

TO TEACH A NATION



UNIT I: GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND CULTURE OF VIETNAM

UNIT THEME: Identification of the physical features, customs and past events that shape Vietnam.

QUESTIONS:

1. How does geography influence the lifestyles of the Vietnamese people?
2. How has the history of Vietnam been one of continuous turmoil?
3. What are the major characteristics of Vietnam diverse culture?

UNIT GOALS:

1. To identify the physical features, turbulent history and diverse culture of Vietnam.
2. To recognize the geography of Vietnam has influenced its history and culture.
3. To realize that the varied customs of Vietnam has molded its culture and world view.

OUTLINE:

- A. Geography of Vietnam
 1. Coastal Region
 2. Mountain Highlands
 3. Delta Region
- B. History
 1. Chinese Influence
 2. French Influence
 3. Japanese Influence
 4. United States Influence
- C. Culture
 1. Religion (Buddhist, Catholic)
 2. Political Systems
 3. Economic System
 4. Ethnic Groups

UNIT II: UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY: CONTAINMENT

UNIT THEME: United States policy of containment led to increased involvement in Southeast Asia.

QUESTIONS:

1. How did the Cold War shape U.S. foreign policy?
2. What is the policy of containment?
3. What is the domino theory?

UNIT GOALS:

1. To understand how the Cold War led to U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia.
2. To explain the domino theory.
3. To explain the containment philosophy.

OUTLINE:

- A. Cold War
 1. U.S. Position
 2. USSR Position
 3. China Position
 4. McCarthyism
- B. American Response to Spread of Communism
 1. S.E.A.T.O.
 2. N.A.T.O.
 3. A.N.Z.U.S.
 4. Truman Doctrine
 5. Eisenhower Doctrine
 6. Domino Theory

UNIT III: AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT: THE EARLY YEARS

UNIT THEME: The role of United States changes from one of an advisor to the South Vietnamese to one of major participant in the management of the war.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the significance of Dien Bien Phu?
2. Why were the Geneva Accords so ineffective?
3. Why did the U.S. strategy change?

UNIT GOALS:

1. To analyze the results of Dien Bien Phu.
2. To investigate the ineffectiveness of the Geneva Accords.
3. To analyze the breakdown of the Diem Regime.

OUTLINE:

- A. Dien Bien Phu
 1. Frances Downfall
 2. U.S. Involvement
 3. Legacy of Dien Bien Phu
- B. Geneva Accords
 1. Nation Divided (17°)
 2. Peaceful Settlement
 3. Proposed Elections
- C. U.S. Strategy
 1. Support of Diem Government
 2. Increased Role of Advisor/Participant

UNIT IV: AMERICA TAKES CHARGE

UNIT THEME: The United States military presence in Vietnam escalates dramatically from 1964 - 1968.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the significance of the Gulf of Tonkin Incident?
2. How did President Johnson and General Westmoreland justify the escalation of U.S. troops in Vietnam?
3. What was the American public's reaction to increased troop involvement in Vietnam?

UNIT GOALS:

1. To investigate the Gulf of Tonkin Incident.
2. To assess the rationale of troop build up.
3. To understand public support of escalation of the war effort.

OUTLINE:

- A. Gulf of Tonkin
 1. Alleged Attack
 2. LBJ's Request for Congressional Action
 3. Resolution
- B. Troop Escalation
 1. Deployment of Combat Forces and Military Support
 2. The Draft
- C. Public Reaction
 1. Blanket Approval?
 2. Taking Sides

UNIT V: WHO FOUGHT FOR THE UNITED STATES?

UNIT THEME: The Vietnam soldier was a cross section of American society.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who served in Vietnam?
2. Who was deferred?

UNIT GOALS:

1. To recognize the social, economic and ethnic makeup of U.S. forces in Vietnam.
2. To examine the Selective Service System.

OUTLINE:

- A. Who served?
 1. Ethnic
 2. Social
 3. Age
 4. Sex
- B. The Deferment
 1. Classifications
 2. Exceptions, Exemptions

UNIT VI: HOW THE WAR WAS FOUGHT

UNIT THEME: A variety of strategies were implemented throughout the war.

