



**MARIO MEETS MINIONS.** Japanese video-game company Nintendo Co. says a movie starring the plumber in the Super Mario franchise (pictured) is in the works. The movie, two years in the making, will be distributed globally. (AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama, File)

## Mario and Minions? Illumination to co-produce Nintendo film

By Yuri Kageyama  
The Associated Press

**T**OKYO — Mario is getting together with the Minions.

Japanese video-game company Nintendo Co. says a movie starring the plumber in the Super Mario franchise is in the works, co-produced with Chris Meledandri, the chief executive of Illumination Entertainment, the U.S. animation studio behind the popular *Despicable Me* series.

Nintendo's star game designer Shigeru Miyamoto told reporters the script is mostly finished. He's promising a "fun" movie, since Meledandri shares his thinking on creative projects.

The movie, two years in the making after a meeting between Meledandri and Miyamoto, is set for global distribution through Universal, which co-owns Illumination, according to the Kyoto-based maker of Pokémon games and the popular Switch machine. They did not give other details, including the release date.

Miyamoto said some people mistakenly think that making games is similar to making movies.

"Creating in an interactive medium is totally different from doing that in a passive medium," he said, saying he'd wanted to make such a film for years.

Meledandri and he hit it right off: "We want to make something great," he said.

Nintendo reported an October-December profit of 83.66 billion yen (\$768 million), up 29 percent from the previous fiscal third quarter.

Quarterly sales ballooned to nearly 483 billion yen, up from 174 billion yen the previous year, on the success of its Switch, a hybrid game machine that can be played both as a home console as well as a handheld.

Nintendo now expects to sell 15 million Switch consoles in this fiscal year, which ends in March. That's up from its initial projection to sell 10 million Switch machines, which was raised last year to 14 million.

Nintendo brought the world the FamiCom game machine in the 1980s and has had its up and downs as people's entertainment tastes changed.

In recent years, Nintendo did an about-face to its past policy of shunning smartphone games, and has scored success in that sector as well. It has brought back a revamped version of the FamiCom, which proved so popular it will go on sale again later this year.

Nintendo executives also expressed hopes for its upcoming Nintendo Labo, whose trailer shows the Switch being played with cardboard concoctions, resembling a piano, fishing rod, robot, and other items.

Nintendo Labo, set to go on sale April 20, is based on the idea that the Switch, which is a controller packed with sensors, can be used with different attachments for many kinds of play. Executives joked that they initially thought cardboard would be cheap, but it turned out to be more expensive than they thought.

# Vietnam veterans recall all-female Tet Offensive squad

By Hau Dinh  
The Associated Press

**H**UE, Vietnam — As a 19-year-old scout and spy for the communist forces in South Vietnam, Hoang Thi No remembers the determination and spirit of her 11-member team of young women who took part in the audacious Tet Offensive that turned the tide of the Vietnam War 50 years ago.

"If we didn't fight the enemy, they would destroy us all," she said. "We were young and weren't afraid. ... Once we had a strong ideology, we could do anything."

Her unit was known as the Perfume River Squad for the river that runs through Hue, Vietnam's cultural capital and third biggest city. Four of them died in the fighting that raged through the city for most of that February; two died later in the war.

They were part of a mobilization of as many as 80,000 fighters — regular soldiers from Communist North Vietnam, guerrillas of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, known as Viet Cong, and village militia — who launched virtually simultaneous surprise attacks on more than 100 cities, towns, and U.S. military bases in South Vietnam during the early morning hours of January 31, 1968.

Official U.S. statistics for a month of fighting put the death toll at more than 58,000 enemy combatants, 3,995 American soldiers, and 4,954 allied South Vietnamese troops plus 14,300 civilians.

"Psychologically, the war turned against the Americans at that point," said Alan Dawson, at the time a 26-year-old U.S. Army journalist in South Vietnam. "That attack in the Tet Offensive was really the moment that the final outcome of the war was decided to the communist advantage."

After an initial period of chaos, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces rallied to overwhelm the communist attackers, largely through the use of superior firepower.

Had the offensive been nipped in the bud everywhere, it might have been more clearly recognized as a major military defeat for the communists. But the tenacious Vietnamese guerrillas in Hue held out for about a month, helped by the work of the Perfume River Squad.



