AP REPORT UPDATE

Investigating claims around ‘The Terror of War’ photograph

May 6, 2025

Executive summary

AP's sole interest in conducting an investigation into the famous AP photo, "The Terror of War," commonly known as "Napalm Girl," is ensuring authorship of the iconic image is fairly and accurately recorded. AP has historically not shied away from taking a hard look at its past, and that is indeed what The Associated Press has done here.

No one is disputing the accuracy of the image, nor that the image is AP's. The goal of this investigation is purely to establish an accurate historical record. No one who worked for AP involved on either side of this story remains at the company. All have died, retired or left.

A team of AP journalists has spent almost a year investigating this image, which for more than 50 years was believed to have been taken by Huynh Cong Ut, known as Nick Ut. Since AP's interim report was published in January 2025 they have:

- Completed a detailed analysis of all available footage and photography from the attack, including rarely seen photos and video, some not previously published.
- Interviewed photographer Nick Ut along with others in the AP office that day, including the Vietnamese office administrator and those who were on the road, including a cousin of Kim Phuc's who also fled the napalm attack as a child.
- Attempted to interview the Vietnamese photographer Nguyen Thanh Nghe, who says he took the photo, and former AP photo editor Carl Robinson, who claims he was ordered to change the credit. They both declined to be interviewed, but responded in writing to questions from AP.
- Inspected more than a dozen cameras, including some belonging to Ut, testing various makes and models from the era.
- Scrutinized all the photos of that day in the AP archive, analyzing minute differences between negatives.
- Built a 3D model to analyze the scene, geography and distances between people.

The Associated Press did all this in pursuit of the facts. AP has concluded that it is possible Nick Ut took the photo. However, that cannot be proven definitively due to the passage of time, the death of many of the key players involved and the limitations of technology. New findings uncovered during this investigation do raise unanswered questions and AP remains open to the possibility that Ut did not take this photo.

Given Ut's body of work from the day as an evidently energetic and proactive photographer, several eyewitness testimonies and a comprehensive analysis of all available material, Ut could have taken this picture.

At the same time, no proof has been found that Nguyen took the picture. Further, AP's analysis shows that the visual record of the day has multiple gaps; that there are also gaps in the timeline covered by the photos and film footage of the key minutes; and that there were other people holding cameras at the spot where the photograph was taken. It is not the case that Nguyen alone was in position to take the photo.

Importantly, AP's investigation has turned up myriad new materials and conclusions, such as:

- It is unlikely the famous photo was taken by a Leica M2
- It is likely the famous photo was taken using a Pentax camera
- A distant, blurry figure seen in key footage that day appears to show Nick Ut

This leaves significant questions:

- If the camera used was a Pentax, could Nick Ut have taken the photo?
- What cameras was Ut carrying? He has said in multiple interviews that he carried two Leica and two Nikon cameras.
- Why have no other frames from the same roll of film as the famous photograph been uncovered?
- If Nick Ut is the distant figure, how could he have taken the famous image, and then appeared in a different location?
- Why has AP found no match between the famous image and any other negative in its archive?

There are possible answers to all these questions, as this report explores. Without further evidence being uncovered, these questions may never be resolved.

We applied AP's photo standards to guide us to an outcome. AP's standards say "a challenged credit would be removed only if definitive evidence ... showed that the person who claimed to have taken the photo did not."

All available evidence analyzed by AP does not clear that bar. Thus, the photo will remain attributed to Ut.

What follows is a report on AP's findings, followed by an addendum detailing AP's visual and technical analysis. We have also published an interactive that shows the highlights of that part of the investigation.

A scan of the famous image and the adjoining frame. These are the only two frames from this roll that AP has in its archive. (AP Photo / Nick Ut)

Introduction

The world famous AP photo of Kim Phuc — "The Terror of War," known popularly as "Napalm Girl" — was taken on June 8, 1972, and credited to Huynh Cong Ut, a young Vietnamese AP staffer working in the Saigon bureau. The image is among the most recognized and celebrated works of photojournalism of the 20th century.

The photo was shot during a well-documented attack on the village of Trang Bang. It won the Pulitzer Prize, World Press Photo contest and many other journalism awards.

For decades, the authorship of the photo was unchallenged.

The attack was witnessed by many journalists for competing news organizations who never publicly called into question Ut's authorship of the photo. Many have written, reported and publicly spoken about their time in Vietnam, while never disputing the provenance of perhaps the most famous photo of the war. The photograph was developed and processed in the busy AP office, where there were yet more witnesses to its emergence.

At no point over the past half century has anyone formally complained to AP that the photo was misattributed.

Earlier this year, a film challenging this historical record was shown at the Sundance Film Festival. "The Stringer" posits that Ut did not take that photo. Instead, it says a Vietnamese stringer sold the picture to The Associated Press, which deliberately miscredited it to Ut.

Aware that the film was in production, but without access to its source material, The Associated Press conducted a six-month investigation and released a preliminary report in January. After gaining access to the film in mid-February, the AP conducted a further investigation.

This new work included a detailed analysis of all available footage from the attack, interviews with Ut along with others in the AP office that day, and a cousin of Kim Phuc's who was on the road. It also included written questions posed to the two main characters in the movie. AP inspected Ut's cameras, which he had donated to the Newseum in Washington, D.C., other camera bodies from the era, as well as all the photos of that day in the AP archive and previously unseen photos from another photographer at the scene.

AP comes to this investigation with deep humility. AP can't pretend to know what precisely happened on that road more than half a century ago despite modern tools. The source material is old and lacking the metadata and high resolution of modern images, so there are limits to what technology can do.

The investigation raised significant questions about some aspects of the story told over the years. But to remove a photo credit and overrule AP journalists of the past who were entrusted to honestly assign that credit requires a high bar of proof of wrongdoing. The fact that many of those journalists (as well as many witnesses) have since died and thus can't present a defense makes that standard even more imperative.

AP's standards say "a challenged credit would be removed only if definitive evidence ... showed that the person who claimed to have taken the photo did not."

That evidence analyzed in AP's investigation does not clear that bar. Thus, the photo attribution will remain as is.

The facts

The broad narrative around the image has been consistent for decades, even as some specifics have blurred over half a century and amid the traumatic fog of war: Ut brought his eight rolls of film back to the bureau after the "friendly fire" bombing of the village by South Vietnamese forces in which Kim Phuc was badly burned. AP darkroom editor Yuichi "Jackson" Ishizaki, in on temporary assignment from Tokyo, then developed the film as Ut stood by.[1]

Horst Faas[2], AP's two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning chief of photos in Saigon, was away at lunch when the negative was first processed. Summoned back to the bureau, he recognized the image's power and ordered it sent to AP headquarters in New York, overruling the photo editor on duty, Carl Robinson, who believed that the nudity of the subject would render it unacceptable in the U.S.[3] Editors in New York, led by the AP chief of photography, Hal Buell, agreed with Faas that the image should be shared because of its honest depiction of the horror of war.[4]

AP distributed the photo to its membership and customers, and the image instantly drew worldwide attention and acclaim. It has remained one of the most recognizable photos in AP's long history. In 1973, it won Ut a Pulitzer Prize.[5]

Aged 21 when the photo was taken in 1972, "Nick" Huynh Cong Ut had already been working for the AP for six years, first as a darkroom assistant and eventually as a field photographer. Ut was born in the province of Long An in the Mekong Delta. Two of his brothers were killed in combat within five months of each other in 1965, one in the military, the other an AP staff photographer, Huynh Thanh My. Exempt from the draft, AP hired Ut as a young teenager, where he was known by colleagues as being energetic and scrappy, and according to Faas, he had developed a keen instinct for news photography working in the busy Saigon darkroom.[6]

Ut would remain with AP for 45 more years until retiring in 2017. He left Saigon in 1975 during the Communist takeover of South Vietnam and eventually settled in Los Angeles. He covered the O.J. Simpson trial, photographed Hollywood icons like Marlon Brando and shot sports events. He remained best known for the "Napalm Girl" image. He has spoken about his work extensively and been regularly featured in articles and documentaries. At no point over the last half-century has his credit for the famous image been seriously challenged.

On the road

The AP spoke to eight eyewitnesses who were on the road when the photo was shot and received a statement from a ninth, Kim Phuc.[7] Those interviewed include Ut and a relative of Kim Phuc's who was also running from the attack. In addition, Nguyen Thanh Nghe, the Vietnamese photographer who says he shot the photo, answered written questions. AP also reviewed a published letter from another witness who has since died. Other than Ut, none of the witnesses worked for AP in any capacity then or since.

Other than Nguyen Thanh Nghe, none questioned Ut's authorship of the photo.

David Burnett, then a 25-year-old photographer who mainly worked for Time and Life but was on assignment for The New York Times, was among the journalists on the road in Trang Bang as the napalm attack hit the village. He said the journalists waited from a safe distance because they were unsure of where the napalm was. It took a few minutes for the victims to start fleeing the village. Burnett saw Ut and fellow journalist Alexander Shimkin, a freelancer who had been covering the war primarily for Newsweek, sprint ahead of the others and start taking photos as Kim Phuc and other children emerged from the smoke.[8] A photo[9] shows Shimkin near Kim Phuc as she ran up the road. Shimkin, a former civil rights activist, was killed in Vietnam just a month after the attack.[10]

"There's nothing that ever has given me pause to think that Nick didn't shoot that picture," Burnett said.[11] Burnett himself missed the precious shot because in that moment he was struggling to change the film in his camera.[12] Burnett has told a consistent version of this story for decades.

Though memories can fade and distort, many of those AP spoke to on the road were journalists who had written contemporaneous accounts of the events of the day and were not simply recalling events they had not thought about for half a century.

For example, Fox Butterfield,[13] the former New York Times Saigon bureau chief, who says he was 10 to 15 yards from where Ut took the photo, says he still has his notebook from that day.

Kim Phuc, in a statement given to the AP by Ut's lawyer, says that while she has no memories of the attack, her uncle, who was an eyewitness to the events on that day, had confirmed that Ut took the photograph. [14]

Arthur Lord, an NBC television reporter at the scene who has since died, wrote a letter to the Los Angeles Times Magazine in its Oct. 1, 1989 issue[15] seeking to ensure that NBC's cameraman on the road also be credited for his courageous work that day, adding that "Nick Ut won a well-deserved Pulitzer Prize." He said his colleague, cameraman Le Phuc Dinh, was standing "shoulder to shoulder with Nick Ut" on the road.

Nguyen Thanh Nghe, the subject of the movie, did not agree to an interview, but answered AP's questions in an email with the filmmakers copied in, sent to AP by his daughter. He said he was standing on the road as the children ran out of the village. He aimed his camera at them and took his whole roll of film, he said. "When I saw the girl running out naked, I knew that was a moment I needed to capture. Whether or not it would sell, it didn't matter, I had to take it," he said. He asserted that he shot the "Napalm Girl" photo.

Ut told AP his story of the moments after the attack: He advanced away from the bridge where he took pictures of the napalm explosion. He quickly moved to the same position on the road to join other journalists, standing at two lines of barbed wire. Everyone waited to see what would happen next, he said. He recalls turning to a camera operator from the news agency, Visnews, and said "I hope there was no one there." When he saw the children running through the smoke, he sprinted forward and took two pictures with a wide-angle lens from close up.[16]

In the office

Ut says he returned to the AP hours later with eight rolls of film to be processed, two in color and six in black-and-white. He stayed in the bureau as the rolls were developed. The AP darkroom had careful procedures in place to ensure that developed film was properly credited to the correct photographer.

According to an oral history with Ut, conducted by AP Corporate Archives Director Valerie Komor and retired Special Correspondent Linda Deutsch in Los Angeles on May 15, 2016, when he developed the film, Ishizaki saw that Kim Phuc was naked, and asked Ut why she had no clothes and why he would take a photo of a naked girl. Ut explained to him that she had been burned by napalm and had removed her burning garments. Ishizaki recognized the significance of the image, and a disagreement ensued between him and Robinson on whether it should be sent to New York.[17] At this point, Ishizaki instructed an office employee to fetch Faas from the nearby Royal Hotel where he was having lunch with AP correspondent Peter Arnett, to tell him that Ut had returned from the field with photos that Faas should see. On returning with Arnett, Faas looked at the image, saw its power, asked why it had not been dispatched already, and ordered the image to be transmitted to New York. He also congratulated Ut on his work.[18]

The Associated Press spoke with seven people in the AP office that day, including Tu Pease, the Vietnamese office manager of the AP bureau. Robinson did not agree to an interview, but answered AP's questions in an email with the filmmakers and his lawyer copied in.

Robinson, who is a key source of the accusations in the movie, told AP in the email that he came to the office after the film from Trang Bang had already been processed. He claimed there were rolls from at least three photographers, with each credited to the photographer who shot it under the meticulous filing system Faas had established.[19] Ishizaki excitedly showed Robinson the famous picture, which Robinson said had been shot by a stringer whose name he didn't recognize. Robinson chose a more discreet profile shot from Ut, he said. Faas entered, overruled Robinson's choice and as Robinson was typing out the photo's credit "Horst … leaned down close to my ear and said, 'Nick Ut. Make it Nick Ut.'" Robinson says he hesitated, but did it.

Robinson says that the only people present with him in the photo room were Faas, Ishizaki and a darkroom technician named Huan. Those other three have died in the half century since the event. AP can find no evidence of any of them publicly or privately challenging the veracity of the photo credit.

Robinson's friends say he is earnest, honest and troubled by the events in the office. Former colleagues have fond memories of working with him.

Yet, for decades, he did not publicly challenge Ut's credit for the photo — and in fact, reinforced it.

AP photos show Robinson holding a bottle of champagne in one hand and drinking from a glass in the other as colleagues apparently toast Ut's Pulitzer win in May 1973.[20]

Robinson also corresponded with New York firefighters who wanted to help Kim Phuc. In copies of that correspondence in AP's archive, Robinson repeatedly identifies Ut as the author of the photo, even when it was unnecessary in the context. In one letter, he writes: "The Vietnamese photographer who took the picture of young Phan Thi Kim Phuc is Hyunh Cong "Nick" Ut, who continues to work here at AP's Saigon Bureau." In another he writes, "Yesterday, Huynh Cong "Nick" Ut, the photographer who took the well-known picture, and I drove to Trang Bang. …"

Robinson worked for AP in New York and later Australia after being evacuated from Vietnam. He was dismissed from the AP in 1978. AP could find no record for why he was dismissed. He later described his anger and frustration at how AP forced its staff's families to evacuate before the fall of Saigon and then forced him to evacuate while leaving a skeleton staff on the ground that he felt was not as deserving of covering the story as he was.[21]

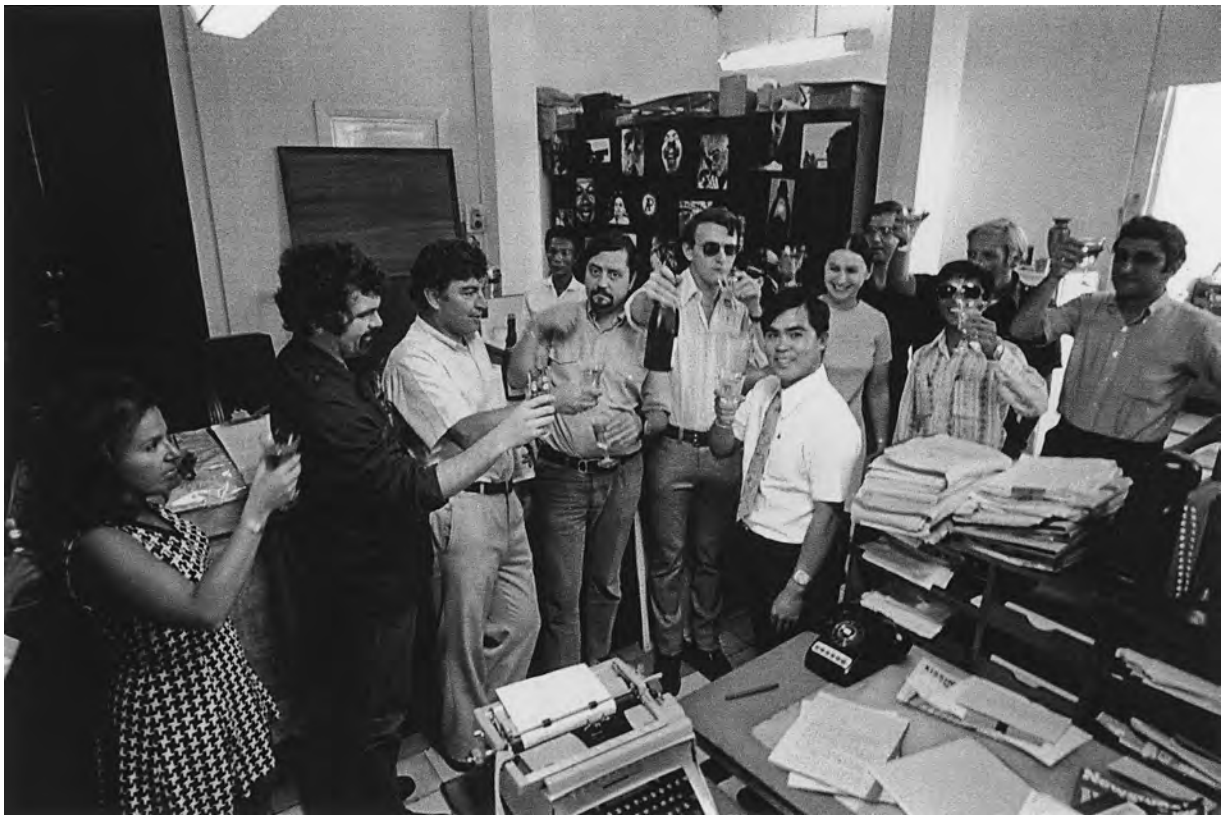
In his autobiography, Robinson said that working for AP in New York, he appeared his usual affable self. "But beneath it lay a simmering anger, resentment and bitterness, especially toward AP," he wrote.[22]

"He has a grudge of some kind, but I could never tell what it was about," said Butterfield,[23] who was close enough with Robinson that he wrote the cover blurb for Robinson's autobiography.