QUESTIONS:

1. How was the air war conducted?
2. Who were the Viet Cong?
3. How did the U.S. soldier adapt and respond to guerilla warfare?
4. What role did the South Vietnamese play?
5. How was this a limited war?

UNIT GOALS:

1. To assess the air war -- its purposes and strategies.
2. To understand the role of the Viet Cong.
3. To explain the tactics of guerilla warfare.
4. To evaluate the pacification program.
5. To understand the rationale behind limited warfare.

OUTLINE:

- A. Air Warfare
 - 1. Bombing Objectives
 - 2. Role of Helicopters
- B. Viet Cong
 - 1. Origin and Structure
 - 2. Objectives and Strategies
- C. Guerilla Warfare
 - 1. Search and Destroy Philosophy
 - 2. Booby Traps
 - 3. Tunnel Warfare
 - 4. Role of Women and Children
- D. South Vietnamese Impact
 - 1. Hearts and Minds Program
 - 2. Pacification
- E. Limited Warfare
 - 1. Geographical Limitations
 - 2. Combat Limitations

UNIT VII: THE WAR AT HOME

UNIT THEME: The Vietnam war divided America.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was the Vietnam war so controversial?
2. What was the antiwar movement?
3. What role did the "silent majority" play?

UNIT GOALS:

1. To analyze the purpose of our involvement.
2. To identify antiwar groups.
3. To examine antiwar sentiment.
4. To recognize the role of "silent majority."

OUTLINE:

- A. Controversial War
 1. Hawk vs. Dove
 2. Morality of the War
 3. Legality of the War
- B. Antiwar Movement
 1. Draft Resisters
 2. Student Protesters
- C. Silent Majority
 1. Definition
 2. Impact

UNIT VIII: HOW THE WAR WAS REPORTED

UNIT THEME: The media brought the Vietnam war into our homes on a daily basis.

QUESTIONS:

1. How was the war reported?
2. How was public opinion influenced by television reporting?
3. How did reporting of the war change as the war progressed?

UNIT GOALS:

1. To describe the methods of war reporting.
2. To examine how the public became informed about Vietnam.
3. To trace the growing independence of the media.

OUTLINE:

- A. How War Was Reported
 1. Active Field Correspondents
 2. Satellite Coverage
 3. Lack of Censorship
- B. Public Opinion - Changes
 1. My Lai Incident
 2. Tet Offensive
 3. Returning Veterans
- C. Growing Independence of Media
 1. Less Government Control
 2. Public Opinion Effected

UNIT IX: VIETNAMIZATION OF THE WAR

UNIT THEME: The United States policy of Vietnamization is implemented.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Vietnamization become our policy of choice?
2. How was it put into effect?
3. Was it effective?

UNIT GOALS:

1. To explain how and why the U.S. reduced its military presence in Vietnam.
2. To describe the methods by which the war was transferred to the South Vietnamese.
3. To evaluate the Vietnamization Policy.

OUTLINE:

- A. Vietnamization
 1. Definition
 2. Rationale
- B. Implementation
 1. U.S. Troop Transfer/A.R.V.N. Replacement
 2. Munitions Transfer
- C. Effectiveness
 1. Deescalation
 2. False Promise?

UNIT X: THE WOUNDS OF WAR AND THE HEALING PROCESS

UNIT THEME: The Vietnam war left open wounds and unanswered questions for generations to come.

QUESTIONS:

1. What problems did the Vietnam war create for the veterans and their families?
2. What was the state of the After Care Program?
3. How did the way a Vietnam War Memorial attempt to heal a nation?

UNIT GOALS:

1. To compare the reception of the Vietnam veteran to that of veterans of previous war.
2. To describe the After Care Program.
3. To explain the impact of Vietnam War Memorial.

OUTLINE:

- A. Coming Home Reception
 - 1. Transition Process
 - 2. Reception
- B. After Care Program
 - 1. PTSD
 - 2. Agent Orange Controversy
 - 3. GI Bill
- C. Vietnam War Memorial
 - 1. The History
 - 2. National Impact (1982 - ?)

UNIT XI: LEGACY OF THE VIETNAM WAR

UNIT THEME: America continues to struggle with the meaning and significance of the Vietnam experience.

