

MEMO

To: Ed Nichols
From: Bill Convery
Date: February 26, 2010
RE: Nomenclature for proposed Lincoln Park Fallen Heroes Memorial

Dear Ed,

Per your request, I have assessed the proposal for the Fallen Heroes Memorial at the State Capitol in Lincoln Park. You particularly desired me to review and make proposals as State Historian regarding the nomenclature for the conflicts listed on p. 2, Item 11. It appears from your notes that you wish me to make particular reference to the terms "Korean War," "Vietnam War," and "War on Terrorism." After reviewing the proposal, I have the following observations:

Korea and Vietnam: What Defines a War?

The crux of this question appears to be whether or not these three conflicts can technically be termed "wars," despite the lack of a formal Congressional war declaration in each case. Article I, Section 8, Clause 11 of the United States Constitution gives Congress alone the power to declare war. In addition, the Constitution gives Congress sole authority "to raise and support armies" and "to provide for calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrections and repel invasions."

It should be noted however that several U.S. Presidents have mobilized and committed U.S. forces to armed combat without Congressional declarations of war. In the ten weeks between the fall of Fort Sumter and the convening of Congress in July 1861, President Abraham Lincoln made war preparations based on his authority as commander in chief. He initiated the drafting of men for military service, approved a Southern naval blockade, and suspended the writ of Habeas Corpus. Congress later ratified most of Lincoln's actions. In the twentieth century several U.S. presidents have committed U.S. armed forces without a declaration of war. In 1903 and 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt took military action in Panama and the Dominican Republic without consulting Congress. President Woodrow Wilson sent troops into Mexico without Congressional approval. President Harry S Truman ordered troops to Korea in 1951 as part of a United Nations "police action." And, in the 1960s and 70s, Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon prosecuted a conflict in Vietnam without a congressional declaration.

Despite this, the conflicts in both Korea and Vietnam appear to fit a broader definition of war as presented by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (e.g. *a*

hostile contention by means of armed forces, carried on between nations, states, or rulers, or between parties in the same nation or state; the employment of armed forces against a foreign power, or against an opposing party in the state). The Stanford University Department of Philosophy has also presented a definition of war as *actual, intentional, and widespread armed conflict between political communities* that seems to fit the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam.

Historians have accepted the terms “Korean War” and the “Vietnam War” as appropriate descriptors of these conflicts. Prominent histories of the Korean conflict include titles such as David Rees’s *Korea: The Limited War*, Burton I. Kaufman, *The Korean War: Challenges in Crisis, Credibility, and Command*, Clay Blair’s *The Forgotten War: American in Korea*, William Stueck’s *The Korean War: An International History*, and Bruce Cumings’s two-volume *The Origins of the Korean War*. Similarly, University of Colorado Boulder historian Robert D. Schulzinger’s definitive two-volume history of the *Vietnam Era, A Time for War: The United States and Vietnam, 1941-1975* and *A Time for Peace: The Legacy of the Vietnam War* routinely refers to the “Vietnam War.”

The Global War on Terrorism

General usage has confirmed the use of the term “war” in relation to the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, in much the same way that the term “World War I” replaced “the Great War” the wake of World War II. Although a similar pattern appears to be happening with the term “War on Terrorism,” the phrase nevertheless presents a different kind of challenge. The term first debuted in a 20 September 2001 speech by President George W. Bush, who said: *Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach as been found, stopped, and defeated*. The term encompasses a broad spectrum of overt and covert of military, political, financial, legal, and ideological conflict against Islamic terrorism, extremist Islamic militants, and the regimes and organizations that aid and support them, including but not limited to Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Active Endeavour, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and unnamed engagements in Pakistan, Waziristan, Yemen, the Philippines, the trans-Saharan, the Horn of Africa, and elsewhere

American allies, as well as policy experts, military, and diplomatic leaders, and cognitive linguists from across the political spectrum have taken issue with the phrase “War on Terror,” arguing that the term is subjective, that it is unacceptably vague, that it targets a tactic and not a particular enemy, and that it provides a framework for perpetual war, since “terrorists” will always continue to arise. As linguist George Lakoff writes: *Terror is an emotional state. It is in us. It is not an army. And you can’t defeat it*

militarily and you can't sign a peace treaty with it. In March 2009, the Obama administration publically distanced itself from the phrase “global war on terror,” using instead the more prosaic “Overseas Contingency Operation” to describe multiple conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere.

That said, there are already several War on Terrorism memorials established or in development in cities, counties, and states around the country. The War on Terror Foundation keeps a running list for a monument planned in Hermitage, Pennsylvania. Service men and women at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, dedicated a granite Global War on Terrorism memorial in May 2005. Vermont Governor Jim Douglas unveiled a Global War on Terror memorial in November 2009. Similar efforts are underway in Idaho, Kentucky, and Oklahoma. Since 2002, the United States has created two military decorations related to the War on Terrorism, including the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal. Both are in active use.

Recommendations:

Despite their Constitutional fuzziness, the terms Korean War and Vietnam War each fit the definition of war as presented by reputable sources. Each has been accepted into common usage by historians and the general public and each is consequently appropriate for use on the Fallen Heroes Memorial at the State Capitol in Lincoln Park. While less linguistically precise, the phrase Global War on Terrorism has come to define the multiple operations, both overt and covert, that have been waged by the United States and its allies against militant Islamic extremism in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. In lieu of a more precise option, I recommend its use.

A Final Note:

On 24 July 1909, the State of Colorado and the Colorado Pioneers' Association erected a Civil War monument on the grounds of the state capitol to honor all Colorado soldiers who had fought in the Civil War. The monument included a list of battles, both in the state and elsewhere, in which Colorado soldiers had participated. Prominent on this list was the “Battle of Sand Creek,” which was the consensus term for the 29 November 1864 surprise attack on a peaceful camp of Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians by Colorado soldiers under the command of Colonel John M. Chivington. In the intervening century, Coloradans have changed their views of the Sand Creek “battle,” having recognized in its design and execution the tragic massacre of women, children, and the elderly. In 2002, at the request of American Indian survivors' groups and the Colorado state senate, the Colorado Historical Society installed a bronze plaque on the memorial. The plaque did not erase the earlier version of the past, but instead attempted to explain how

sensibilities had changed in the intervening years. The new marker reads in part: *The controversy surrounding this Civil War Monument has become a symbol of Coloradans' struggle to understand and take responsibility for our past.* Perhaps someday a similar addition will be made to the Fallen Heroes Memorial. Or perhaps not.