The photo itself was a point of contention for Robinson. In a 2005 interview with AP's Corporate Archives, he said he thought AP "created a monster" when it distributed it because much of the world's sympathies focused on Kim Phuc specifically, rather than more broadly on all the war's victims.[24] In a 2022 memo, he called it "pedo war porn" and laid out his decades-long anger at Ut, whom he called "a false idol."[25]

In an email to the AP in August 2024, Arnett, who was in the Saigon bureau with Faas during the incident, wrote: "I don't fully understand why Carl Robinson launched his failing attempts to discredit two of the great photographers of our time, Horst Faas and Nick Ut. But maybe it is jealousy. … In a response to my own emailed question to him to explain himself, he replied that he was disturbed by Nick Ut's growing reputation as a photographer with the Los Angeles AP bureau. 'He's gone all Hollywood, I don't like that.'"

Arnett said[26] Robinson wrote to him after Faas' death, making the allegation. Robinson told him he didn't want to make the claim while Faas was alive because he wanted to spare Faas any embarrassment.



This photo apparently shows members of AP's Saigon bureau team gathering to toast Nick Ut's Pulitzer Prize after it was announced on May 7, 1973. The exact date of this photo is unknown. Ut is at the front in a white short-sleeved shirt and tie. Next to him is Carl Robinson, wearing sunglasses, holding a glass in one hand, and a bottle of champagne in the other. Horst Faas is third from the left. (AP Photo)

Arnett said he got in touch with former colleagues when he heard of the accusation. “I immediately notified [retired] AP photo chief Hal Buell of Robinson’s claims who got in touch with Jackson Ishizaki, [former AP Saigon bureau chief] Richard Pyle and others in the Saigon Bureau at that time. Over the years I’ve checked with Vietnamese staffers in the Saigon Bureau, several of whom now live in the U.S. None could recall any questioning of the validity of Nick Ut’s authorship of the famous picture during the years that followed up to its end in 1975.”

Burnett was at the AP bureau where his and Ut’s film from the day was being processed. “Then, out from the darkroom stepped Nick Ut, holding a small, still-wet copy of his best picture: a 5-by-7 print of Kim Phuc running with her brothers to escape the burning napalm. We were the first eyes to see that picture; it would be another full day before the rest of the world would see it on virtually every newspaper’s Page 1,” Burnett wrote in a column in the Washington Post.[27] Speaking to AP, Burnett recalled Faas then saying, “You do good work today Nick Ut.” In an oral history with AP, Burnett said he then went to the Life magazine office where he wrote a note on the teletype telling his bosses he was sending his photos and then informing them that Nick Ut had shot a photo they would probably be interested in.[28]

Nguyen Thanh Nghe told AP that when he returned from Trang Bang, he met with his brother-in-law, Tran Van Than, who worked for NBC, which was next door to AP. The pair then went to AP to give them Nguyen’s roll of film. The following day they returned and a Westerner working for AP said he’d buy one photo. The man kept the negative, gave him $20, two new rolls of film and a print of the purchased photo, which Nguyen identified as the “Napalm Girl” photo. Nguyen said he never saw the negative that he shot and sold, nor was he present when the roll of film was processed.

Nguyen said he brought the print home. He didn’t find out his photo was credited to Ut for “about six or seven months later”[29] when he said he was told by an unidentified AP staffer that Ut had received the credit and was winning awards. By then, when he looked for his proof — the print — he discovered that his wife had torn it up and thrown it away.

His other negatives from that day and his camera were all left in Vietnam in the chaotic flight from the country, he said.

His daughter, Jannie Nguyen, told AP that her father's story was long known among the family. "Dad was always distressed every time the photo was mentioned," she said, adding that her mother always felt guilty for throwing the print away.

AP has no reason to doubt that Nguyen was at Trang Bang, and it is possible he sold a photo to AP, although there is no record of it. According to Nguyen, this was the one and only occasion he sold a photo to any international media.

Tu Pease, known as Miss Tu, who worked as the office secretary, bookkeeper and cashier, said that she was responsible for paying all stringers for their photos, which she did nearly every day.[30] She said stringers were usually paid $20 for run-of-the-mill photos, but if they had shot something special, Faas would ask her to pay them more, $50 or $100.

On the day the photo was shot, she remembers Ut shouting as he returned that he took a lot of good pictures. Then, a little later, Faas praised him for the picture. "I don't know what happened in the photo room. I was in the newsroom."

She said she had memories of Carl as a nice man. Likewise, for Faas, who she said was respectful of the Vietnamese staff. She described Ut as "a very honest young man."

"They were all very good men," she told AP in a phone interview.

She does not remember paying any stringer that day or the next. She said Faas would never handle AP's money, as it was her job to both handle cash and account for it. She would only pay when directed to do so. While she allows for the possibility that "Robinson or Horst" could have paid someone with their own money the next day, she says she handled all cash transactions for the bureau. Also, it would have been deeply out of character for Faas to have paid so little for such a valuable photo, she said.

"One thing I can tell you, if Horst Faas paid for that photo — it was very important — he would never pay $20. When the man says he was paid 20 bucks, that's wrong. I don't believe it," she said. "Horst Faas was very generous, and he knew the value of a photo. He sees a valuable photo, he would pay more."

While the film alleges the theft of the photo credit was an open secret among the office's Vietnamese staff, Miss Tu says that's incorrect.

"No, we never talked about it. We never heard of that before. One hundred percent no one brought this up. Nothing was ever said," she said. "We were a friendly office, we only had a few Vietnamese people there, only four or five. … We never heard anything about it, about that photo, until last year."

Many of those intimately involved in the publication of the photo did speak about it before they died. Faas long maintained that Ut shot it. Buell wrote an entire book about it and Ut.[31] Pyle, who was friends with Robinson and was the Saigon bureau chief at the time, repeatedly spoke about the photo as Ut's.[32]

Neal Ulevich, an AP photojournalist based in Saigon who won a 1977 Pulitzer of his own, was on vacation from the Saigon bureau at the time the photo was taken and only returned a few days later. He said[33] none of his colleagues, which included Robinson who went on to write several follow-up stories about Kim Phuc, ever suggested it was not Ut's photo. He reviewed journals he kept at the time and there was no indication in there of anyone challenging the provenance of the photo, he said.

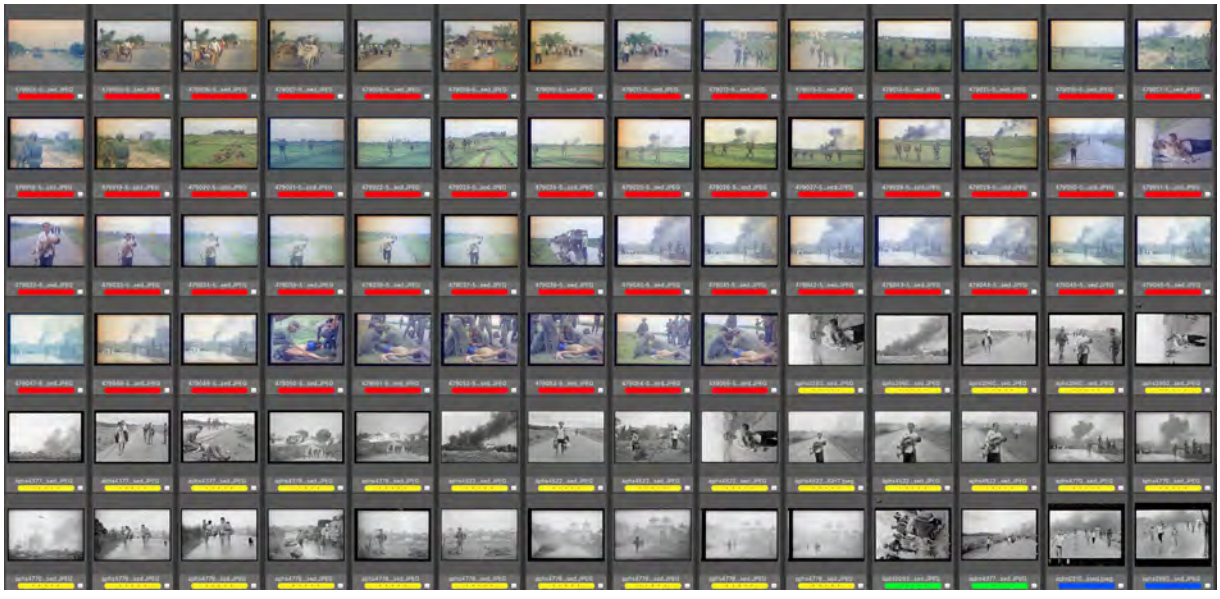
Ulevich said intentionally miscrediting a photo would have gone against the ethos of the bureau's photo team. "There was a lot of respect for the person who took the picture [any picture], and there was never an inkling to misappropriate any film, that would have been a terribly dishonorable thing to do. I believe no one was interested in doing it and it never happened when I was there that I know of."

Visual and physical analysis

As part of the physical investigation, AP analyzed all of the negatives in its possession from that day at Trang Bang. AP examined a camera reportedly associated with AP's photos from that day and accessed new, never-before-published photos from the scene. A visual timeline was created, together with 3D analysis, to map out the scene. That work is summarized below. A more extensive, technical description is appended to this report.

Negatives

AP analyzed the 84 negatives it uncovered in its possession from Trang Bang. This was just a subset of the negatives from the event. Many more were lost by poor archiving practices, the hectic flight from Vietnam when Saigon fell, or were accidentally discarded over the years. AP also individually scanned and then examined more than 1,000 other negatives shot by Ut during his time in Vietnam.



The negatives in AP's archive from the day were identified by the characteristics of the negatives. This process showed that four camera outputs were identified. (AP Photo)

In those days of analog cameras, many negatives that were not transmitted on the wire were given back to the photographers. It is a far cry from current digital archiving protocols.

AP visually sorted the negatives based on film gate corner curvature, edge marks and other distinguishing characteristics, which showed that AP photos from that day came from four cameras. In addition, it appeared that the famous photo and the one next to it were the only negatives discovered from that roll. A second pair of negatives were also the only ones found from a different roll shot at Trang Bang that day. It was standard practice if AP was using a photo to also clip the adjacent negative.

AP also compared the famous image to other images in the archive but that analysis showed nothing of note.

AP archivists in the 1990s assembled all the Trang Bang negatives known to be in the organization's possession at the time, coming from at least three cameras with clearly distinct characteristics, into a composite image. Only years later did more images surface from the archive and other sources.

Ut recently gave AP a bag filled with thousands of unpublished negatives from the Vietnam era, some of which we believe were taken at Trang Bang on that day. AP has not yet found anything that sheds further light on the question of authorship.

Camera

In the lore of the photograph, Faas and Ut said it had been taken with a Leica camera, a model of camera widely used by the AP staff in Vietnam generally and by Ut as well. The Leica M2 purported to have been used was loaned to the now-closed Newseum in Washington, D.C., in 2008.

AP borrowed that camera, examined it and shot three rolls of film through it to look for distinct characteristics. Further, dozens of rolls of film were shot through other Leicas of the era as well as through Nikons — which Ut was known to carry — and Pentax cameras, which Nguyen said he used to shoot the photo.

The corners and the borders of the negatives were examined to look for any distinctive patterns that might come from specific brands of cameras. AP also measured the slight differences in proportions between some brands.

It should be stressed, while cameras can leave clear marks or traces on negatives — and many negatives were matched in the AP investigation — it does not occur consistently across all situations and in all environments. Consequently, AP's examination did not achieve the precision of a formal forensic analysis. AP was unable to find and examine every negative shot by Nick Ut during his time as a photographer in Vietnam, and given the volume that exists, that is unlikely to happen.

Keeping in mind that the Newseum Leica was old and unused for an indeterminate period of time, and that there was no record of its maintenance history, AP determined it was likely the photograph was not taken with that camera, at least not how it functions in its current state. Ut, when told this, suggested the camera previously in the Newseum was the same model he used in Vietnam, but added that several cameras were stolen in Vietnam before the end of the war.

2016.0169 Nick Ut Donation Inventory

ɔan #	Artifact name/description
2016.0169.01a&b	Nikon camera with lens cap
2016.0169.02a&b	Honeywell Pentax camera with lens cap
2016.0169.03	jacket, patch on left side "NICK UT/AP PHOTOGRAPHER
2016.0169.04	camouflage shirt, patch on left side "ASSOCIATED PRESS"
2016.0169.05a&b	light meter in leather case (SEKONIC)
2016.0169.06	film in Kodak box - Tri-X 400 Pro, expires 03/2005
2016.0169.07a-c	film in canister, a=Kodak professional, E200. c=36/PGA 100 (a=film, b=canister base, c=canister lid)
2016.0169.08a-c	film in canister, a=Kodak Gold 100. c=36/E 200
2016.0169.09a-c	film in canister, a=400 Kodak Tri-X pan. c=36/TX-400
2016.0169.010a-c	film in canister, a=Kodak professsional 100, Ektapresss. c=36/PJ800
2016.0169.11a-c	film in canister, a=Kodak professsional PJ800, EKTAPRESS
2016.0169.12a-c	film in canister, a=Kodak Tri-X pan
2016.0169.13a-c	film in canister, a=Kodak Tri-X pan 400
2016.0169.14a-d	4 white AP photo envelopes, on stickers: (00571, 00575, 00576, 00577)
2016.0169.15	Pulitzer Prize certificate in leather case from Columbia University
2016.0169.16	large beige envelop, AP News Photos, "Nick Ut Film" with Saigon address. Notse on back.

Part of an inventory of a donation to the Newseum, found in AP's archive.

Furthermore, through film-gate analysis, it appeared unlikely the photo was taken with any Leica. It was also likely, though not certain, the image was taken with a Pentax camera, though some Nikon cameras had similar characteristics to some Pentax cameras of the same era.

When challenged by the AP, Ut said he had never had any reason to doubt the photo was shot with a Leica. He said he had not paid attention as to which camera took the photo and was told it was a Leica by Faas that day, who congratulated him and said the film roll was from a Leica. He said after the film was processed he never again handled the negatives. He also had no reason to doubt Faas, who was a proponent of Leica and ensured that it was widely used by AP in Saigon, even though Nikon was the standard camera for AP photographers.

In previous interviews, Ut has said he was carrying two Leicas and two Nikons that day. When questioned by AP, he said he also used Pentax cameras. AP found negatives in its archives shot by Ut in Vietnam that had the characteristics of a Pentax camera. In addition, among the cameras Ut donated to the Newseum was a Pentax, though it also did not appear to have been used to take the photo. Ut said he used his slain brother's Pentax in Vietnam. His brother's widow, Arlett Hieu Salazar, who Ut lived with while he worked for AP there, confirmed to AP[34] that she had given Ut a silver Pentax that had belonged to her late husband and that Ut always carried one with him as a good luck talisman.

Ut said those Pentax cameras were left behind in the scramble to evacuate Vietnam at the end of the war. Ut said Faas had told him the picture had been taken with a Leica and, having used many cameras that day, he had no reason to doubt him.

Three of the cameras AP examined. A Pentax, Leica and Nikon F loaned to the Newseum by Nick Ut. (AP Photo)

Reconstruction

Any effort to reconstruct what happened on the road using available footage is going to be imperfect, with a wide margin for error. It's important to keep in mind this took place in an analog world, where film stock and camera rolls were a finite resource, not today's world of ubiquitous smartphones. Among the challenges AP faced:

- There are no timestamps on the footage or the photos, so any estimate of the timing and duration of the events is at best an estimate.
- The footage itself is limited, with indeterminant gaps between shots as TV crews hoarded their film stock, only shooting when necessary.
- The lack of any landmarks or objects of known size in the footage that would help determine scale and distance was also a challenge.
- AP also could not determine whether the famous photo was shot with a 35 mm or a 50 mm lens, adding to the uncertainty, because of a lack of visual references or landmarks.

The spotty footage and photographic record also meant there were blind spots on the road, missing some people who were clearly there. Only after finding some NBC News footage not shown in the movie,[35] did AP see for the first time a person believed to be military photographer Huynh Cong Phuc, who sometimes sold photos to AP and UPI, very near the position where the famous photo was shot.

AP's photos from throughout the day and during the napalm attack show Ut was an active photographer working the scene. Ut shot photos all over the road throughout the day, of evacuees leaving the town, soldiers on patrol as well as fighting. He was not restricting himself to hanging back by the bridge. And he was shooting a lot, covering many different aspects of the event.

While Ut used a wide-angle lens for close work, his photos showed a propensity to use a long lens to focus cleanly on his subject in the foreground.

AP examined a satellite photo of the village from the time, footage that day from ITN and NBC News as well as photographs of the events in question from the AP archive, from UPI and those recently made available by David Burnett. The NBC footage — as well as Burnett's photos — do not appear in the movie's reconstruction, although they had used other parts of NBC's footage from that day in the movie.

Photos by Nick and others give a good idea of the layout of the edge of town bordering Highway 1, which included a temple, a cemetery, some signs and barbed wire.

He shot photos of the napalm attack from a bridge and then about two minutes later, Kim Phuc and the children are seen running through the cemetery.

Examples of Nick Ut's use of a long lens to isolate his subjects on the road that day. (AP Photo / Nick Ut)

In November 2025, an error was identified to the AP and a third photograph, previously included here in error, was removed.

Burnett's photos appear to be the first of Kim Phuc and the children that day, as they move through the cemetery on their way to the road. In the series of photos, Ut suddenly appears in Burnett's frame. Since he was not there before, this shows he was moving forward in the direction of the temple. It also shows he is aware of the children. From his location, he could have moved up the road and met the children at the location of the famous shot, which is the story Burnett has consistently told for decades.

Another question, though, is a distant figure in the later ITN footage — shot after the famous photo was taken. The grainy figure does look like Ut, far back on the road and approaching the children, though it is hard to be sure given the film's low resolution and shaky camera work. It raises the question: if that figure is indeed Ut, how much time elapsed after the second AP photograph was taken, and how far away is the figure from the position it was taken? This time and distance would be needed to reposition from the second shot, to being further down the road. Essentially, could he be back there and have still taken the famous photo? It also raises another question: why would he have repositioned?

AP used 3D design techniques similar to those used in the movie industry, which require exact replicas of a scene to recreate real places in a virtual environment, to add in visual special effects that need to be accurate in every frame.

With all the available evidence, it was simply not possible to determine the exact distance between the camera and any figures in the ITN footage because of the lack of clear reference points and the ITN crew's use of a zoom lens. In addition, AP could not determine whether the famous photo was shot with a 35 mm or a 50 mm lens.