QUESTIONS:

1. How has American foreign policy been influenced by the Vietnam experience?
2. How did post-Vietnam attitudes affect domestic politics?
3. Why is the Vietnam war so controversial?

UNIT GOALS:

1. To examine post war foreign policy in light of the lessons of Vietnam.
2. To analyze why American political attitudes changed.
3. To examine the ongoing controversies concerning Vietnam.

OUTLINE:

- A. American Foreign Policy
 1. War Powers Act
 2. Recognition of the Importance of Public Support
 3. Establish Clear Objectives
- B. Domestic Politics in the U.S. After Vietnam
 1. Increased Skepticism of Authority
 2. Declining Participation in the Political Process
- C. Controversy
 1. Winners and Losers
 2. POW/MIA Issue
 3. Patriotism Examined
 4. Southeast Asian Refugee and Immigration Issue

UNIT XII: THE BRIDGE BACK

UNIT THEME: America and Vietnam normalize relations.

QUESTIONS:

1. What were the major impediments to normalized relations with Vietnam?
2. How has Vietnam changed since 1975?

UNIT GOALS:

1. To resolve the POW/MIA issue.
2. To recognize that the cold war was an impediment to normalization.
3. To describe the economic changes in post war Vietnam.

OUTLINE:

- A. POW/MIA Issue
 1. Search for the Truth
 2. Controversy Continues
- B. Cold War
 1. Communist Infiltration in Vietnam
 2. Ideological Differences
- C. Post War Vietnam
 1. Economic Flexibility (1986 - present)
 2. Foreign Investment

SUGGESTED READING LIST

1. "Five Years to Freedom" by Nick Rowe
2. "Flashbacks" by Morley Safer
3. "This Must Be My Brother" by Leann Thieman and Carol Dey
4. "My Father, My Son" by Elmo Zumwalt
5. "Fortunate Son" by Lewis Puller
6. "Lessons of the Vietnam War" by Jerold M. Starr
7. "The Best and The Brightest" by David Halberstam
8. "When Heaven and Earth Changed Places" by Lely Hayslip
9. "My Lai 4" by Seymour Hersh
10. "Vietnam: A History" by Stanley Karnow
11. "In Retrospect" by Robert MacNamara

SUGGESTED VIDEO

1. Vietnam: Chronicle of a War (page 11)
2. Vietnam: The 10,000 Day War (page 11)
3. To Heal A Nation (Story of the Wall)
4. Letters to America
5. How to Teach Vietnam (in your school packet)

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

JAMES D PENTLAND

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SP4 JAMES D PENTLAND

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James Douglas Pentland Specialist Four

PERSONAL DATA

Home of Record: Pittsburgh, PA
Date of birth: 06/01/1942

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MILITARY DATA

Service: Army of the United States
Grade at loss: E4
Rank: Specialist Four
ID No: 52853063
MOS: 11H20: Infantry Direct Fire Crewman
Length Service: 01
Unit: E CO, 3RD BN, 60TH INFANTRY, 9TH INF DIV, USARV

CASUALTY DATA

Start Tour: 02/05/1968
Incident Date: 02/19/1968
Casualty Date: 02/19/1968
Age at Loss: 25
Location: Phong Dinh Province, South Vietnam
Remains: Body recovered
Casualty Type: Hostile, died outright
Casualty Reason: Ground casualty
Casualty Detail: Gun or small arms fire

