

Eddie Adams (photographer)

Eddie Adams (June 12, 1933 – September 19, 2004) was a Pulitzer Prize-winning American photographer and photojournalist noted for portraits of celebrities and politicians and his coverage of 13 wars.

Adams served in the United States Marine Corps during the Korean War as a combat photographer. One of his assignments was to photograph the entire Demilitarized Zone from end to end immediately following the war. This took him over a month to complete.

It was while covering the Vietnam War for the Associated Press that he took his best-known photograph – the picture of police chief General Nguyễn Ngọc Loan executing a Vietcong prisoner, Nguyễn Văn Lém, on a Saigon street, on February 1, 1968, during the opening stages of the Tet Offensive.

Adams won the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for Spot News Photography and a World Press Photo award for the photograph (captioned 'General Nguyen Ngoc Loan executing a Viet Cong prisoner in Saigon'), but would later lament its notoriety.

On Nguyen Ngoc Loan and his famous photograph, Adams wrote in *Time*:

“ The general killed the Viet Cong; I killed the general with my camera. Still photographs are the most powerful weapons in the world. People believe them; but photographs do lie, even without manipulation. They are only half-truths. ... What the photograph didn't say was, 'What would you do if you were the general at that time and place on that hot day, and you caught the so-called bad guy after he blew away one, two or three American people?' ”

Adams later apologized in person to General Nguyen and his family for the irreparable damage it did to the General's honor while he was alive. When Nguyen died, Adams praised him as a "hero" of a "just cause". On the television show "War Stories with Oliver North" Adams called Gen. Nguyen "a goddamned hero!"

He once said, "I would have rather been known more for the series of photographs I shot of 48 Vietnamese refugees who managed to sail to Thailand in a 30-foot boat, only to be towed back to the open seas by Thai marines." The photographs, and accompanying reports, helped persuade then President Jimmy Carter to grant the nearly 200,000 Vietnamese boat people asylum. He won the Robert Capa Gold Medal from the Overseas Press Club in 1977 for this series of photographs in his photo essay, "The Boat of No Smiles" (Published by AP) Adams remarked, "It did some good and nobody got hurt."