While the movie claims a precise distance of approximately 60 meters between the distant figure who might be Nick Ut and the ITN camera, there are two issues. First, they are measuring from the distant trailing figure to the pack of journalists when they should be measuring from the figure to the spot where the second AP photo of Kim Phuc was taken, even closer to the temple than the spot where these journalists were standing. That would make the distance even further. Second, they fail to account for the range of possible distances as well as a significant margin of error. AP's analysis shows the distance between the ITN camera and the approaching figure as between 28.8 meters and 48 meters (compared to the 60 meters the film claims). A few more meters need to be added to account for the photographer's position taking the second photo, up the road toward the temple. AP's analysis shows this makes the distance from that position to the distant figure a range of 32.8 and 56 meters. Even that range has a further margin of error of 20% either way. While it is not possible to know the precise amount of time Ut would have had to traverse that distance, AP's analysis shows it would have been at least nine to 13 seconds, and possibly more.

Ut was shown AP's findings during a five-hour interview. He acknowledged that the person in the distance could have been him, though he did not confirm it. He explained that he took the famous photo and the next one. And then, because he wanted to get more pictures of the running children isolated in a photograph on the road, he turned around and ran back in the same direction as the children to get further ahead of them. He says he intended to give himself some distance to take more pictures of the children with a telephoto lens once they had passed the group. This would have been a long lens shot similar to other photos he had taken that day.

But the children unexpectedly slowed as they approached two journalists, who began pouring water on Kim Phuc. So, Ut started walking back toward them to take more photos, he said.

In short, the analysis shows Ut could have been in the position to have taken the shot. So could many of the other journalists with cameras there that day, including some, like the military photographer Huynh Cong Phuc, or Shimkin, whose film has never been published. This also includes Nguyen Nghe, who claims he took the photo.

The film

The version of the film presented at the Sundance Film Festival contains misstatements, contradictions and an undisclosed professional relationship. While this doesn't disprove the filmmakers' conclusions, it does raise questions about their investigation.

An AP representative was first able to see the film "The Stringer" at the festival. Later, access was given to members of the AP team who were investigating the photo. There are several concerns with what is presented in the version screened at Sundance.

- In the movie, Gary Knight, the co-founder of the VII photo agency and the film's protagonist, says he first heard rumors about the photo in 2010, but his investigation only truly began with an email he received in December 2022 from "someone called Carl Robinson, who I'd never communicated with." He says this was the man he had spent 12 years looking for, adding that though they had friends in common, "I don't know Carl."

  Yet someone calling himself "Gary Knight" wrote on Sept. 20, 2013, in a comment on the website readingthepictures.com that he had been in Hue, Vietnam, three years earlier with Carl Robinson, who "told me many things about that photograph."[36] He then relates an extensive conversation the pair had about the events surrounding the Napalm Girl photo, while not casting its authorship into doubt. He also offers to give the author of the post Robinson's e-mail, adding that he "has an interesting narrative to that image." Knight is clearly familiar with that website since he mentions it by name at a Sundance screening of the film.[37] In a 2010 blog post, Robinson also references Knight and that trip to Hue.[38]

- The film says that Burnett, a key witness to the events both on the road and in the AP bureau that day, wouldn't speak to them on the record because he didn't want to contradict AP or Faas, with the implication that he agreed with the filmmakers' premise. "David doesn't want to get involved in a fistfight within his tribe. To undermine AP in Vietnam and to undermine Horst Faas is a big deal, and all of their legacies are wrapped up in that memory. So, they don't want to go there," Knight says in the film.

Leaving aside questions about why the film characterized — or mischaracterized — the testimony of someone speaking to a journalist off the record, Burnett has told AP he was clear that he disputes their premise, and did not engage with the film for that reason.

- The movie presents an interview with Ho Ti Hien, a cousin of Kim Phuc's who was on the road that day, apparently expressing doubt Ut took the photo. In an exchange in both English and Vietnamese, with many cuts to it, Knight asks her: "Did you understand who the journalists were or what they were doing?" She seems to answer a different question: "No, I didn't know who took the picture."

  Though it is highly unlikely any of the actual victims of the bombing would have much memory of which stranger was in position to take their photo, Hien told AP she has never doubted Ut was the photographer: "He took the photo. Nick took the photo."[39] When told the film presented her as doubting Ut's authorship, she said: "That's a lie. They made that up. It wasn't what I said."

  At Sundance, Knight said the filmmakers interviewed 55 people, 45 of them shown in the movie, implying they backed up their thesis. "This isn't Carl's story. Carl isn't the only source, there are 55 of them," Knight said. Leaving aside that many of those in the movie have no independent knowledge of the photo's provenance, or don't directly confirm the story, Ho Ti Hien is presumably one of those 55 and she does not support their allegations.

- In the film's narrative, Nguyen is portrayed as a seasoned visual journalist, perhaps the most seasoned on the road that day, routinely mistreated by Western news organizations. In the movie, when asked if he was usually credited for work he sold to news agencies, he said rarely. "Normally after I get back from a shoot, I would just give them all the film. They do what they do, and I wouldn't question them."

  In response to written questions from AP, Nguyen said: "This was the first and only time I ever sold a photo to AP or any other Western media outlets."

- In the film, Nguyen and his brother-in-law, Tran Van Than, give conflicting accounts that are never reconciled of the film roll's arrival at the AP office. Nguyen says he went into the office to drop off the film and that he returned the following day to retrieve it and get paid. Tran says it was he who went into AP, while Nguyen waited outside and did not deal with it. Nguyen is presented as being a driver for NBC that day. But in his written answers to AP's questions, he strenuously denies he worked for NBC that day, and says he rented a car to get to Trang Bang, and worked independently to take photos to sell. But he says he only sold one photograph, and gave the other frames away to a Vietnamese colleague who wasn't present at Trang Bang, and he felt sorry for him.[40]

- Robinson said in a 2015 blog that Nick Ut brought rolls of film from other stringers back with him from Trang Bang.[41] The other stringers Robinson refers to are never identified or mentioned again. In the film Robinson does not account for how the film got back to the office, but said that AP had negatives from three photographers that day.[42] Regardless, he told AP he was not there when the film was delivered or processed because he returned a bit later than usual from lunch. He also says in the movie that AP had four rolls of film from Trang Bang. But AP has identified at least seven rolls of film from that event in its archive.

  One voice missing from the movie is that of Phan Thi Kim Phuc, the young girl in the photo and unquestionably the true victim of the event. Near the end of the film, they address that absence with words on the screen: "Kim Phuc was unable to speak to us." Kim Phuc declined to speak to them because she rejected their narrative. "I would never participate in the Gary Knight film because I know it is false," she said in a statement.[43]

- The film's conclusion is that only Nguyen Thanh Nghe was in position to have taken the famous photo, and that no one else could have done so. AP's analysis shows this was not the case. Military photographer Huynh Cong Phuc is seen in NBC's footage in the area where the photograph was taken, but even in that footage there were blind spots, and neither Ut nor Nguyen can be seen. This footage was either overlooked or ignored by the film, and it was not included in the commissioned analysis of the scene.

- The movie presents Santiago Lyon as an independent judge of the photo's provenance, who, if anything, could be seen as biased toward AP since he was the news agency's former director of photography. The film does not reveal that Lyon was on the advisory board[44] of the VII Foundation, Knight's organization, which made the film, and remains so at the time this report is published.

- In the movie Knight cites an AP oral history interview where Faas recalls that Americans showed prejudice toward the Vietnamese staff, using it to implicate Faas himself as reluctant to credit Vietnamese journalists for their work. But Faas, who was German, was clearly not talking about himself or even the American staff in the Saigon office, but AP staff at headquarters in New York. And he was condemning that behavior in the context of championing Vietnamese photographer Dang Van Phuoc, who he lamented did not get enough credit for his photos and his bravery during the war. He said AP had rarely given any photographers credit, but that the staff in Vietnam worked to change that along with director of photography Hal Buell. "In these days, photographers didn't get credit. … Vietnam was the first occasion where photographers regularly got credit lines, but in World War, World War II, and between the wars … photographers never got bylines."[45] The fact that the Napalm Girl photo was credited to a young Vietnamese journalist, Nick Ut, was a sign that their efforts had succeeded, at least to some extent. In that same oral history, Faas bitterly recalls how on a visit to the archives in New York he discovered that boxes of AP's photos from the war had been casually thrown out, destroying an irreplaceable document of history.

- The film includes an analysis of the footage by the firm INDEX that is presented with precision and confidence. AP twice asked filmmakers for access to the INDEX report but could only view their findings as presented in the film. The INDEX investigators, using less footage and fewer photos than AP did, are presented as saying the figure in the distance that could be Ut was approximately 60 meters away, with no broad range or margin of error stated in the film. AP's analysis shows that no such precise measurement can be calculated with the limited available visual evidence. Furthermore, AP's analysis shows the comparable distance is much shorter, between 28.8 meters and 48 meters, with a high margin of error. This is not an impossible distance to cover in the time available.

- The INDEX analysis in the film shows the scene on the road as a 3D graphic model. But that model appears to have multiple errors. People seen in photographs on the road appear in the rendered graphic to be on the grass off to the side — or would have been even further off the road had they not been omitted from the graphic completely. Bushes are shown in one critical part where none exist. This might be a mistake in how the film graphics were produced, but it is portrayed as being an accurate 3D model that proves their case. These errors suggest there might be flaws with the calculations that led to that model — AP's own analysis shows that minor differences in the data led to big changes in the distances between people on the road in a virtual environment. AP is reaching out to INDEX directly.

- In the film and in promotional appearances, the filmmakers portray AP as having reviewed their material and been dismissive of their allegations. In reality, Knight told AP he had already concluded Ut had not taken the photo, wanted access to AP's photo archive to prove it and insisted AP sign a non-disclosure agreement in exchange for showing AP the detailed evidence of the claims.

  AP declined to enter an NDA about its own image, reasoning that an NDA would have prevented the news organization from fully investigating or talking about the image or the allegations, and that if the photograph needed to be defended or corrected, the AP should retain the freedom to act on such information. In response, the filmmakers did not share their detailed claims.

  NDAs are not standard in investigative journalism, though they may be in commercial filmmaking, where the main concern is protecting intellectual property. AP made clear it had no interest in "scooping" the filmmakers with an editorial story regarding authorship of the photo.

Conclusions

AP pursued this investigation with an open mind. When it makes errors, AP standards require swift corrections. In this case, AP is simply interested in ensuring an accurate record of an event that took place more than half a century ago.

Did Nguyen shoot the Napalm Girl image? Did he shoot a very similar image of the same event? By his own account, Nguyen never saw the negatives he says AP bought from him being processed or printed. Nguyen says he never saw the photograph in the newspapers, and by the time he heard of the photo's fame months later, his own print had been destroyed, so he could never compare it, nor ask for recognition. Faas, in an AP oral history, said he bought photos from stringers even if he had a similar photo from a staff photographer to keep his stringer network intact and loyal.[46]

The historical narrative has been that Ut took the photo with a Leica camera. AP's investigation showed that was very unlikely. But Ut also used other cameras, including Pentax cameras he inherited from his slain brother. An examination of the negatives also showed only two frames from that specific roll. But many negatives from that time have been lost and only two negatives can be found in the AP archive from another AP roll from that same day.

The visual evidence that showed someone who resembled Ut as a grainy, distant figure, behind the group of journalists after the photo had been shot also raises questions about whether he could have taken the picture and run back there. AP's analysis shows the distance to that figure and the time available makes that possible. His explanation of events and his style of shooting as evidenced by other photos from that day also keep that possibility open.

In the movie, Knight says for Ut to have taken the photo one would have to believe a series of incredibly unlikely events.

But what leaps in logic would one have to make to believe Ut had not taken the photo?

You would have to believe that Ut, whose photos show him running up and down the road all day, stood in place about half a football field back while all the other journalists ran to the wounded and terrified children emerging from the town, the most dramatic moment of the day. Ut would have stayed far behind even Burnett, who was stuck in place changing his film. You would have to believe that not one of the fiercely competitive journalists on the road recognized in the day or two after, when the photo became world news, that Ut had been so wildly behind the pack he could not have taken it. You would have to believe that Faas, who was not at Trang Bang, would know that when he miscredited the photo no one on the road would contradict him or even cast doubt on it. You would have to believe that Faas knew that Nguyen, whose brother-in-law worked for NBC in the office next door, would not hear of the miscredit and complain. And he would have to be so sure of that, that he would give him a print of the famous photo, which he could have used as proof that he had taken it. You'd have to believe that others in the office, including Ishizaki, the respected colleague who processed the famous image and did not work for Faas, all kept the secret for decades, and that Faas knew in the moment he made his decision that they would keep the secret. And you'd have to believe not just that Faas thought all those things would happen, but that every one of them then did happen.

You would also have to believe that the only photo Nguyen ever sold to a Western news outlet was one of the most famous photos of the century.

It is possible that was the case. It is possible it was not.

AP acknowledges there are uncertainties, disparities and lingering questions raised by its own independent investigation. These questions will likely remain, barring the uncovering of new evidence.

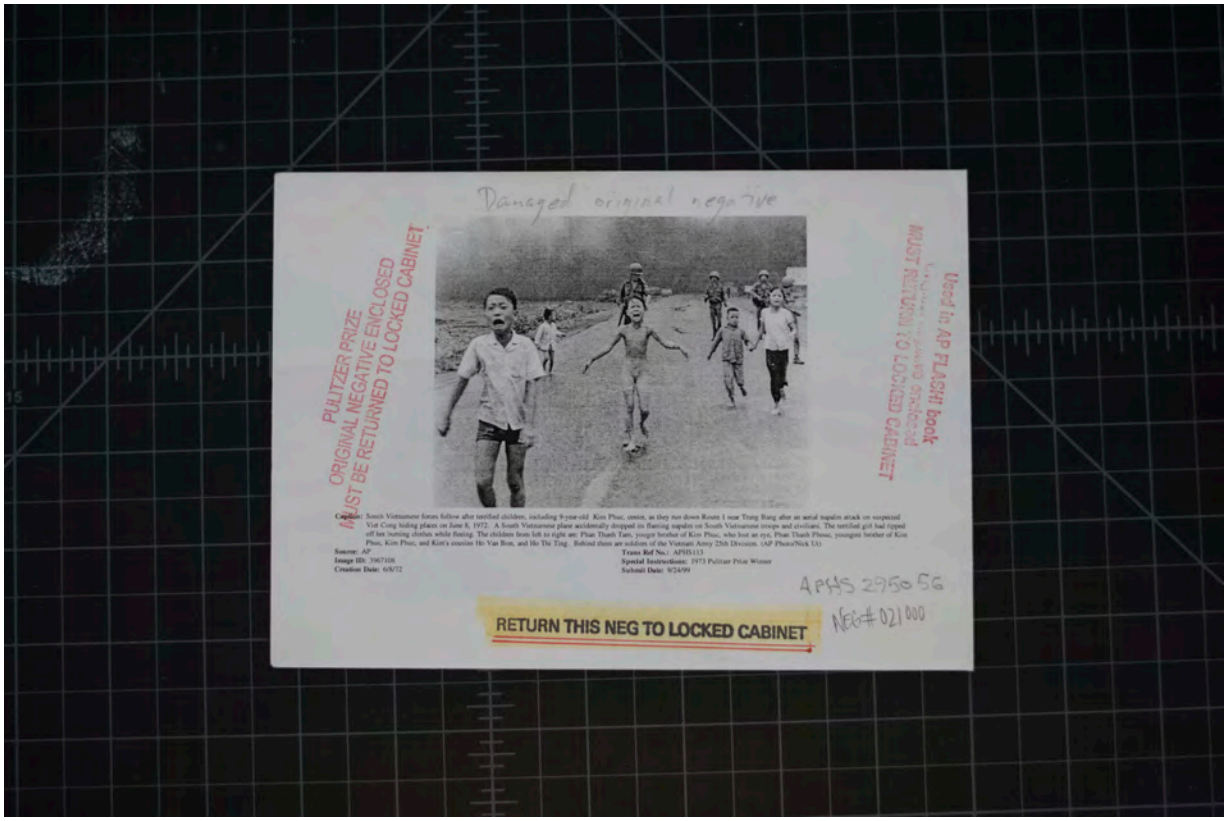
No one investigating the creation of a photograph more than a half century later can have any true certainty about what happened. To overrule a photo credit given at the time would require clear evidence the decision made by those at the scene was incorrect.

Such certainty is simply not possible to have here.

For more:

An interactive showing key moments is available here.

AP's detailed technical and visual analysis begins on Page 32.



The envelope in AP's archive containing the Pulitzer-winning negative. (AP Photo)

Appendix

AP's technical and visual investigation

To investigate the claims surrounding the photograph, AP launched a visual analysis of the available images from the road outside Trang Bang that day, and in parallel a technical analysis of the negatives that were held in the AP archive in New York. That led to a further technical investigation of cameras available at the time. The building of a 3D model helped to place individuals on the road, to understand their movement, the geography, and to calculate distances between places and people.

An audit of the negatives

In the photo archive at AP's New York headquarters, locked in a cage for safekeeping alongside other precious and rare photographs from history, are AP's images from June 8, 1972, showing the events around Trang Bang, Vietnam, all credited to Nick Ut.

Standard practice in AP bureaus in the 1970s, including Saigon, was for the negatives of published photographs to be shipped to New York along with any other images deemed important enough. Unused negatives would be offered back to the photographer or thrown away.

In the early 1970s a limited number of negatives were known to be in the AP's possession. In the mid-1990s the archive team assembled all known negatives related to several Pulitzer-winning entries and made separate collated composite images of the negatives for each of those stories. This was for internal purposes, a kind of snapshot at that time of what was known to exist around each event. In the case of the Trang Bang story, they were not made to show a frame-by-frame progression of the coverage. There is intentional space between the negatives to show they are not necessarily consecutive. There are also at least three different rolls of film reflected in the composites.

These composites are distinct from a "contact sheet," which in analog film photography often meant a representation of all the frames from one roll of film taken together — equivalent to a series of digital thumbnails today. Today, the terms are often used interchangeably.

At some point two of these sheets were posted online, though not by AP and the source has not been located. Some, including the makers of the film "The Stringer," have subsequently questioned why the "contact sheets" appeared not to match a single camera,[47] but these are simply different rolls of film from different cameras reflecting their unique characteristics.