URL: www.VirtualWall.org/dp/PentlandJD01a.htm

ON THE WALL Panel 40E Line 028

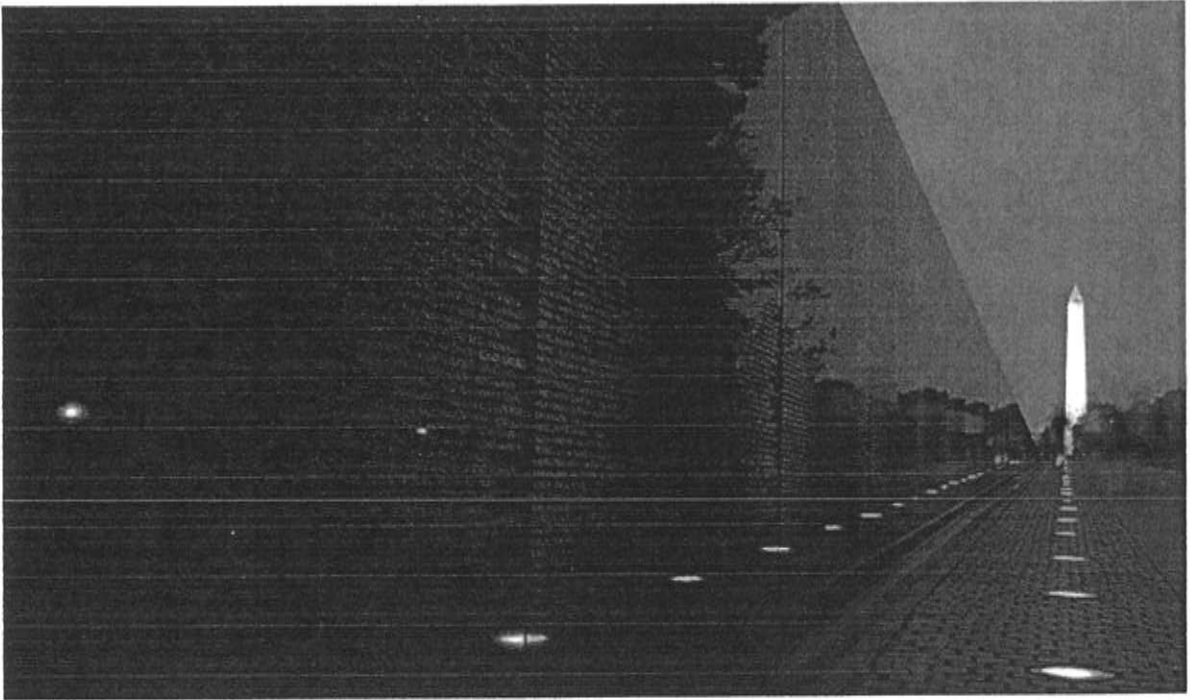
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Why Vietnam Vets Are America's Greatest Heroes

By Raymond Bechard



Raymond Bechard pays tribute to the men who hardly received any while they fought for our country.

Lately, I've been watching the much-deserved reception of American soldiers returning home from war. I was a media embed in Iraq a few years ago. In Baghdad and surrounding areas I saw up close the dedication, professionalism, and difficulties faced by everyone serving in hostile environments. It was inspiring to see people half my age taking on enormous responsibilities and making lonely sacrifices so far from home and for such long periods of time. They have a courage I'll never know. There is no way we can thank them enough.

But I'm old enough to remember when soldiers came home from Vietnam. I remember how they and their experiences were shunned and ignored. Like cowards, we loaded our shame unjustifiably onto them. Then we tried to put them and our defeat behind us, or more accurately, beneath us. We didn't thank them. Didn't welcome them. Didn't heal them. And certainly, we didn't understand them. We never tried.

The lack of respect and gratitude we gave our returning Vietnam Vets 40 years ago seems even more deplorable when compared to how deeply we embrace those returning from Iraq, Afghanistan, and all other places of military service around the world today.

Were they heroes? Yes. Did they sacrifice their lives for others? Yes – over 58,000 of them.* Did they serve with honor, bravery, and courage under impossible circumstances? Yes. Did war change, even destroy, their lives, their families, their careers, and their dreams back home? Absolutely. And all this can be said of our soldiers for the past 236 years.

But Vietnam Vets are a different kind of hero than the rest. In many ways they are heroes above the rest.



Here's why. In 1910 a very soft spoken woman named Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born in Skopje, today the capital of the Republic of Macedonia. From the beginning it looked like Agnes was going to have a very mediocre life. Then she decided to become a Roman Catholic nun. That's when her life got much more interesting – and complex.

