

Stone monument on house foundation of family killed at My Lai

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A grey stone monument rests on a house foundation of a local family killed at My Lai on March 16, 1968. The inscription on the monument, written in both Vietnamese and English reads, "Foundation of Mr. Lê Lý's house burnt by U.S. soldiers - 7 of his family members were murdered." This statement is followed by a list of seven names and the ages of each family member killed. A ceramic urn filled with incense sticks rests at the base of the monument. At age 70, Mr. Lê Lý was the oldest male of the household. The list of names and ages inscribed on the stone suggests that he lived with his wife, one adult son, the son's wife, and three grandchildren.

In 1968, U.S. forces considered the My Lai area to be a stronghold of Communist Vietnamese fighters (known as Vietcong) and their sympathizers. Repeated bombing of the region only increased the support of local civilians for the Communist fighters. After an order was given to U.S. troops to attack My Lai Village, American soldiers killed hundreds of mostly women, children, and elderly with brutal methods.

Photographs and reports about the atrocities at My Lai led many Americans who thought little about the Vietnam War to conclude that it was not a war they wished to support. Increasingly, the U.S. government decided to reduce civilian killings and military deployments in Vietnam. American forces gradually were withdrawn and then the southern capital of Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese Communist forces on April 30, 1975.



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