One of the sheets includes two frames that have triangular notches on the negatives. This is the result of individual photographers filing a pattern or shape into the frame gate of the camera itself. When that camera took a photo, it exposed these patterns only on the edge of the negative so they would never be seen in a print of the photo. One retired photographer, Neal Ulevich, said it was a kind of fad that died out as the auditing process used in the Saigon bureau was proven effective in linking the film roll with the name of the photographer who took it.[48]

These notches can be seen in the composite sheets and demonstrate clearly that different cameras were used that day. In addition, in the archive there were two rolls of film represented by only two frames each: the two showing the notches and the two showing the famous photograph and its adjoining frame. No other frames from either roll were found in the archive nor captured in the composites. The remaining photos are from different rolls.

Another sheet repeating some of the photos from Trang Bang, as well as shots of Kim Phuc taken in the hospital, and others of Kim Phuc at a later date, was additionally compiled likely around the same time. This has never been published before now.

The first two composites of the napalm attack photographs show 21 black and white images, while the third shows additional photos from different periods of time.

Since that compilation was made in the 1990s, more photos from the day were discovered. After Horst Faas died in 2012, his collection of photographs and papers went to Germany's Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences. The curator of the Faas estate, Michael Ebert, found some photographs from Trang Bang and sent them to AP.

In the late 2010s, one of AP's archivists took it upon himself to search for images from Trang Bang and Vietnam more broadly, which surfaced some other images from the day contained elsewhere in the archive, likely a reflection of how the archive was managed in the 1970s.

Composite images, undated from the 1990s. (AP Photo)

Composite image, previously unpublished, undated from the 1990s. (AP Photo)

Once AP was made aware of the allegations contained in “The Stringer” in 2024, the photo archive was checked and a total of 84 negatives from that day were found in the archive cage. There were 51 color negatives and 33 black and white negatives. In addition, there were five other prints identified as being taken at Trang Bang, making a total of 89 images known to be in AP’s possession.

It is clear many negatives are missing. It was never AP’s practice to retain all negatives shot by its photographers and stringers, and that is still the case today. Too much content was generated, and it was not practical to store the volume of work from a global workforce of staff and freelance photographers. AP’s bureau closed down in Saigon sometime after the end of the war in April 1975, and any negatives that might have been held locally were lost. Nick Ut told AP that he lent negatives to Hal Buell for the book he published about Ut, “From Hell to Hollywood.” He says he recently got in touch with Buell’s family who told him that, after Buell’s death, negatives were thrown away.[49] Finally, Horst Faas said that when he went to New York to look at Vietnam-era photographs after the war, he found that “thousands and thousands” of photos had been destroyed. It appears that a decision was made corporately at AP — which today appears shortsighted — to discard all photos from the war once it ended, other than those which were published.[50]

The negatives known to be in AP’s possession in the AP archive in New York in 2024 (AP Photo)

Examining the negatives

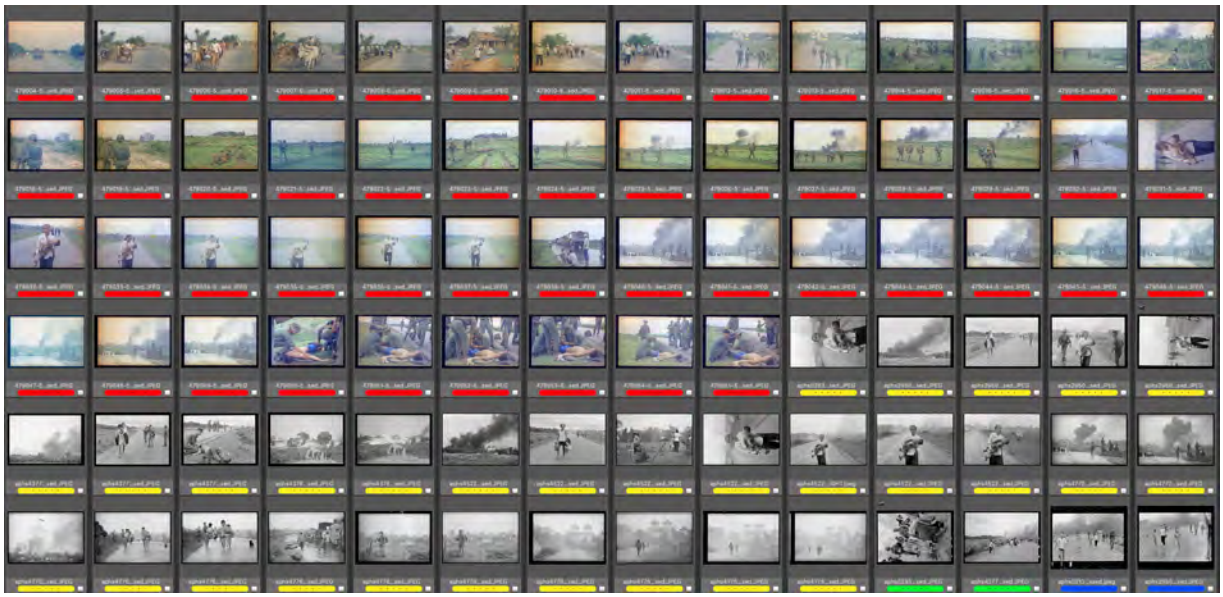
An examination of the negatives allowed for them to be grouped together, and this shows that a total of four cameras were used to take these 84 pictures. The characteristics of the borders of the negatives, with their respective imperfections, allowed for this conclusion. (The prints do not show the borders or edges of the exposed negative so they cannot be used for this kind of analysis).

A closer examination of the negative borders was undertaken to determine if other negatives in the AP archive from different events of the war matched exactly the imperfections of the famous negative taken at Trang Bang. This was akin to finding a needle in the proverbial haystack. To do this work, around 1,000 negatives were rescanned from the originals so that the files could be examined in maximum resolution. The process took a considerable amount of time, as each one had to be scanned individually by hand.

While different negatives from one camera roll often appear to have the same or similar imperfections across different frames within that roll, often those characteristics were not present when film in the camera was changed, or when the camera was used in different environments. There did appear to be similarities across rolls, but not always. Therefore, it could not be proven beyond doubt that they were from the same or different camera bodies.

A scan of the famous "Terror of War" negative, and the adjoining frame. The punch hole semi-circle comes from the negative being processed then assessed by the AP darkroom in Saigon, where negatives of interest were marked for further attention or printing. (AP Photo)

As noted in AP's preliminary investigation of January 2025, the work was paused as there was no definitive outcome, and not enough evidence to convincingly draw a conclusion either way.



Groupings of AP's negatives by camera output. This was done by comparing the characteristics of each negative. (AP Photo)

Camera analysis

Nick Ut had several cameras with him that day. There were a few photos taken of him, and no single image shows all of his cameras in one picture, as they were all taken from a side angle or from behind. It appears he is carrying at least three cameras, and possibly four, but it cannot be stated with accuracy.

Ut has consistently said that he carried four cameras: two Leicas, an M2 and an M3 model, and two Nikon Fs. He has also stated in interviews over the years that he took the famous photograph on a Leica M2. The groupings of the negatives show four cameras, which appears to back up Ut's claim of how many cameras he carried, but does not prove it. This does not confirm the models he carried or was used to take this single photograph.

The Leica M2 that Ut said took the photograph was loaned in 2008 to the Newseum in Washington, D.C., which held exhibits related to events in the news, and to journalism itself. This camera was subsequently gifted to the museum, which later closed permanently in 2019. The exhibits were either returned to their owners or held in storage. Today these cameras are in a collection in Washington, DC.

The Leica M2 camera that was previously on display in the Newseum. (AP Photo)

The camera was made available to AP for inspection and a photographer was sent to take photos with it using Kodak Tri-X film, the same kind of film stock used by AP's Saigon bureau during the war, and also used to take the famous image.

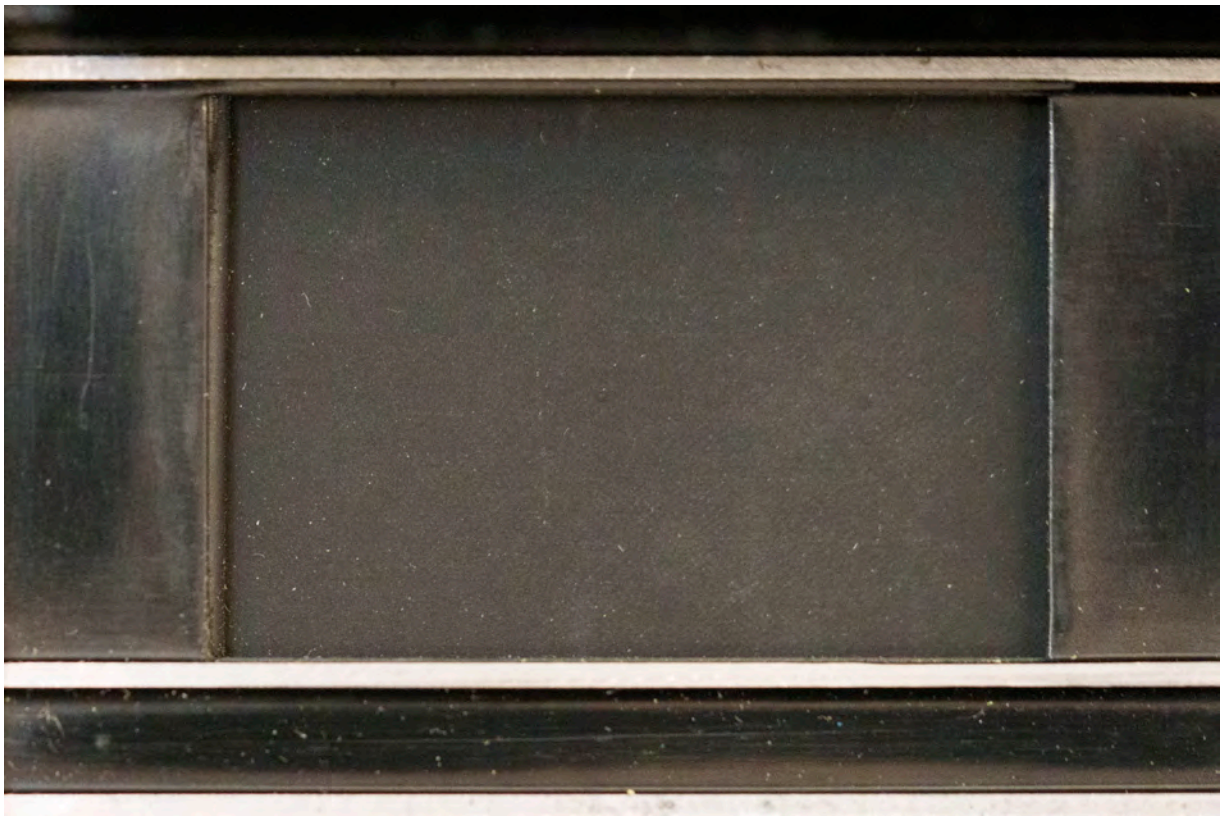
This exercise was intended to establish whether a photo with a close or identical match to the characteristics of the famous image could be seen.

The camera was dusty and had been unused for many years, but serviceable. It also showed signs of age and of wear and tear, indicative of having been used in a hostile environment.

The camera and frame gate were inspected.

Three rolls of film were taken using the camera, in the hope that any dust or debris in the earlier shots would eventually yield clean images across the three rolls.

The entire process was documented, from handling the camera to processing the negatives.



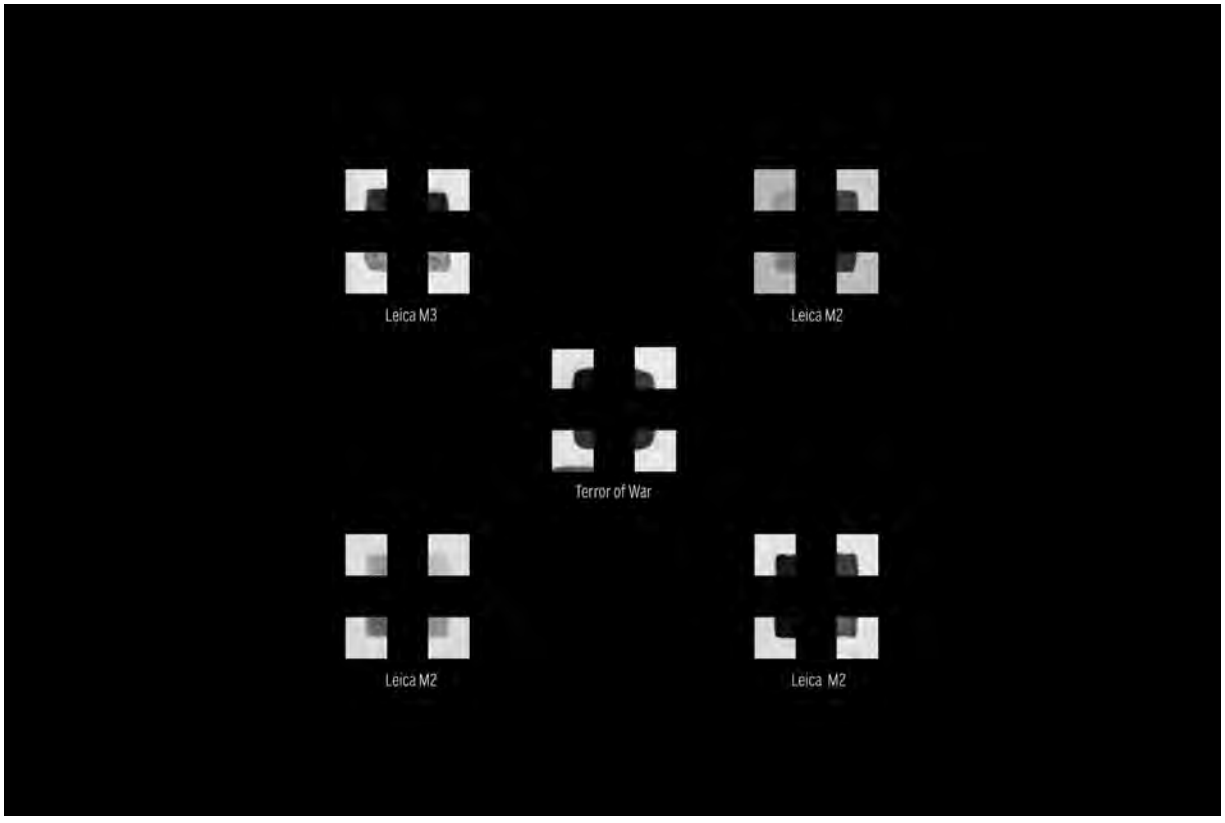
The frame gate of the Leica M2 camera formerly in the Newseum (AP Photo)

Handling negatives from the Leica M2 camera, which was loaned to the Newseum in Washington, D.C. (AP Photo)

However, comparing the corners and edges, the negatives from the camera output did not match the negative of the “Terror of War” photograph. While this was concerning, it was not conclusive. Among other things, the camera has not been kept in sterile conditions.

The following variables remain unknown:

- How the camera was stored in the many years between when the photograph was taken and when the museum received it.
- How the camera might have been handled over the course of 50 years, or by whom.
- If the camera had ever been damaged.
- Whether any servicing or repair work had been done on the camera.



This is a composite image showing different camera outputs for internal use in AP’s analysis (AP).

AP's work showed that while cameras can leave clear marks or traces on negatives, it does not occur consistently across all situations and in all environments. As a result, AP's examination did not achieve the precision of a formal forensic analysis. AP could not be certain that a camera would replicate the same characteristics consistently in different conditions. So this work was also found to be inconclusive, and paused.

Investigating other cameras

Further Leica cameras from the era were borrowed or acquired to examine their output to determine if there were characteristics to the Leica output which would either affirm the famous photograph was from a Leica, or not. That search was expanded to Nikon cameras.

Once it was clear that the movie asserted a Pentax had been used, the analysis was then expanded to that brand, specifically to the Pentax Asahi, which was the most commonly available at the time in Asia.

The corners of the Leicas had some characteristics that were similar but not identical across the four that were compared.

To make matters more complicated, the output from different Leica models showed a wide variety of frame gate characteristics in older models. And Nikon cameras appeared to have similar characteristics to some Pentax cameras.

In all, more than a dozen cameras were examined, using dozens of rolls of film. Further images from different cameras were sent to AP to analyze and compare. That said, this work does not have the precision of a forensic analysis. We compared fresh negatives shot recently with cameras that are now more than 50 years old to negatives that were originally shot more than five decades ago.

In March 2025, a different approach was adopted. Rather than looking solely at the corners and edging, the dimensions of the images produced by each camera type were examined.

Just as different camera models take photographs with inconsistencies around the edges, different brands also create images with slightly different dimensions on 35mm cameras. Although the images are approximately 36mm by 24mm, there are distinct differences down to fractions of a millimeter among camera brands.

The approach involved measuring the physical frame gate dimensions of different camera models, then establishing the proportions so the dimensions and proportionality could be examined digitally. Close cropping of images — to the pixel — was undertaken so that very precise measurements could be achieved.

Analysis shows that Leica images are generally marginally wider than images from a Nikon or Pentax.

Measuring the frame gate dimensions. AP's analysis showed slight but distinct variations across brands. (AP Photo)

The famous, uncropped image was not as wide as a camera believed to be a Leica. (AP Photo / Nick Ut)

An image believed to have been taken with a Leica was wider than other camera brands (AP Photo / Nick Ut)

Conclusion from the technical analysis

To be clear, the laborious work on the cameras and the negatives is not similar to a forensics team analyzing a crime scene. Where the courts and the pursuit of justice require exacting scientific accuracy and proof, this work has a high margin of error and must be viewed in that context.

With that caveat, AP's conclusion from the technical analysis is that it is likely the "Terror of War" photograph was not taken on a Leica camera, and further, that it is likely that it was taken with a Pentax camera. The Leica M2 gifted to the Newseum was likely not used the day the famous image was taken. This is not forensic, and further information could change this — such as a match between the output of a different camera and the famous photo, or an exact match between the famous photo and another photo in the AP archive, which is a near impossible task given the volume of pictures stored there. It is not known if such a match could be proven even if two different rolls of film came from the same camera.