From the moment Agnes decided to dedicate herself to God, she faced a very serious problem, one she would hide from the world for the rest of her life. This note, which she wrote to a friend many years ago – and revealed only after she died – illustrates the terrible dilemma Agnes faced. “I call, I cling, I want – and there is no One to answer – no One on Whom I can cling – no, No One. Alone. Where is my Faith? Even deep down right in there is nothing, but emptiness and darkness. My God. How painful is this unknown pain. I have no Faith. I dare not utter the words and thoughts that crowd in my heart and make me suffer untold agony. I am told God loves me, and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul.”

This poor little nun had lost her faith in God. And from her letters we know she questioned the very existence of God for over 50 years, until her death in 1997.

Did her lack of faith in the God to whom she had devoted her eternal soul kill her dedication to her duty as a nun? Nope. In fact, at the time of her death the order of nuns she built had over 4,000 sisters, an associated brotherhood of 300 priests, and over 100,000 lay volunteers, operating 610 missions in 123 countries. These included hospices and homes for people with HIV/AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis, soup kitchens, children's and family counseling programs, orphanages, and schools.

Yet, along with having won the Nobel Peace Prize, Agnes – known to the world as Mother Teresa – didn't believe in God.**

And that's why she is one of my greatest heroes. Not because of her religious devotion, or her work, or the countless lives she saved. No. It's because even though her faith in God faded away, she did the work anyway. She put herself aside and did the job that had to be done – no matter what hardships she was facing. She did it anyway.

And for the same reason, Vietnam Vets are our greatest heroes. They were thrown into the worst shit imaginable then they got shit thrown on them when they came home. But, they did it anyway.

The Vietnam War was a mess. It was initiated by and fought for reasons only the most cynical Washington politicians could understand or justify. It divided America unlike any issue since the Civil War. It destroyed at least one generation's faith in the worthiness of our government. It not only left permanent scars on our nation, but especially on those who rotted away in the jungles. No one really wanted them there in the first place; poor leadership let the entire conflict get completely out of control. Then, no one could figure out how to bring them home without losing our precious global standing which, by that point, had been lost. It was a filthy proxy war with Russia that could never have ended in anything but tragedy, loss, and humiliation.

Yet, despite all the wretched inevitability and with everything telling them not to go, those young men went and fought. Unlike all our other wars, the American men who sacrificed themselves in Vietnam carried the added burden of fighting and dying in war without faith. Our national heart was not in it. We didn't believe in the fight. We were never willing to win, only to throw young, expendable bodies at an enemy who eluded us.

It is not difficult to imagine one of those lost soldiers, waiting through the night and rain in some far off swamp, uttering the same words as Mother Teresa, “there is no One to answer – no One on Whom I can cling – no, No One. Alone. Even deep down right in there is nothing, but emptiness and darkness.”

Yet, he waited there anyway. He desperately held onto his gun while his friends back home called him a baby killer. He went on endless patrols while Americans protested in anger against him. He got trench foot and diarrhea while his classmates got degrees. He looked into the dying eyes of his buddy while his high school sweetheart avoided the eyes of the next nameless guy she was banging.

The Vietnam Veteran is our greatest hero because he fought two enemies: the North Vietnamese and us.



Even though we blamed him for something that was our fault, like Agnes, he carried on because of something greater; some need to help where and when no one else was willing to. He served because he was noble. He sacrificed because of the friends next to him in the trenches. He did his duty because his nation – a nation he so badly wanted to believe in – told him to.

And just like that little nun, he struggled every day to wade past all the obstacles and do the right thing. In the face of disease, death, and defeat, he somehow put aside the petty selfishness of the world – along with his own doubts – and fought the good fight.

* For a list of fascinating list of statistics on Vietnam, go to: <http://www.mrfa.org/vnstats.htm>

While everyone is entitled to his own opinions about the Vietnam War, not everyone is entitled to his own facts.

Thirty years ago this summer, major changes were taking place in the Vietnam War. On May 3, 1968, President Lyndon Johnson announced that the United States and North Vietnam had agreed to begin formal peace talks in Paris. If the troops had any lingering illusions that we were there to win the war, that announcement dispelled them. Instead of victory, the task became survival—to hang on and not get killed as America began to gradually disengage from the war.