**FEMALE FORCE.** Veteran spy Hoang Thi No holds up a photo of the all-female Perfume River Squad, in Hue, Vietnam. January 31, 2018 commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Tet Offensive, a tactical setback for northern Vietnamese troops, but a strategic turning point of the Vietnam War. (AP Photo/Hau Dinh)

"Our duties were to enter the city to get information of movements and important locations of the enemy," No said. "We also mobilized local people to support the revolutionary forces by stocking up food and digging secret trenches and tunnels, getting ready for the fight. When the offensive started, we guided our major forces to various top important locations to fight the U.S. Army in Hue city."

No joined her comrades in Hue in marking the anniversary of the offensive with speeches and patriotic songs.

No suffers from a thyroid condition that doctors attribute to contact with Agent Orange, the herbicide that U.S. warplanes sprayed over large parts of Vietnam to try to deprive the communist forces of jungle cover.

The veterans, mostly in their 70s and 80s and some wearing their combat medals, looked happy just to get together, chatting in the hallways before the formalities, laughing as they shared wartime stories and posed for group photos taken with their smartphones. The hall where they were meeting was about a half a mile from Hue's famous Citadel, the scene of the fiercest fighting, whose walls are still pockmarked with bullet holes among the moss.

Communist military planners of the Tet Offensive had hoped their attacks would incite a popular uprising to upset the balance in what had become a very costly and increasingly conventional war since the escalation of the U.S. military presence in 1965.

They also believed that a show of strength would weaken American

political will, which they were well aware was wilting under pressure from anti-war sentiment back home.

Seeking to maximize psychological impact, they targeted high-profile targets in Saigon, the South Vietnamese capital now called Ho Chi Minh City. They included the Presidential Palace, Tan Son Nhut air base, and most dramatically the U.S. Embassy, where sappers penetrated the outer perimeter but were shot down before they could get to the main building.

Dawson said the Americans and South Vietnamese knew an attack was coming, but didn't understand the scope of it. "The Viet Cong, for example, smuggled weapons into Saigon by the thousands; rifles, grenades, that kind of thing, including even in mock funerals they had, and they got the weapons in coffins into Saigon."

U.S. Marines spearheaded an allied effort to clear the communists in bitter house-to-house fighting in which neither side paid much heed to the safety of civilians. Dramatic footage of the harrowing fighting dominated U.S. television coverage, with devastating political effect. In March, embattled U.S. President Lyndon Johnson announced he would not run for another term and put limitations on bombing as a prelude to peace talks.

The fighting dragged on for seven more years, fuelling U.S. street protests and convulsing American politics, before the North prevailed and the last Americans evacuated in 1975.

## China lashes out at Taiwan over cancellation of flights

**BEIJING (AP)** — China is again heating up the rhetoric against rival Taiwan, with a spokesman saying that Taiwan's cancellation of added flights during the Lunar New Year holiday "hurt the feelings of people on both sides."

Spokesman for the Chinese cabinet's Taiwan Affairs Office, Ma Xiaoguang, said the move to cancel 176 flights over the holiday beginning February 16 is creating inconveniences and is "foolish and unpopular."

"The irrational action by the Taiwan authorities creates inconvenience for tens of thousands of travellers and difficulties to a great many families on both sides during the Lunar New Year," Ma said at a bi-weekly news conference.

"It has hurt the feelings of people on both sides, for which the Taiwan-

ese authorities bear the full responsibility," Ma said.

Taiwan complains it was not properly consulted about the opening of route M503 and that it poses a danger to planes landing on and taking off from islands near the Chinese coast controlled by Taiwan. The move announced by Beijing on January 4 also takes aircraft near a Taiwanese military zone.

Taiwan announced in response that China Eastern Airlines and Xiamen Airlines will not be allowed to add flights during the holiday, the most important time of the year for family gatherings in Taiwan, China, and other parts of Asia.

China and Taiwan divided amid civil war in 1949 and Beijing threatens to use force to take control of the self-governing island republic. It has

been increasing economic and diplomatic pressure on the island since the inauguration of independence-leaning President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016.

Tsai has refused to endorse Beijing's contention that Taiwan is part of a single Chinese nation that must eventually be unified. China's ruling Communist Party, which wields the world's largest standing military, has refused to rule out the use of force to achieve that goal.

China sent bombers and fighter planes to fly around Taiwan twice in December and in January sent its sole operating aircraft carrier through the 100-mile-wide Taiwan Strait with its battle group.

The Chinese planes flew near South Korean and Japanese air space, prompting Japan to dispatch fighter planes to intercept them.

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