While AP has found it is likely a Leica M2 camera did not take the famous image, this does not disqualify Nick Ut as the author of the photograph, for two reasons: the body of work he created that day and the fact he was using multiple cameras that day. In addition, we found evidence that he used Pentax cameras in his work covering the Vietnam War.

Three cameras loaned to The Newseum by Nick Ut and inspected by AP. From left to right: a Honeywell Pentax, a Leica M2, and a Nikon F. This is a composite image of three separate photos. (AP)

Visual analysis

In tandem with the technical analysis of cameras and negatives, a search was launched for all available, previously published images from Trang Bang on June 8, 1972.

The findings from this visual analysis are set out below, and an interactive depicting the results can be found at apnews.com/project/terror-of-war.

As several photographers and film camera operators were on the scene, various archives and collections hold photographs and video, and have published them online or have previews available. AP believes there are further collections we have not been able to locate.

From looking at this wider array of work some firm conclusions can be made. Please note that references to film camera operators mean those who were shooting moving images.

Who was there?

We have determined the following people and organizations were on the road that day:

AP

- Nick Ut working alone as a photographer

UPI

- Hoang Van Danh, freelance photographer
- Unnamed staff film camera operator, who also carried a stills camera. That day he can be seen taking photos, while also carrying a film camera.

Military photographer

- Believed to be Huynh Cong Phuc.[51] As well as working for the military he was known to sell his photos to UPI and sometimes AP. It is understood he also helped bureaus of international media acquire cameras that he bought on the black market.

Visnews

- Unnamed film camera operator

NBC

- Arthur Lord, correspondent, not easily identifiable in photos or footage
- Le Phuc Dinh, camera operator
- Tran Van Than, sound recordist

ITN

- Christopher Wain, correspondent
- Alan Downes, camera operator
- Tom Phillips, sound recordist

Chicago Tribune

- Donald Kirk, reporter

New York Times

- Fox Butterfield, reporter. Not seen in most images of the day
- David Burnett, freelance photographer often contributed to Time and Life, and that day was on assignment for The New York Times

Alex Shimkin, freelancer and fixer

William Shawcross, and his then-girlfriend. Shawcross was writing for The Sunday Times

Nguyen Thanh Nghe, who claims he shot the famous photograph

Only a limited number of images from the scene have been published, and the analog nature of the work means there are gaps in the coverage and in the sequence of events that have been pieced together. This is because, in an analog age, photographers and film crews preserved the amount of film stock they were using so they did not run out if they needed to continue working.

It is also because not everything taken that day is readily available or still exists. While many of Nick Ut's images from the day are missing, and critically the rest of the roll of film from which the famous image and an adjoining frame were taken, the same is also true for other collections. NBC footage exists but does not appear to have been published contemporaneously on NBC news

programming at the time. AP found at least one instance where important NBC footage was broadcast in France and Spain in a documentary[52], a rare instance of it being seen. This was incorporated into AP's analysis.

The Reuters archive has references to four rolls of film, including one roll referencing "children hit by napalms" but their archive preview shows the output from only two rolls of film, not including the bombing run and what happened afterward. An inquiry to their archive team resulted in the answer that two rolls of film are missing, and it is presumed they never made it back to what was then the Visnews archive.[53]

Several photographers do not appear to have their collections from the day readily available, or even to have ever been published, including the military photographer Huynh Cong Phuc. In addition, a staff film camera operator for UPI can be seen holding a film camera for moving images, but is also seen in photographs mostly using his stills camera. His stills are available, but the video is not. Alex Shimkin was there that day — he died a month afterwards in combat, but any photos he took from Trang Bang have not been located. And Nguyen Thanh Nghe, who says he took the famous image, has no known images credited to him from that day. He also told AP in written answers to questions that he gave the remainder of the single roll of film he shot to a friend who worked for a local newspaper.[54] The absence of these other sources in the public domain from multiple photographers does not prove anything other than they are not available for assessment.

Photographer David Burnett has retained some of his negatives from that day, and AP was able to access these photographs for this analysis.

Of the images that can be found online, the most well-known moving images of the scene were shot by the crew of British broadcast news provider ITN. They covered events before and after the air raid. Of the critical moments with Kim Phuc on the road, the camera started rolling at least a few moments after the photograph was taken. That film footage was carried by hand by a willing U.S. serviceman on a flight from Saigon to Hong Kong just a few hours after the event occurred. From there, couriers met the flight and, marked as urgent, the film canister was immediately sent to London where it was processed and broadcast. By the time it was screened on the British ITV network, the photograph had been published for at least two days.[55]

Taking all available sources, AP created a working tool for internal purposes — a timeline — to try to understand the sequence of events, who was where and what happened. AP does not have access to all of this footage to publish, but some of the most relevant content is included in the accompanying interactive: apnews.com/project/terror-of-war.

The timeline was helpful in determining where people were at different moments. However, it was also limited due to significant gaps in the photos and video of the scene. There was no saturation coverage, and people move in and out of view. Just because people cannot be seen in one area does not mean they were not there, but were out of frame. This is true for many of the journalists present, at different times not being caught on camera. Trying to piece this together almost 53 years later is complex. Visual investigative methods used to understand news events today were employed to understand what happened five decades earlier at Trang Bang. But much of the detail and evidence that would be standard at a current news event is missing from one that happened in 1972, in a pre-digital age. This includes access to photographic and video metadata, which is captured in modern cameras showing camera and lens information, time, geography, and other details, as well as access to eyewitnesses who are long dead.

As so many of Ut's color negatives are available sequentially, they were used as a basis for the core timeline, onto which was layered Ut's black and white photos, the ITN footage and all other available sources.

What AP's negatives show

Starting with Ut's negatives alone, one color photograph taken from a bridge just outside of Trang Bang shows key elements that have been used for analysis.

This shows the relatively compact area involved, though it should be noted that photography gives an illusion of distance depending on the type of lens used.

A blue grave or grave marker is visible in a cemetery. After the air raid, Kim Phuc, other children and soldiers later can be seen running from Trang Bang out of the smoke, through this area then onto the road in front of the signs in the middle distance.

Highway One leading to the village of Trang Bang. This was taken before the air raid, from the bridge. This also shows the compressed space in which events took place, between the barbed wire furthest from the camera, and the yellow sign. (AP Photo / Nick Ut)

Other photos by Ut, taken earlier and before the bombing, show South Vietnamese troops patrolling the area on the same side of the village. They show him covering a wide area.

Ut's collection of photos taken before and during the air raid show him working the scene, moving with apparent ease, and not solely restricting himself to being behind or on the bridge. Instead, he was proactively telling and showing the story of the fighting from multiple areas outside the village.

Ut photographed villagers fleeing Trang Bang, cars waiting for the road to be reopened and soldiers on patrol.

His other photos show his propensity to use a long lens, to focus cleanly on his subject in the foreground.

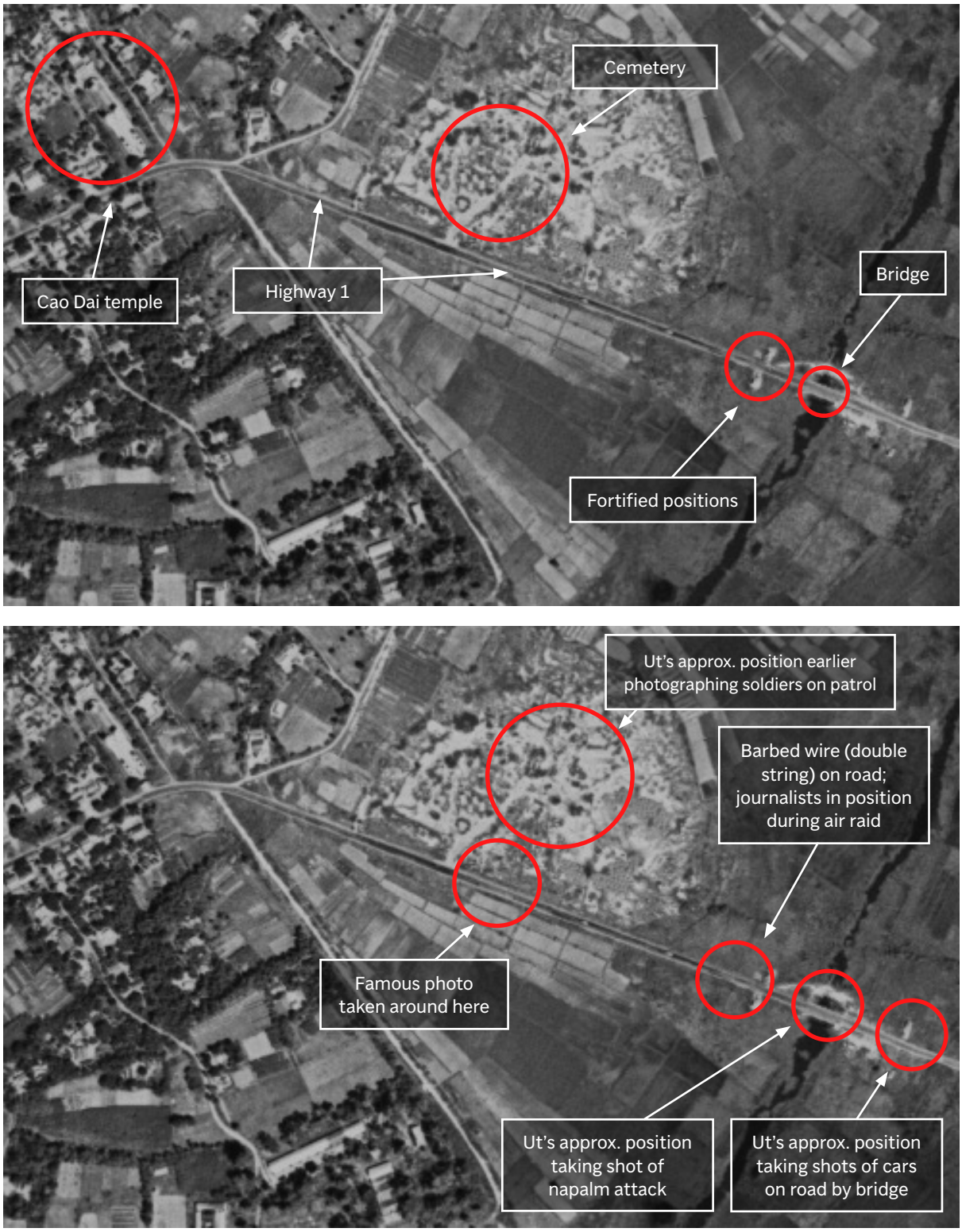
One shows children with a dog walking with their backs to the Cao Dai temple heading toward the bridge. This was around the same area as the famous photograph was captured.

Another shows soldiers on the road closest to the temple with smoke in the aftermath of fighting.

This is a style of shooting — an aesthetic — that can be seen throughout Ut's body of work that day, repeated over again.*

* The original version of this report included a brief reference to another photograph (of a man with a scarf on his head walking from the village) in this section as another example of this shooting style using a long lens. This photograph did not reflect this style and was included in error. This was communicated to AP in November 2025, and both the reference and an image of the photograph on the next page were immediately removed for accuracy. Its removal does not change the original meaning of this section.

Villagers flee fighting from Trang Bang. June 8, 1972. (AP Photos / Nick Ut)



A satellite image captured on Nov. 4, 1972, and declassified by the US government in 2013, available through the U.S. Geological Survey Earthexplorer. Photo ID: D3C1204-200292A105 (Photo USGS)

Placing Nick Ut on the road

Many, but not all, of the journalists before and during the air raid were in a line mostly behind a double row of barbed wire that had been stretched out across the road around the time of the air attack.

One, the military photographer Huynh Cong Phuc, was in front of the wire and ahead of all other journalists.

From further back, at least two photographers captured the napalm explosion as those journalists were standing at the wire. One was Nick Ut, who took two images from the bridge. The other was UPI's film cameraman who shot many still photographs that day.

Two photos of the napalm explosion, taken from the bridge by Nick Ut. After photographing this scene, Ut says he moved forward and joined the journalists seen in these photos at the barbed wire, waiting to see what happened next. (AP Photo / Nick Ut)

Meanwhile from the barbed wire, ITN was shooting footage of the air raid, while Burnett and others next to them shot photos.

After this moment, David Burnett says there was a pause of perhaps a couple of minutes, after which the first people ran from Trang Bang, including Kim Phuc, the children and soldiers.[56]

This scene plays out in the ITN footage. Before AP had seen David Burnett's images, it was assumed that the first photograph of Kim Phuc that day was taken by UPI photographer Hoang Van Danh, who captured the first photo of her on the road.

However, at the same time the children were being guided by soldiers across the cemetery, Burnett took a sequence of four photos, showing the same scene witnessed in the ITN footage from a very similar angle, while positioned behind the barbed wire. The photos show Kim Phuc and the other children running near the cemetery. Of the photos AP has located of the day, it was Burnett who took what is believed to be the first photograph of Kim Phuc.

The sequence shows not just the movement of the people in the distance, but also shows Nick Ut, at the barbed wire, turned toward the children. This shows that Ut, who had been well behind the group of journalists during the napalm drop, was now ahead of at least Burnett. He appears to be moving, as he is not seen in any other photo in this sequence, meaning he was moving forward in this moment toward the temple and the area where the children would shortly arrive on the road. It also shows he was aware of Kim Phuc and the children as they ran from the village.

Ut could have repositioned from this area at the forward barbed wire coil further up the road, getting there before or around the time Kim Phuc arrives on the road. Given the geography of the scene, Ut certainly had the chance to reposition from the wire to meet the children and be at the spot the famous AP photograph was taken.

Once the children run through the cemetery, there is a gap of indeterminate length before they reach the road. ITN and NBC crews both repositioned from the barbed wire to a point further up the road when they started filming Kim Phuc and the other children walking toward, then to the side of, their cameras. There is a break in what they both film. The two crews only begin filming again after the famous image had already been taken.

The final photo in this sequence shows Ut in the foreground, and the children and soldiers running through the cemetery. It is thought this image has never before been published. (David Burnett via Contact Press Images)

Both crews consisted of a camera operator and a sound recordist. They had bulky, heavy shoulder-mounted cameras, and these were attached by an audio cable to the sound recordist, so each crew had to run in tandem with their equipment joined together — or they would have had to uncable the equipment, move and then reconnect. Either way, neither crew could have moved particularly quickly.

Christopher Wain of ITN recalls the moment he witnessed events unfold after the explosion:

> I think we were all in shock for a few seconds, and then everyone started to run down the road towards the burning tarmac. But I was acutely aware that the first plane would now be making another run and might well drop more bombs. So I stopped the crew and we filmed the plane emerging through the napalm smoke-cloud and then departing.[57]

Wain recalls other journalists ran by and overtook his team to move forward down the road. So, despite their moments of caution when he says he stopped the crew, the ITN team was still able to pause around the area near the barbed wire, then move forward to shoot images of Kim Phuc on the road, which happened just a short time afterward. With all their gear, and the awkwardness of moving together, they could still do that within the time available.

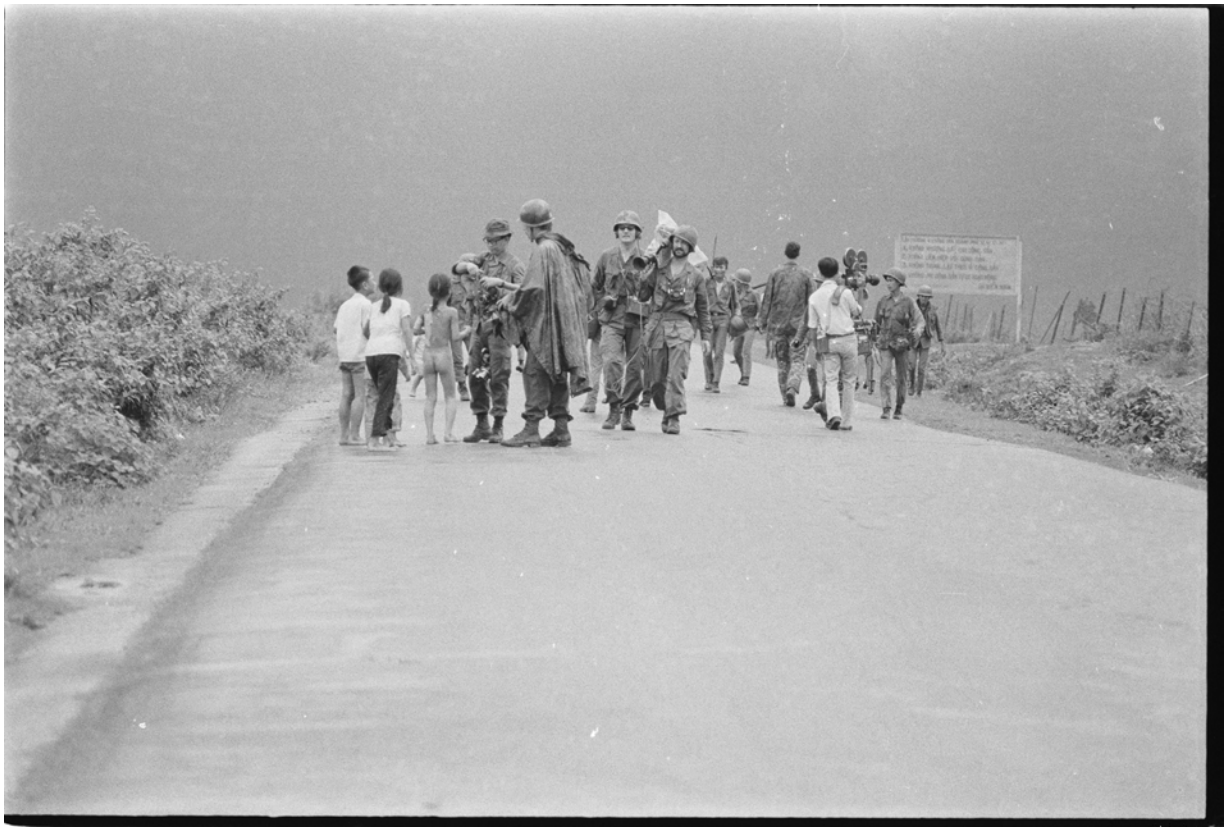
Burnett wrote in "The Washington Post" in 2012 describing how he came to miss the shot:

> When I reflect on that day, my clearest memory is the sight, out of the corner of my eye, of Nick and another reporter beginning their run toward the oncoming children. It took another 20 or 30 seconds for me to finish loading my stubborn Leica, and I then joined them. It was real life, unfolding at the pace of life.[58]

In examining Burnett's photos during that short period, it appears he put aside the camera he used to take the cemetery photos. He changed a roll of film on another camera. Once done, he advanced forward to catch up with everyone else. While doing so, he went back to the first camera and it appears he took one last photograph of the scene, on a long lens from further back. Once he caught up, he switched to a camera with a wider lens to shoot close up of journalists aiding Kim Phuc.

