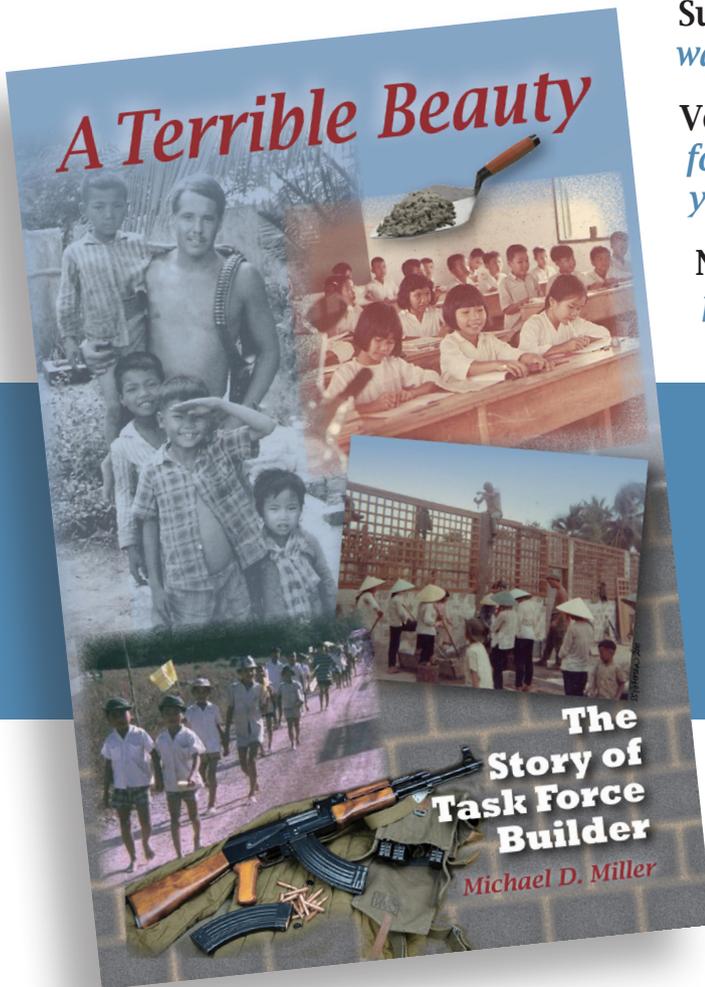


There is a better way to fight our wars. History is our teacher.
To ignore the lessons of history is to bring folly. The great masters such as Von Clausewitz, Sun Yat-sen, and Niccolo Machiavelli all understood this:



Sun Yat-sen: *"If you are going to swim in foreign waters, make friends with the fishes in those waters."*

Von Clausewitz: *"If you are going to war with a foreign people, you must make friends with them or you will be defeated."*

Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince: *"No matter how powerful one's armies, in order to enter a country one needs the goodwill of the inhabitants."*

There is a better way to fight our wars.

the Japanese and French, the youth of Vietnam set out to expel the invader once again.

In 1967, John Paul Vann established Task Force Builder in the Mekong Delta in order to demonstrate that we could greatly affect the attitude of the enemy by showing them that we there as friends, and not as foreign invaders. We built eighteen schools as fierce fighting raged for control of the area. John Paul Vann knew the desperate needs of rural Vietnamese to educate and improve the welfare of their children. They wanted our schools. In some cases even the wives of Viet Cong families fought to protect our schools from marauding bands of enemy. Our program was a raging success. Enemy activity in our area lessened. The locals protected us as their heroes.

These lessons are important. Today, young men in Afghanistan villages are being encouraged to defeat us, just as their ancestors defeated the Russians and the British. We need to show them that we are their friends. This message is incredibly important to our future.

My Vietnam experience taught me the same thing: study the enemy, understand why he fights you, and then attack those reasons why he fights you. Then the outcome is he won't want to fight you. Sounds simple. So why then did we lose in Vietnam? We lost because we did not understand this fundamental truth. We still do not understand this fundamental truth, as evidenced by our less than perfect results in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Most of the young Vietnamese farmers and villagers fought us because we were labeled as foreign invaders. Since the Vietnamese had been expelling foreign invaders for a thousand years, they easily grasped this lie. Just as they had recently expelled

***A Terrible Beauty*, by Michael D. Miller, USMA '64, Harvard MBA '73**
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