ba Hung who has followed his father's footsteps as "like father, like son" - "Tel père, tel fils".



Back to USS Lassen. The U.S. Navy uses the names of national heroes to name its destroyers. USS Lassen (DDG 82) is named in honor of a hero in the United States Navy during the Vietnam War. Clyde Everett Lassen, a native of Fort Myers, Florida, earned the Medal of Honor for his courageous rescue of two downed aviators while commander of a search and rescue helicopter in Vietnam.

On June 19, 1968, Lassen, then a 27 year-old Lieutenant flying a UH-2 Sea Sprite, embarked on a mission to recover two downed naval aviators whose plane had been shot down deep in North Vietnamese territory. Upon reaching the hilly terrain where the aviators were hiding, LT Lassen made several attempts to recover the aviators, but dense tree cover, enemy weapons fire and intermittent illumination frustrated his efforts. Determined to complete his mission, LT Lassen turned on the landing lights of the helicopter, despite the danger of revealing his position to the enemy. After the pilots made their way to the helicopter and with his damaged helicopter dangerously low on fuel, LT Lassen evaded further anti-aircraft fire before landing safely at sea onboard a guided missile destroyer - with only five minutes of fuel left in the helicopter's fuel lines.

The account of the rescue was logged as a successful, routine search and rescue mission. But at the home base for Helicopter Combat Squadron Seven, the rescue flight of June 19, 1968, will always be acclaimed as one of

the most daring feats of flying to come out of the Vietnam Conflict. LT Lassen became the first naval aviator and fifth navy man to be awarded the Medal of Honor for bravery in Vietnam.

DDG 82 is the powerhouse of the U.S. Navy, often called the category "Aegis". According to Greek legend, Aegis is the name for the plate shield covering the chests of the god Zeus and the goddess Athena, so United States uses the name "Aegis" for escort ships and defense forces such as aircraft carriers. Typically, a Carrier Battle Group always has many 'Aegis' ships to protect carriers against the threat of attack from enemy aircrafts from the air, enemy ships at sea and enemy submarines.

The Arleigh Burke class of guided missile destroyers, one of the destroyer classes of the United States Navy, is built around the Aegis combat system and the SPY-1D multi-function phased array radar. Arleigh Burke was the name of the U.S. Admiral and Commander of a famous destroyer squadron during World War II in the Pacific Ocean. The naming process began in 1991, when the Arleigh Burke was named (DDG 51). The latest to join the fleet in June 2008 was USS Sterett (DDG 104). The ship that has received the most mention in this category was probably the USS Cole (DDG 67). USS Cole was attacked by a boat loaded with explosives while mooring in the bay terminal in Yemen on April 2002. It can be said that the Arleigh Burke class of guided missile destroyers are the main force in the defense and protection of Carrier Battle Groups because they are equipped with special radar systems, capable of detecting, tracking and shooting down different targets simultaneously.

These ships are built entirely of steel, instead of aluminum to better withstand damage. These destroyers are worth approximately \$800 million and annual operating costs can run up to \$20 million.



The change of Command USS Lassen (DDG 82)

We see today in the South China Sea that the dispute between China and Vietnam has become increasingly severe. With the heavy pressure of its giant neighbor to the north, certainly Communist Vietnam will have to find a way out by seeking supports from powerful countries for survival. Looking at the global strategy at present, only Russia and the United States would be able to help. Russian has not completely solved its internal economic problems, therefore its relationship with Vietnam would be limited in areas of commerce and trading arms. Only the United States can deter China's hopes of holding occupation rights in the Pacific. In keeping with its strategic interests, the United States must maintain its presence in the East Sea. And who could have predicted that USS Lassen under Commander Le Ba Hung's leadership would be a part of the peacekeeping forces in Southeast Asia. /.

Virginia, Fourth of July 2010

by Tran Do Cam and Nguyen Manh Tri