The photo by Burnett on a long lens shows the scene of the journalists stopped in the middle of the road to help Kim Phuc. By this time, Hoang had taken his photo of Kim, the two AP photos of Kim had been taken, and ITN and NBC had both filmed her running toward them on the road. It also shows the blind spots on the road from the available footage — while we know Ut was on the road ahead of Burnett, he is out of frame.

Although Ut carried multiple cameras and bags as he moved forward from the barbed wire, he did not have the additional burden of a shoulder mounted camera, nor of having to run in tandem with a colleague connected via cable. The photo of Ut at the barbed wire does not prove authorship of the "Terror of War" image, but it does put Ut in a viable position to be able to move to reach Kim Phuc and the children.



This photo by David Burnett was taken on a long lens, shortly after he changed his film roll in another camera. This shows the moment between two ITN shots showing a blurry, grainy figure. The calm scene hints at the passage of time between the two ITN shots. (David Burnett via Contact Press Images)

The scene of the famous image

When Kim and the children entered the road, it was Hoang Van Danh who takes the first picture of her, right before AP's famous shot was taken.

As soon as he takes his shot, Hoang changes the roll of film in his camera, and is seen in the uncropped version of both AP photos. When the NBC camera starts rolling, Hoang is still there changing his film.[59]

Hoang Van Danh's shot of Kim Phuc is the first time she is photographed on the road. He then changes his camera roll. (Bettmann/Hoang Van Danh/via Getty Images)

The next two photographs of the scene are AP's, and the negatives are joined together consecutively.

First is the famous image shown here uncropped, and then another photo in a sequence taken a few steps away.

In Hoang Van Danh's photograph, Kim Phuc is ahead of the other children. Her cousin Hien, the girl in a white top, is closest to her. She is a few steps away on Kim's left and slightly behind, standing on the edge of the road. Further back is Kim Phuc's brother, in the white shirt, and her younger cousin. Still not on the road is Hien's younger brother who is dressed in grey, coming up the gentle slope toward the road.

From Hoang Van Danh's photo to the famous photo, the children have all changed position. The passage of time between these two photos cannot be determined with accuracy. All are by now on the road. Hien and her brother are together, holding hands. Kim Phuc's brother in the white shirt with his face contorted is a few steps ahead of her. He has both caught up with, and overtaken, his sister. Their younger cousin is further back. Hoang Van Danh is identifiable, on the right side of frame, with "UPI" on his helmet and a white rectangular bandage or first aid kit on its left side.

The photographer of the famous image then takes a second shot. By the time he does, Kim Phuc's brother has run out of frame, though we know he is there from NBC footage that shows all the children running. Her two cousins, including Hien in white, have crossed from one side of the road to the other. Her smaller cousin in a white shirt cannot be seen.

The uncropped version of the famous photograph. This version was not distributed by AP that day. (AP Photo / Nick Ut)*

* The original version of this report contained the wrong version of this image. This was pointed out to AP in November 2025, and this correct version was immediately inserted. This was an oversight at the time of publication, and the error in no way changes the meaning of this report as this image is here for illustrative purposes only. The correct image has been used repeatedly in this same report.

The second AP photo of this sequence, taken just a few meters forward from where the "Terror of War" was taken. (AP Photo / Nick Ut)

Placing the photographer on the road

It had been raining heavily that morning, as shown in multiple photographs when people were leaving Trang Bang. By the time the children ran out of the village, the rain had stopped and in the photos of the scene there are distinctive puddles on the road.

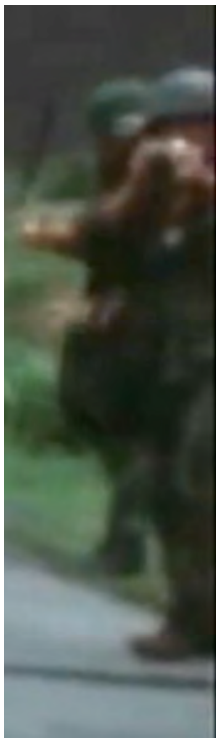
In the famous image, Kim Phuc's right foot has stepped onto a circular puddle that extends into a straighter line of water. These two features can also be seen in the next photo and in the NBC footage that follows.

Kim Phuc is in the center of the road in the second AP photo. The photographer was a few meters back from her position. She continues to walk and the photographer also moves backward to take this second image. Kim Phuc is on the straight line of the puddle, with the circle visible behind her.

Still visible on the right of the image is photographer Hoang Van Danh changing his roll of film.

A frame grab from NBC's footage shows Hoang Van Danh, second from the right, identifiable by the white rectangular shape on his helmet. On the far right is military photographer Hyunh Cong Phuc who cannot be seen in other photographs of this scene. (NBC News)

The puddle in the middle distance is where Kim Phuc was on the road when the famous photograph was taken. At the far side of the straight line of water is a circular puddle where she was standing. On the far right of this shot is Hyunh Cong Phuc, a military photographer who sold to UPI and sometimes AP. He is raising his camera to take a photo of the children as they run toward the NBC camera operator. (NBC News)



Close crop from the above image, showing Hyunh Cong Phuc looking through the viewfinder of his camera, standing next to UPI freelancer Hoang Van Danh. (NBC News)

The next available visual is the beginning of the NBC footage of Kim Phuc and the children running. This footage runs for three seconds before the ITN footage of the same scene begins.

The first frames of the NBC footage show that Kim Phuc is now side by side with her brother and cousin, Hien's younger brother. Hien has moved her position and is now on the edge of the road, furthest from the side where the children entered the road.

There is a group of soldiers in all three frames on the right of the scene. However, in the NBC footage, unlike in the three preceding photographs, two photographers can be seen standing among the soldiers. One of them is the Vietnamese military photographer, Huynh Cong Phuc, who is on the far-right edge of the footage as it is viewed, within the vicinity of where AP's photos were taken, and then he disappears out of frame. Before he does, he can clearly be seen raising his camera and taking a photograph of Kim. Next to him is photographer Hoang Van Danh.

A few frames into the NBC footage, Kim moves her arm in relation to the camera angle, and the distinctive circular pattern of the puddle can be clearly seen behind her left side.

What does this mean?

This was a chaotic scene. The children were moving constantly, and it was a confusing and terrifying period of time. Before the children entered the road, Kim Phuc can be seen running in one direction toward the camera, then darts off to her right.

It cannot be assumed that the children moved in a linear manner once on the road, nor can it be assumed that there is minimal passage of time between Hoang's first photo of the children on the road, and between the "Terror of War" frame and its adjacent image, and the start of the NBC footage. It is impossible to know without further video evidence. However, visually it can be seen that the people on the road moved position, and that did not happen in an instant from one frame to the next.

Critically, the military photographer on the right edge of the NBC footage, although he appears for just three seconds, cannot be seen in any other photograph of this scene, nor can he be seen in the ITN footage. Despite this scene becoming famous because of the photograph, there are gaps in the visual record because it was an analog age. Others are also off camera, including anyone else who could have been in position to take the famous photograph.

The presence of the military photographer proves that there was more than one photographer who could have been in position to take the famous image. And while Huynh Cong Phuc can be seen in this rarely available footage, Nick Ut — and Nguyen Nghe for that matter — cannot. The absence of anyone in this scene does not prove they were not there to take the photograph, just that this specific angle did not capture them.

This critical piece of the visual jigsaw puzzle was not included in "The Stringer" movie, nor was it included in the analysis performed by INDEX for the film, which concluded that Nguyen Nghe, and only Nguyen Nghe, was near the scene. This was either overlooked or not included, despite some NBC footage which was shot that day being used in the opening minutes of the film.

The ITN footage

The footage shot by Alan Downes of ITN picks up three seconds after the NBC footage began. By the time his camera starts rolling, Kim Phuc is near his position. Shortly after he starts shooting, she runs toward him and then passes on his left. He keeps rolling, and the camera pans around, from facing toward the temple, then facing in exactly the opposite direction with his back to the temple, toward the bridge.

As the pan begins to resolve, two people are seen in the middle distance. AP believes these are Christopher Wain, the ITN correspondent who had hung back slightly, and UPI's video staffer whose name is unknown to AP. It is hard to make out in the ITN film, but it can clearly be seen in the NBC footage that the UPI staffer had a film camera (for moving images) wedged between his legs, and the camera he is working with in that moment is a stills camera. The photograph he took almost in this moment can be found in the Getty archive.[60]

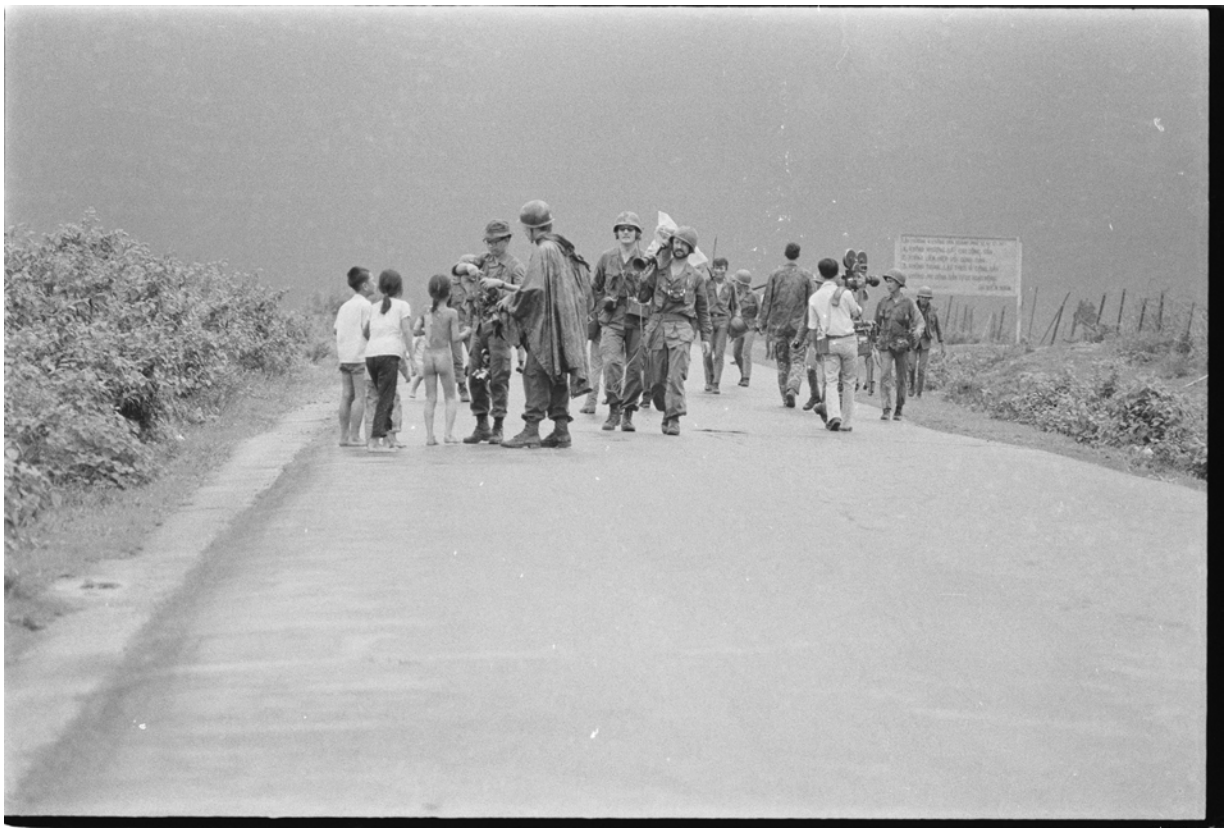
Photograph of Kim Phuc, her brother and their cousin running toward the UPI video staffer who was using a stills camera to shoot this. (Bettmann via Getty Images)

A cropped screen grab from ITN footage showing Christopher Wain of ITN in the middle distance, and a UPI camera operator/photographer next to him. Further back on the left is a grainy figure the film claims to be Nick Ut. (ITN via Getty Images)

On the left of the ITN frame, a distant, blurry figure is walking up in the distance, away from the bridge and toward the temple, the children and the ITN camera. When slowed down, stabilized in the frame (so the figure does not move when viewed), and cropped to a tight zoom using professional video editing software, the grainy image shows that the person lifts a camera to their eye to take a photo. This could only be seen properly with material in its highest resolution licensed from the Getty Archive[61] (which represents ITN content), not with the lower resolution version found online.

There is then a cut in the ITN footage. As seen in an NBC shot, Kim Phuc is then stopped by the UPI photographer and Christopher Wain. An indeterminate time later the ITN footage picks up and Kim Phuc is surrounded by journalists — with some soldiers looking on — who after they doused her with water are giving her some to drink from a canteen. The journalists include Wain and the UPI staffer. This can be made out in photos of the scene, as the ITN footage is focused on close ups of Kim Phuc.

The photo of the scene taken by David Burnett on a long lens was moments before the ITN footage picks up again.



Burnett's photo taken as Kim Phuc is being helped and between the two ITN camera shots. (David Burnett via Contact Press Images)

Burnett's photo alone shows there was a break in time for Downes to finish taking the panning shot with the distant, blurry figure visible and then get into position to resume filming with her drinking from the canteen with both he and Phillips, connected via cable, walking back into position.

The ITN crew with Kim Phuc. (Bettmann via Getty Images)

A frame grab from ITN's footage shows Nick Ut approaching the scene with Kim Phuc and journalists on the road. (ITN via Getty Images)

The same scene of Kim Phuc, with journalists, and her brother and cousins nearby. This photo was taken by Nick Ut as he approached, as seen in ITN's footage. (AP Photo / Nick Ut)

The next photograph shows Downes kneeling on the ground once he gets into position, obscured by Kim Phuc's brother. He is shooting slightly below Kim Phuc's head height with his shoulder-mounted camera covered in plastic to protect it from the rain. Wain is standing, his helmet with a white triangle, and next to them both is sound recordist Tom Phillips.

As Downes resumes shooting film footage while kneeling, Nick Ut can be seen walking toward this scene and taking a photograph. AP is able to confirm this is Ut as the photo he takes in this moment is in the AP archive and both these visuals cross-reference the other.

The distant figure

When examining the best resolution of 50-year-old newsreel footage of this scene, this distant, grainy figure, looked like Nick Ut. Using a professional video editing tool, the close-cropped, slow-motion version of the distant blurry figure was put side by side on the same screen as the figure that was known to be Nick Ut.

It cannot be proved beyond doubt, but there is a similarity between the two.

Two screengrabs from ITN's footage, side by side. (ITN via Getty Images)

"The Stringer" claimed that this figure was first seen when 60 meters from the ITN camera position and concluded that if that were the case, it would have been impossible for him to have both taken the picture and then appear so far away. AP's analysis of the scene will address that issue, below.

Approaching the children on the road at Trang Bang. (David Burnett via Contact Press Images)

The scene after the famous photo

In the photos that follow, Ut is in the vicinity of Kim Phuc and clearly focused on her.

Photographer David Burnett approached the scene, taking a wide shot of the children and the journalists helping Kim Phuc. On the left edge of the frame is Nick Ut, his back to the camera, and the distinctive strap from his helmet in view.

Another image by Burnett is of Kim Phuc's cousin Hien. In the background, on the right, is Nick Ut, taking a picture.

Kim Phuc's cousin, with Nick Ut taking a picture in the background. (David Burnett via Contact Press Images)

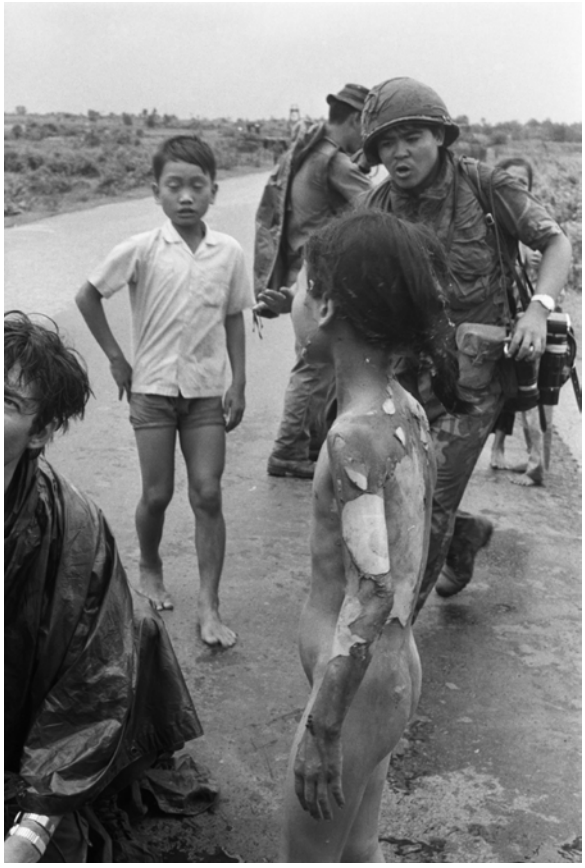
Ut was taking this photograph of Kim Phuc, standing in a puddle created by water being poured on her wounds, surrounded by journalists and soldiers.

The face and helmet of Alan Downes from ITN is poking in from the left; the UPI camera operator — at this point again taking a photograph — is next to him; Tom Phillips, the ITN sound recordist, is in sunglasses and his equipment attached by cable to Downes. Toward the back is a radio signaler from the Vietnamese military, holding a radio handset. A military officer is gesturing to Kim Phuc, while Christopher Wain is bending down, presumably to his water canteen. The two-person NBC crew is on the right of the image.

