

Translated from:

<https://www.voatiengviet.com/a/tham-sat-my-lai-qua-anh-cua-ron-haeberle-dang-lap-lai-o-ukrain/6502841.html>

## **My Lai massacre after more than half a century: 'It's repeating itself in Ukraine'**

For the first time, former war correspondent Ron Haeberle has displayed to the American public all the photos taken with his own camera in the village of My Lai more than 50 years ago during the massacre that he believes is being repeated in Vietnam. Russian Invasion in Ukraine

“I was scared and amazed when I saw those pictures,” Abigail Stallard, a history student at the University of San Diego, told VOA after seeing the photos at the “America” exhibition. My Lai: A Massacre that took 504 lives and shocked the world” is on display on the campus of the California university.

Those are the photos that Mr. Haeberle took in My Lai village during the massacre of the US army on March 16, 1968. Some of these photos have been published before, but this is the first time that all the color photographs that Mr. Haeberle took with his personal Nikon camera have been released at the same time on the 54th anniversary of the massacre.

'What happened in My Lai...

Mr. Haeberle, then a war correspondent of the US army, came to My Lai village by helicopter on March 16, 1968 with the mission to record images of an infantry regiment of more than 100 people searching and destroying. The Viet Cong, or North Vietnamese troops, were believed to be hiding in this village – but this was later proven not to be true.

Of the more than 60 photos that Mr. Haeberle took that day, 40 were black and white from a Leica camera issued by the US military and the rest from his personal camera. The black and white photographs were submitted by Mr. Haeberle to the command room, while the color photographs were kept by him.

Eight of those photos were published by Plain Dealer, the first newspaper to report on the My Lai massacre, on November 20, 1969, along with an investigative article by reporter Seymour

Hersh to expose the killing, harming Vietnamese civilians by American soldiers in My Lai. A month later, Life Magazine published a number of photographs (seven) that Mr. Haeberle had taken of the massacre.

The anti-war movement began in the 1960s, but with what Plain Dealer and Life Magazine put out, which included photos by Mr. Haeberle, many Americans began to question the validity, the legitimacy of US military involvement in Vietnam.

As the first person to expose the My Lai massacre through photos to the American public, Mr. Haeberle said he was pleased to see that Americans have become more aware and knowledgeable about this war over the past 50 years. However, he thinks it is not taught much in schools.

“What really upsets me is this knowledge in education, in high schools, and there are only three pages of books about what happened in Vietnam or the Vietnam War, and the teachers don't talk a lot about that,” said Mr. Haeberle, but he explained that at the university level “students are now starting to learn about what happened in Vietnam” during the war that ended in 1975, three years after The US withdrew its troops from South Vietnam.

But according to Abigail, she had the good fortune of being a student at the University of San Diego, which offers history classes on the Vietnam War and lectures with a variety of sources about the war. Even so, Mr. Haeberle's photographs provided "a major turning point" in her view of the Vietnam War.

“Haeberle’s pictures have taught me how intrusive war is on humanity,” said Abigail, who plans to study for a doctorate to become a history professor. “I don't think anything can justify killing another person, especially an unimaginable act of violence against children. No one in My Lai deserved to die and that is a tragedy – war is a tragedy.”

...repeated in Ukraine'

This tragedy is happening again in Ukraine, said Haeberle, who witnessed hundreds of Vietnamese women and children being killed by American soldiers in My Lai more than half a century ago.

"What's happening now, the history of March 16, 1968 is being repeated now in Ukraine, the massacre of civilians, women, children," said 80-year-old Haeberle. "It's reminiscent of what happened in My Lai, like a parallel to what's happening now in Ukraine."

During the four-hour search for the Viet Cong in My Lai village, American soldiers found only civilians, mainly the elderly, women and children, and 504 of them were killed. A later investigation revealed that American soldiers raped several women and then burned the village.

In Ukraine, Russian forces bombed a maternity hospital in Mariupol and a theater marked as a bomb shelter for children. Since the Russian invasion began on February 24, nearly 1,000 civilians have been killed, including many women and children, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as of February 24. 3. The US State Department says the Russian military committed war crimes while a separate court is likely to be created to look into war crimes in Ukraine.

With his photos of the My Lai massacre, currently on display at the University of San Diego until March 28, Mr. Haeberle hopes to create a change in the young generation's view of war in America. .

“Hopefully with what happened in My Lai, what is happening in Ukraine, the students can learn something and a change can happen,” Haeberle said.

At the University of San Diego exhibit, students at first couldn't believe that American soldiers could act so cruelly, said Ron Carver, exhibit organizer, activist, and long-term worker for social justice and labor.

“We explained to students that this is part of the problem of any war, but it was exacerbated by certain policies of the highest-ranking Pentagon officials, the demand for daily reports on the number of dead (Vietnamese) bodies,” Mr. Carver said.

By deciding to make the photos public because he saw it as a crime even though it was committed by his fellow American soldiers, Mr. Haerberle drew criticism from many Americans at the time - they called him as a "traitor." In 1970, he testified when the US government investigated the massacre in which Vietnam said about 500 civilians were killed in My Lai. Twenty-six US Army soldiers and officers were charged, including only one convicted.

Mr. Carver said Mr. Haeberle's photos are important in that they show not only the Vietnamese killed but also survivors, including the siblings Tran Van Duc and Tran Thi Ha, who later were able to be reunited with the person who photographed them during the tragedy.

The exhibition, which will be combined with a display of photographs of the anti-war movement by US soldiers in the late 1960s and early 1970s, is expected to be taken to other cities such as San Francisco in California, Seattle in Washington State, and Boulder, Colorado this year.

Mr. Carver also hopes to bring this exhibition to Vietnam.