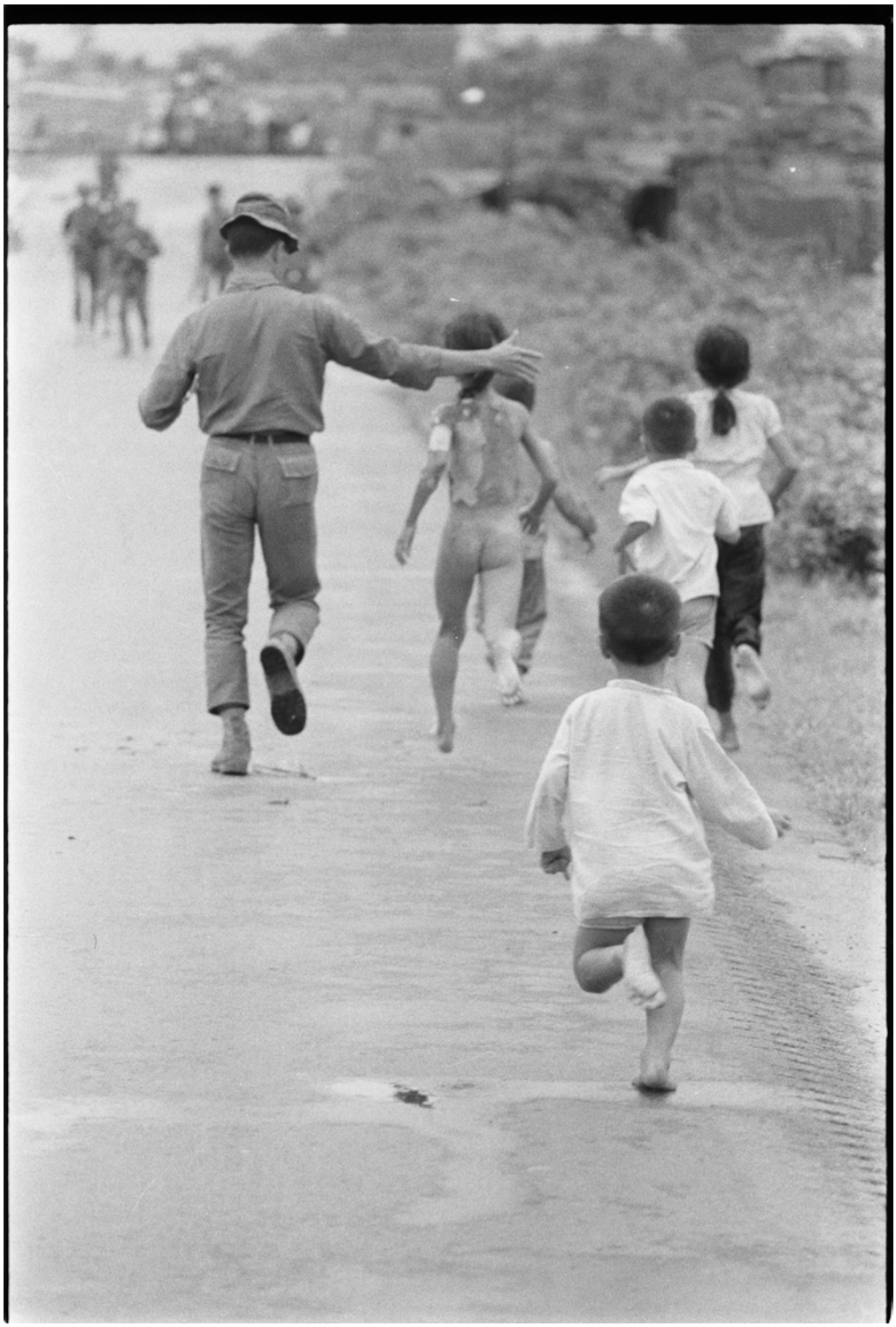
Kim Phuc being doused with water. (AP Photo / Nick Ut)

Many of the photographers and journalists at the scene cannot be found in these images. That could be due to them moving on elsewhere on the road, losing interest in the scene around Kim Phuc, or because blind spots persist due to the limited coverage afforded by the discipline of working with analog technology. Simply put, fewer images were taken to conserve film, compared to the saturation coverage of today.

Burnett's later photos, which have been seen by AP, appear to show a degree of milling around by all the journalists on the road in the minutes that follow. Kim Phuc is led away by a military officer down the road toward the barbed wire and beyond to the bridge. Meanwhile journalists go a little further up the road toward the temple, but it is difficult to say what is happening.



Nick Ut at the scene on the road, with Kim Phuc in the foreground. The crouched figure on the left is Christopher Wain. (Bettmann via Getty Images)



Kim Phuc, apparently running, is led away from the area by a soldier toward the barbed wire and parked civilian areas.
(David Burnett via Contact Press Images)

3D analysis of the scene

To try to establish the geography of the scene and to make sense of events, AP launched its own 3D analysis of the position of the key people on the road and of the distances involved. AP undertook all analysis, using techniques employed by the movie industry to create a virtual 3D recreation of the real scene of the road. In movie production, this approach allows real environments to be digitally recreated, enabling the addition of special effects with frame-accurate precision.

This work revealed that there is a limit to how far modern technology can drive any conclusions in this case. That is because the landscape at Trang Bang in 1972 is devoid of many landmarks, especially any of a known size. There is a lack of buildings, fixed objects and known positions. The terrain is flat, the road is uneven, and there are few reference points. This specific scene makes it difficult to determine how close or how far away people seen in photos and footage were from the cameras. This means any calculations have a very wide margin of error.

Distances on the road

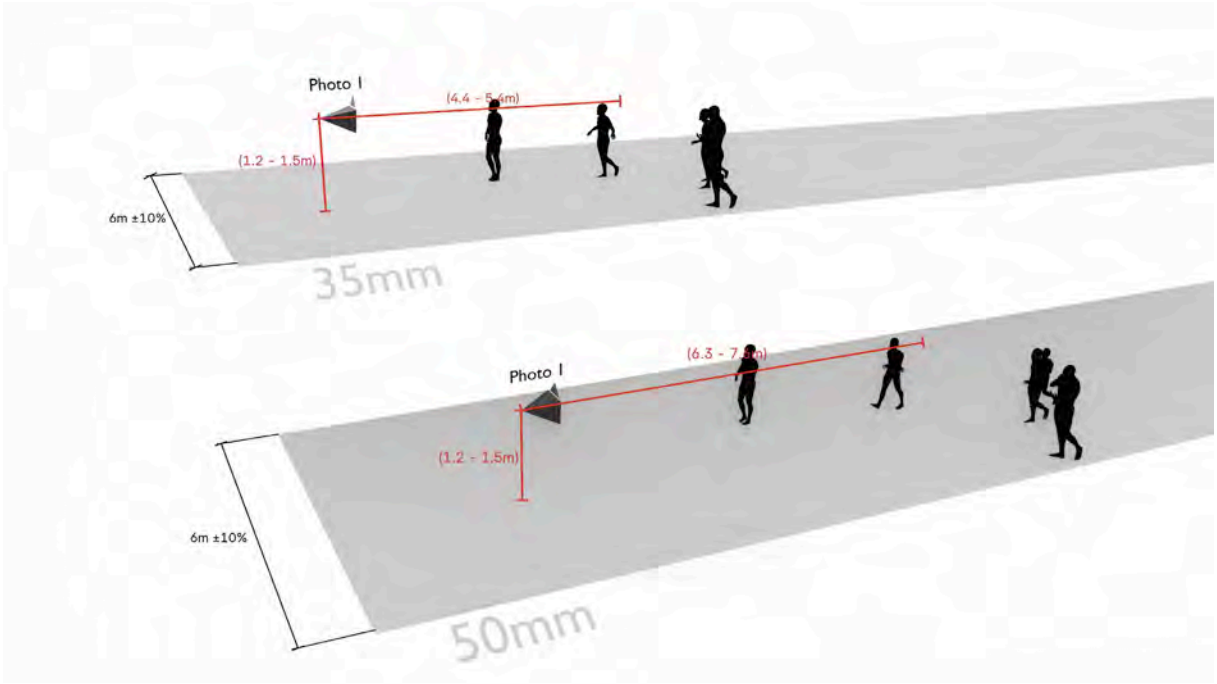
First, the scene around the famous photo was analyzed and calculated based on two possibilities: the photographer using a 35 mm lens or a 50 mm lens.

Then we looked at the distance between the photographer's position at the time the first photo was taken to the second. To do this we calculated how far Kim Phuc ran between these two moments.

Many photographers believe a 35 mm lens was used to take the photo. In other circumstances it would be easier to tell simply by looking at the photograph because of any distortion of objects in the frame around the edges in the wide angle. However, with so few landmarks, this cannot be determined solely by looking at the photograph.

We calculated the distance between the position where the second photograph was taken and the position of the ITN camera. AP estimates the total distance from the photographer's position at the moment he took the second photo to the final position of the ITN crew when filming the distant, blurry figure at between 4 and 8 meters, but with a high margin of error.

Second, the distances on the other side of the road were calculated to determine the distance between the ITN camera and the blurry figure seen in the ITN footage. This is harder to calculate, as the camera is using a zoom lens and it is impossible to know its focal length. The different possible focal lengths were converted to equivalent 35mm camera format values. This was done by analyzing the additional images in AP's archive, as well as David Burnett's photos and the NBC footage. All of these were absent from the analysis contained in "The Stringer."



Screen grab from a rendered video of the scene of the two AP photos, and the movement between the children and others on the road. (AP)

The analysis showed that — at best — a range for the distance between the blurry figure and ITN camera could be determined. The range was calculated at between 28.8 meters and 48 meters, with a margin of error around 20%. This is potentially significantly shorter than the calculation in the film.

By contrast, the distance given in the movie was stated with certainty at "approximately 60 meters," with no margin of error cited.

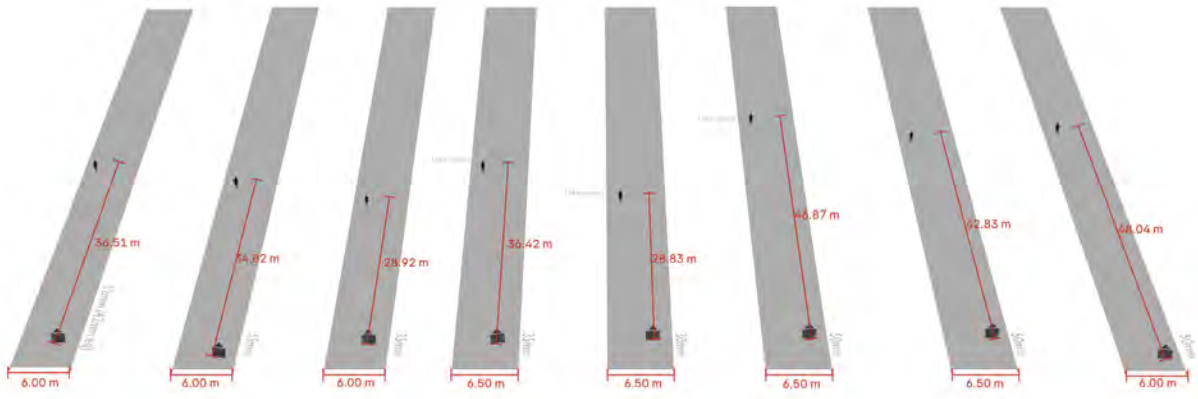
However, the famous photo was taken further up the road toward the temple. AP calculates that distance to be approximately 4 to 8 meters away, but with a high margin of error, depending on the lens used. There is no way to be sure. This does not rule out Nguyen Nghe as the photographer. But the position that Nguyen is seen holding a camera — with Kim Phuc and the other children running — is some distance from where the famous image was taken.

Nguyen Nghe seen with a white shirt and black vest on the right. This photo was used to suggest that he alone could have taken the famous photograph. (Bettmann via Getty Images)

The film, using the calculation of 60 meters from the ITN camera to the distant figure, contends that Ut was too far away from where the AP pictures were taken to have plausibly shot them. However, AP calculated the distance from the position of where the second photograph was taken, to the distant blurry figure. This is the correct calculation in deciding whether Nick Ut could have both taken the picture and later be seen down the road.

AP's calculations show the distance from the position the second photo was taken to the distant figure is between 32.8 meters and 56 meters, with an overall margin of error of 20%. The film's stated 60-meter figure falls within AP's outer range when a margin of error is taken into account, but so would a distance of half that length.

The film's analysis of the scene, as detailed in the version screened at Sundance, appears to use a flawed graphic 3D render of the scene. It repeatedly shows people in the wrong places. If the underlying data were correct, this should not happen. As AP's analysis proved, even minor differences in the data can have a big effect on placement and distances involved, leading to errors in the model.



A 3D model of the distance between the ITN camera and the distant figure when it first appears on screen. This shows the wide range of possible options depending on some variables. (AP)

Instead of being on the road, some people appear on the grass alongside it. That both Kim Phuc's cousin Hien and UPI photographer Hoang Van Danh are seen in the model standing on grass and not on the road — as they are in UPI and AP photos of the day — gives cause for concern about the underlying calculations and approach.

Further, the graphic in the film depicting the geography of the second AP photo is inaccurate. It shows five soldiers standing on the right of the frame further behind Kim Phuc. When the graphic render appears, three of them are walking on grass, and one in the middle of the group is very close to the grass on the very edge of the road. In the actual photo, all of them are on the road, and the soldier in the middle is at least one meter, probably further, from the road edge.

Then in the wide shot taken by Nick Ut, when he says he walked back toward Kim Phuc, his photo shows Alan Downes (ITN) kneeling while Kim Phuc is being helped. There is a small crowd of soldiers in the middle distance on the road — the same group mentioned above. In the graphic depicting this scene in the movie, all those soldiers are gone. Had they not disappeared, the film's graphic would have had this group standing in the middle of bushes and barbed wire, not on the road.

This scene, when shown in the analytical section of the film as a graphic, has all of the soldiers on the road on the right of frame removed. The graphic would have placed them in the bushes and barbed wire. (AP Photo / Nick Ut)

On the roadside at the time, further away from the temple, bushes can be seen clearly in many photos. However, there were none near the scene where the famous shot was taken. In the 3D graphic rendition, bushes are shown in the background, where none existed in reality.

AP cannot address INDEX's calculations other than to note their researchers were working with a significantly reduced visual data set, ignoring the NBC footage and without access to two sets of images from AP and David Burnett. Also, no margin of error was stated in the film, and AP's research and analysis of the road shows that the lack of visual references make it impossible to give accurate distances. AP asked the filmmakers for access to the INDEX research, but could only review what was included in the film.

Nick Ut's account

Given the results of AP's research, there were many questions that needed to be addressed. An interview with Nick Ut was arranged and took place in Los Angeles on April 9, 2025.

These questions focused on:

- The camera used
- How Ut could have been both the photographer and the distant figure
- Why he would reposition in this way
- What cameras he was actually carrying that day, given he has often said he used a Leica M2 to take the famous photo, and said that he had two Leica cameras and two Nikon cameras

During a five-hour interview, Ut said he took the pictures of the napalm explosion from the bridge as the cannisters were dropped, and then immediately moved forward to join the other photographers and journalists at the barbed wire position. He said everyone was waiting to see what happened after the air raid, and while there he commented to the Visnews camera operator to his left that he hoped no one was caught in the strike.

Then he says he saw the children coming through the smoke and immediately ran forward, met them on the road and took the famous photo, then ran backward to take the second.

Ut said it all happened very fast. Kim Phuc and the children were running, and after taking the second shot he thought she was going to carry on running, so he decided to run ahead in the same direction they were headed. He says this was to gain some distance so he could take a photo with a telephoto lens, which would isolate the children on the road, or perhaps just Kim Phuc by herself.

As noted earlier, AP's analysis of Ut's body of work that day contains several such photos taken on a long lens, with their central subject isolated in the frame.

Ut said he sprinted, but then saw Kim Phuc stop. She approached the journalists we now know to be Christopher Wain and the UPI staffer. Ut saw that he was now too far back from Kim Phuc and could not get the shot he wanted. So he walked back toward the scene.

When questioned on the issue of the Pentax, Ut said he hadn't previously doubted a Leica was used to take the image. He said when Horst Faas congratulated him in the bureau, it was Faas who told him it came from a roll taken with a Leica camera. He says he accepted what Faas said, and never handled the negatives again once they were processed.

When told that AP believed a Pentax camera likely was used to take the image, Ut accepted that could be the case.

He then explained that when his brother, Huynh Thanh My — who was a photographer working for the AP — died in combat in 1965, he inherited two Pentax cameras from him. Ut says he carried one with him wherever he went.

Later, AP spoke with Huynh Thanh My's widow, Arlett Hieu Salazar, who today lives in the greater Los Angeles area. She told AP she gave Ut a box of cameras and lenses from her husband after he died, and vividly recalled handing him a Pentax with a part-silver casing. When she mentioned her husband had given Ut cameras when he was still alive, AP asked if it could have been this Pentax she remembered so clearly. She said: "... the Pentax, my husband wore it all the time. That's the one I gave to Nick, I gave it to him, not my husband, because my husband used the Pentax a lot and he used it all the time, so I gave it to Nick when my husband passed away."[62]

Salazar said that Ut, who lived with her in Vietnam, carried the camera for luck. “The silver Pentax around his neck he always had it. He told me ‘I wear it because my brother will be with me and protect me when I go to the battle.’ I would say ‘well, if you think your brother will be there to protect you, if you get hit in battle then pray to him, call his name, and he will help you.’”

She said, “I was really surprised that Nick survived the war because he went every day to operations — every day.”

In the interview with Ut, he said he had cameras stolen before he left Saigon, in the early part of 1975. The two Pentax cameras from his brother were not with him, but were in his house. When the order came to leave Vietnam, it happened so quickly he could not get them.

Ut’s explanation was unclear regarding the M2 camera lent to the Newseum, and which was said to be the camera used to take “The Terror of War.” It appears Ut, whose spoken English is difficult to understand, believes that it was the same camera type he had that day, not necessarily the same camera.

This and other details leave much doubt as to what cameras he was carrying that day, and exactly how the day played out. In several interviews about the photograph, Ut has stated that he carried four cameras and never mentioned a Pentax.

However, AP’s analysis of Vietnam-era photography showed that negatives with the characteristics of a Pentax were held in the AP archive and were credited to Huynh Thanh My and to Ut himself. The number of photographs found show that he did not use a Pentax often, but he did use one while covering the war in Vietnam.

AP reviewed the inventory of materials Ut lent to the Newseum. Among the items were two other cameras besides the Leica: a Nikon F and a Pentax Honeywell. This model of Pentax was targeted at the U.S. market — it is the same kind of camera as the Pentax Asahi but with a different name. The Honeywell was manufactured from 1971 and shipped with a 50 mm lens as standard.

The camera was tested by AP on April 18, 2025. The results appear to show very clear similarities to the famous image and are another marker to suggest that the famous image was likely taken with a Pentax. The negative images do not match exactly. The camera itself seems to be in mint condition, so it is unlikely to have been used in combat for any length of time, and given the date of manufacture, could not have been inherited from Ut's brother. The investigation showed Ut owned Pentax cameras and used Pentax cameras while covering the war. It does not prove he held a Pentax in Trang Bang on June 8, 1972.

2016.0169 Nick Ut Donation Inventory

ɔan #	Artifact name/description
2016.0169.01a&b	Nikon camera with lens cap
2016.0169.02a&b	Honeywell Pentax camera with lens cap
2016.0169.03	jacket, patch on left side "NICK UT/AP PHOTOGRAPHER
2016.0169.04	camouflage shirt, patch on left side "ASSOCIATED PRESS"
2016.0169.05a&b	light meter in leather case (SEKONIC)
2016.0169.06	film in Kodak box - Tri-X 400 Pro, expires 03/2005
2016.0169.07a-c	film in canister, a=Kodak professional, E200. c=36/PGA 100 (a=film, b=canister base, c=canister lid)
2016.0169.08a-c	film in canister, a=Kodak Gold 100. c=36/E 200
2016.0169.09a-c	film in canister, a=400 Kodak Tri-X pan. c=36/TX-400
2016.0169.010a-c	film in canister, a=Kodak professsional 100, Ektapresss. c=36/PJ800
2016.0169.11a-c	film in canister, a=Kodak professsional PJ800, EKTAPRESS
2016.0169.12a-c	film in canister, a=Kodak Tri-X pan
2016.0169.13a-c	film in canister, a=Kodak Tri-X pan 400
2016.0169.14a-d	4 white AP photo envelopes, on stickers: (00571, 00575, 00576, 00577)
2016.0169.15	Pulitzer Prize certificate in leather case from Columbia University
2016.0169.16	large beige envelop, AP News Photos, "Nick Ut Film" with Saigon address. Notse on back.

An inventory of a donation to the Newseum, found in AP's archive.

Endnotes

1 "'Napalm Girl' at 50: The story of the Vietnam War's defining photo": https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/napalm-girl-50-snap/index.html

"Forty years after 'napalm girl' picture, a photographer reflects on the moment that might have been his": https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/forty-years-after-napalm-girl-picture-a-photographer-reflects-on-the-moment-that-might-have-been-his/2012/06/13/gJQAfoToeV_story.html

"A Young Girl's Cry for Help in Vietnam and the Photographer Who Saved Her...": https://digitaljournalist.org/issue0008/ngtext.htm

2 "Parting Glance: Horst Faas" The Associated Press, published by The New York Times, May 10, 2012 https://archive.nytimes.com/lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/10/a-parting-glance-horst-faas/

3 "Photographer Who Took Iconic Vietnam Photo Looks Back, 40 Years After the War Ended." Vanity Fair, April 3, 2015 https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2015/04/vietnam-war-napalm-girl-photo-today?srsltid=AfmBOoo99DW3sU2WmZtcEiHu27renSeGv3m1sGeDgFdTBqSrUkvXbSzM

4 Interview with Hal Buell conducted by Valerie Komor, May 12, 2016. The Associated Press Corporate Archives. "So the picture came out by radio and we discussed it for 10 minutes or so around the desk. Nobody, we couldn't even within our own ranks, we didn't have any objection to the picture because it was not prurient — yes, nudity — but not prurient in any sense of the word. It was a horror of war. It was innocence caught in the crossfire. And it went right out, and of course it became a lasting icon of that war, of any war, of all wars." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TII8U7YXNPs&t=596s AP, Nov. 15, 2016

5 https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/huynh-cong-ut

6 Interview with Horst Faas conducted by Valerie Komor, May 21, 2007. The Associated Press Corporate Archives. p. 75. "It was Nick Ut who was trained with the eye of his brother. He was trained by seeing so many excellent pictures, AP pictures in the dark room and later on the editing table. He participated in the production for six years, and he had an eye and that eye delivered this one photo."

[7] Kim Phuc statement, sent to AP Jan. 6, 2025:

"I have refused to participate in this outrageous and false attack on Nick Ut raised by Mr. Robinson over the past years and never responded to his email requesting that I talk with him. I hope he finds peace in his life. I have no memory of those minutes but I would never participate in the Gary Knight film because I know it is false."

[8] Interview with David Burnett conducted by Valerie Komor, July 13, 2016. The Associated Press Corporate Archives. p. 14

[9] Vietnamese children flee from their homes in the South Vietnamese village of Trang Bang, June 8, 1972, after South Vietnamese planes accidently dropped a napalm bomb on the village, located 26 miles outside of Saigon. Bettmann Archive/Getty Images. Alex Shimkin on the far right side of the image: https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/vietnamese-children-flee-from-their-homes-in-the-south-news-photo/517292620

[10] https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/50121592/alexander-demitri-shimkin

[11] AP conversation with David Burnett, Jan. 9, 2025

[12] Interview with David Burnett conducted by Valerie Komor, July 13, 2016. The Associated Press Corporate Archives. p. 13–14

[13] AP conversation with Fox Butterfield, Aug. 5, 2024

[14] Kim Phuc statement, sent to AP Jan. 6, 2025:

"All eyewitnesses on that horrific day including my uncle, have confirmed through the years that it was Nick Ut who was there, who ran towards me to take the photo and brought me to the closest hospital ..."

[15] https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-10-01-tm-624-story.html

[16] Interview with Nick Ut, Los Angeles, April 9, 2025

[17] Interview with Nick Ut conducted by Valerie Komor, May 15, 2016. The Associated Press Corporate Archives.

[18] "There was a transcendent moment. Horst, a big rugby player of a European, and Nick Ut, a slight, unassuming Vietnamese, coming together again at a focal point of history. We all looked at Nick's picture. "Well," I thought, "that is way better than anything I have." Horst paused a minute, and said in his most authoritative Germanic accent, "You do good work today, Nick Ut." It was a profound compliment. Discussions ensued for some time about whether the picture could be put on the wire since it involved "nudity" though clearly no rule ever written had this picture in mind. And in a matter of 24 hours, the photograph went from being viewed by our dozen eyes in the AP office, to tens of millions around the world." "Closing the Circle" by David Burnett, Digital Journalist, May 2009: https://digitaljournalist.org/issue0905/we-re-just-sayin-closing-the-circle.html

[19] Carl Robinson, in written answers to AP's questions received Feb. 15, 2025

"The film had arrived and was logged in by Jackson after I'd gone to lunch. As I recall, there was film from at least three photographers and whose film was meticulously logged in as normal, duplicate stick-on numbers one on the film and second in the school exercise book. He and Huan had processed all the rolls and Jackson had edited the film and made the prints I've just described. There were no photographers present, Nick Ut or stringers. Choice of pics, return of unused negs and payment for stringers always came later. In other words, staff and stringer photographers dropped off their film which was logged in and then left the office. Nobody was hanging around for a decision."

[20] In the AP's Saigon bureau in May 1973, staff apparently celebrate news of Nick Ut's Pulitzer Prize, won for his picture of young Kim Phuc, severely wounded by a napalm strike. Left to right: Edith Lederer, Charles Harrity, Horst Faas, Dang Van Huan (in rear), Richard Pyle, Carl Robinson, Nick Ut, Toby Pyle, Lynn Newland, Dang Van Phuoc, Hugh Mulligan and George Esper. (AP Photo)

[21] Interview with Carl Robinson conducted by Richard Pyle, May 2, 2005. The Associated Press Corporate Archives. p. 34–36

[22] "The Bite of the Lotus: An Intimate Memoir of the Vietnam War." Carl Robinson. Wilkinson Publishing, 2019. https://www.amazon.com/Bite-Lotus-Intimate-Memoir-Vietnam/dp/192592713X

[23] AP conversation with Fox Butterfield, Aug. 5, 2024

[24] Interview with Carl Robinson conducted by Richard Pyle, May 2, 2005. The Associated Press Corporate Archives.

[25] A document sent to filmmakers in December 2022 by Carl Robinson when told they were considering making a story regarding the photograph, Kim Phuc and Nick Ut.

The file is titled “And after that” and it carries the headline “Part 2: Who really shot the ‘napalm girl’ picture? A 50-year cover-up.” Shared with AP in January 2025.

[26] Email exchange between AP and Peter Arnett, Aug. 9, 2024

[27] “Forty years after ‘napalm girl’ picture, a photographer reflects on the moment that might have been his” https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/forty-years-after-napalm-girl-picture-a-photographer-reflects-on-the-moment-that-might-have-been-his/2012/06/13/gJQAfoToeV_story.html

[28] Interview with David Burnett conducted by Valerie Komor, July 13, 2016. The Associated Press Corporate Archives.

“And I went back to my little desk at the Time Life office. And I was still a LIFE contract photographer, so I felt like it was my job to not only tell them what I’d done, but I wrote this note that went out on the—it wasn’t really a telex, it was like a direct open teletype line to New York—and I just wrote a note saying, “Just sending you in tomorrow’s packet five or seven,” whatever it was, “rolls of film from Trang Bang, and here’s what happened, and there were some civilians that were accidentally burned.” And at the bottom of my note I wrote, “Nick Ut from AP has a pretty good picture which you’ll probably see on the wire, but they told me that they’re sending the negative to New York. So you should probably try and get an original print made from AP rather than do anything with the wire print.”

[29] Nguyen Nghe interviewed in “The Stringer”

[30] Telephone interview with Tu Pease, April 10, 2025

[31] “From Hell to Hollywood: The Incredible Journey of AP Photographer Nick Ut.” Hal Buell. The Associated Press. 2021. https://www.amazon.com/Hell-Hollywood-Incredible-Journey-Photographer/dp/0999035991

[32] "Vietnam War Photos That Made a Difference." The New York Times, Sept. 12, 2013 https://archive.nytimes.com/lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/09/12/vietnam-war-photos-that-made-a-difference/

CSPAN, "Lost Over Laos." Richard Pyle and Horst Faas discuss their book at the Overseas Press Club, New York City, April 1, 2003. At 40 minutes, 14 seconds, Pyle refers to "Nick Ut's picture of the little napalm girl running down the road." https://cdn.jwplayer.com/players/l8TAiw0y-xS4RtpB7.html?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR0v_L6nN8DOhVbWiOKeLNIl6AiXCC_8TSehcjEqLXrRTvT0rtJhN9IWTdI_aem_pmVj_i5NK6_TVAI1A4y9-w

[33] AP conversation with Neal Ulevich, Aug 28, 2024

[34] Telephone interview with Arlett Hieu Salazar, April 10, 2025.

"The silver Pentax around his neck he always had it. He told me 'I wear it because my brother will be with me and protect me when I go to the battle.' I would say 'well, if you think your brother will be there to protect you, if you get hit in battle then pray to him, call his name, and he will help you'... the Pentax, my husband wore it all the time. That's the one I gave to Nick, I gave it to him, not my husband, because my husband used the Pentax a lot and he used it all the time, so I gave it to Nick when my husband passed away."

[35] NBC footage is contained in a French made documentary, "La Petit Fille Au Napalm, Histoire D'Une Photographie"

https://www.france.tv/france-5/la-case-du-siecle/4761958-la-petite-fille-au-napalm-histoire-d-une-photographie.html

This remains viewable in the Catalonia region of Spain: https://www.3cat.cat/3cat/la-nena-del-napalm-historia-duna-fotografia-/video/6260387

More footage from the NBC sequence is viewable in the PBS documentary "The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick." Part 9, "A Disrespectful Loyalty."

[36] Comments section to the article “Have You Ever Seen the Uncropped Version of the Napalm Girl?”

https://www.readingthepictures.org/2013/09/have-you-ever-seen-the-uncropped-version-of-the-napalm-girl/

[37] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1409164590072571

[38] https://groups.google.com/g/vietnam-old-hacks/c/FCFg1ovC65E/m/3fLCDfWIOIsJ

[39] Telephone interview with Ho Ti Hien, April 7, 2025

[40] Written answer to AP’s questions, received Feb. 11, 2025

“I gave away the rest of the negatives. I felt sorry for my Vietnamese colleague who wasn’t there that day. So I gave him the rest of the negatives to use for the Vietnamese newspaper that he worked for. I don’t have any negatives from that camera or any camera from that time period because I left them all behind in Vietnam. If I had them, I would’ve shared them with the investigative team and also I would’ve been willing to share them with you.”

[41] https://groups.google.com/g/vietnam-old-hacks/c/vOJfGOB8kzU/m/VuabCvTUmDIJ?pli=1

[42] Emailed answers to questions, Feb. 15, 2025.

“The film had arrived and was logged in by Jackson after I’d gone to lunch. As I recall, there was film from at least three photographers and whose film was meticulously logged in as normal, duplicate stick-on numbers one on the film and second in the school exercise book. He and Huan had processed all the rolls and Jackson had edited the film and made the prints I’ve just described. There were no photographers present, Nick Ut or stringers.”

[43] Kim Phuc statement, sent to AP Jan. 6, 2025:

“I have refused to participate in this outrageous and false attack on Nick Ut raised by Mr. Robinson over the past years and never responded to his email requesting that I talk with him. I hope he finds peace in his life. I have no memory of those minutes but I would never participate in the Gary Knight film because I know it is false. All eyewitnesses on that horrific day including my uncle, have confirmed through the years that it was Nick Ut who was there, who ran towards me to take the photo and brought me to the closest hospital ...”

[44] https://theviifoundation.org/board/

[45] Interview with Horst Faas conducted by Valerie Komor, May 21, 2007. The Associated Press Corporate Archives.

[46] Interview with Horst Faas, Sept. 29, 1997. The Associated Press Corporate Archives.

"It was a very well-oiled machine. Stringers — as a principle, as a principle, you never refused photos from anyone as long as we were convinced that the pictures aren't phonied, that he is telling us the truth about the circumstances and that the pictures can be trusted. There were some instances where pictures were outdated and we would never buy anything from men like this again, but Saigon at the time was attracting so many foreign photographers that tried their luck to make a bit of money and to live through the adventure that was Vietnam, to get a professional foothold that was possible at that big story, and they came. I always compensated people in some way. When somebody would bring me five rolls of film from an action, I always gave him five rolls of film back. We had the budget to do that, so at least I felt that we appreciated their coming. We always bought more photos than we really needed, and if somebody went through an effort to bring us something and by sheer luck we had similar pictures before — let's say a staffer had been in the same area and we didn't really need it — I still made an effort to buy four, five pictures and depending on the economic circumstances of this person, if I knew he has to pay his hotel bill, we fiddled somehow and used some pictures. I made an effort that everybody — everybody went away happy, was what the — how the AP was treating him, and I think we succeeded on that. Some of these people were as old as fourteen years. There was the son of a photographer we called Vinh Lo. He learned what his father, what his old father was doing, and then he saw what we were doing, and on his little moped he would race to Saigon and bring us demonstration photos and explosions and this man was worth his gold in the Tet Offensive because he knew Saigon, he traveled everywhere — a child, and he would just dump his film — dump his film on our desks, sometimes marvelous film. Sometimes he would stand behind professionals like Eddie Adams. He did that once, and he saw that Eddie stayed around so he rushed to the office, the AP office, showed me the film, and I said, oh, very wonderful pictures today, Vinh Lo. 'I'll buy this, and this, and this.' Half an hour later, Eddie comes in and says, 'Great pictures today,' and I said, 'Sorry, I got it already,' and Eddie, I remember, said, 'Do I have to compete with 12-year-olds?' but this kid simply imitated what Eddie was doing and sold me his photos. Now, I wouldn't tell him to go and get lost because he's 12 years or because we have Eddie on the scene. Try to keep him happy, that's all. It worked."

[47] Gary Knight posting on Threads, March 19, 2025
https://www.threads.com/@gary_knight_vii/postDHYcdRXtarz?xmt=AQGzAfqmapsCPmdzNuu5gQSQvXBBXFmmG8A9MWFoUqTQ7g

[48] Email correspondence to AP dated Sept. 5, 2024

[49] Interview with Nick Ut, April 9, 2025

[50] Interview with Horst Faas conducted by Valerie Komor, May 21, 2007. The Associated Press Corporate Archives. Faas describes how he visited New York after the war and found "thousands and thousands" of photographs had been thrown away as there was no coherent filing system at the time, and there was thought to be no ongoing interest in the war after it ended.

[51] Huynh Cong Phuc was identified to AP by Nick Ut. Both have almost identical names in Vietnamese and were often confused with each other.

[52] https://www.france.tv/france-5/la-case-du-siecle/4761958-la-petite-fille-au-napalm-histoire-d-une-photographie.html

https://www.3cat.cat/3cat/la-nena-del-napalm-historia-duna-fotografia-/video/6260387/

[53] https://reuters.screenocean.com/record/648951

[54] Written answer to AP's questions, received Feb. 11, 2025

"I gave away the rest of the negatives. I felt sorry for my Vietnamese colleague who wasn't there that day. So I gave him the rest of the negatives to use for the Vietnamese newspaper that he worked for. I don't have any negatives from that camera or any camera from that time period because I left them all behind in Vietnam. If I had them, I would've shared them with the investigative team and also I would've been willing to share them with you."

[55] Interview with Christopher Wain, ITN correspondent, July 24, 2024

[56] Interview with David Burnett, Jan. 9, 2025

[57] Emailed statement to AP dated Jan. 9, 2025

[58] https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/forty-years-after-napalm-girl-picture-a-photographer-reflects-on-the-moment-that-might-have-been-his/2012/06/13/gJQAfoToeV_story.html

[59] Hoang Van Danh: “That’s me. After I take a picture, I rolled my camera out, take the film out and I send back to Saigon for UPI. I change a new roll film so I can take pictures more.”

In “From Hell to Hollywood” documentary, 2021, Gravitas Ventures.

[60] https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/vietnamese-children-flee-from-their-homes-in-the-south-news-photo/517292620

[61] https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/video/south-vietnamese-planes-drop-napalm-on-south-vietnamese-news-footage/804941208

[62] Telephone interview with Arlett Hieu Salazar, April 10, 2025

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