Marking that sea change, on July 1, 1968, General Creighton Abrams assumed command of MACV as General William Westmoreland, the man who, more than anyone else, symbolized the war for many Americans in and out of uniform, left Vietnam for Washington to become Army chief of staff. Although many still blame General Westmoreland for the failure in Vietnam, the truth is that he had won his war. By the time he left Vietnam, the guerrilla war he had come to fight in 1964 was over, for the VC guerrillas had destroyed themselves in their abortive Tet 1968 uprising.

The remainder of the war, which dragged on for another seven years, was primarily a North Vietnamese regular army affair. By the Easter Offensive of 1972, NVA regulars accounted for about 90 percent of day-to-day combat. As the late William Colby, a former CIA director, observed, "The ultimate irony was that the people's war launched in 1959 had been defeated, but the soldier's war, which the United States had insisted on fighting during the 1960s with massive military forces, was finally won by the enemy."

With the passage of three decades and the attendant period of reflection and assessment, the good news is that the Vietnam War is finally getting the recognition it deserves. "Vietnam is resurfacing as a hot topic on campus," read the headline in the November 2, 1997, *New York Times*. "An unpopular war is now popular to study," the article said. The number of college faculty members teaching history courses on the Vietnam War grew from 157 in 1986 to 351 today. At Harvard University, the second most popular history course is "America and Vietnam." An increasing number of graduate students are studying the war, too, as "new research materials are becoming available domestically and abroad."

The bad news is that the academic ivory tower syndrome is alive and well. "Studying the political and social effect of the conflict is 'more easily done by people who weren't there and weren't involved,'" said one doctoral candidate. Only in academia could the notion flourish that ignorance is bliss.

What that can lead to is the same kind of distortion seen at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington when a group of academics tried to turn an exhibit of *Enola Gay*, the bomber that dropped the atomic bomb that ended the war with Japan, into an anti-war and anti-American diatribe. Only the active intervention of World War II veterans prevented that atrocity from taking place.

The same thing almost happened in New Jersey last December with the planned Vietnam Era Educational Center in Holmdel. Again, a group of academics who "weren't there" were responsible for writing a scenario that, while ostensibly honoring Vietnam veterans, was instead veiled praise for the anti-war movement. As one veteran told the local newspaper: "It paints an unattractive picture. It magnifies the anomaly and minimizes the regular practice of American GIs."

"Don't put the warrior down in an unhappy war," said another. "The veteran is painted in a negative image and that's not right." Yet another noted that the "problems could have been avoided if more veterans were involved from the beginning." Instead, he pointed out, "history is being rewritten by the historians. It has no basis in reality." With schoolchildren as the exhibit's primary target, "Vietnam veterans...want to be certain that the hardships and sacrifices of soldiers who fought the war are not overshadowed by accounts of the dissension at home and reports of atrocities committed by U.S. troops."

The New Jersey example is a wake-up call for Vietnam veterans. While they should respect other opinions on the war, they should not tolerate distortion of the facts. As former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger once said, "While everyone is entitled to his own set of opinions, not everyone is entitled to his own set of facts."

Those of us who were there owe it to the schoolchildren of tomorrow, as well as to our fallen comrades, to tell the truth about Vietnam.

H.G.S.

Vietnam Veteran's Military Lingo

**Every War develops its own language; here are a few from Vietnam
some have made it to today's language**

GRUNT.....Ground pounder or infantry

BROWN NOSER.....Person who sucks up to superior officers

CRUD.....Skin fungal infection or jungle rot

TDY.....Temporary duty

DEAP SIX.....To get rid of

FUBAR.....F@#d up beyond repair

FIGMO....F@#k it I got my orders

NUMBER 10.....Bad

NUMBER 10,000.....Really Bad

DINKY DAU.....Crazy

BEAUCOUP.....A lot or many

BEAUCOUP DINKY DAU....Very crazy

C's.....C Rations, box of pre-packed can meals with toilet paper, cigarettes, and other items, mostly left over from WWII and Korea

MOTHER F@#KERS...C Rations-Ham and Lima Beans

SINLOI.....Sorry about that

REMF.....Rear Echelon Mother F@#kers, soldiers at base camps

SHORTIMER.....Also SHORT, a soldier getting close to leaving Vietnam for home

SHORTTIME.....Brief meeting with a prostitute

2 DIGIT MIDGET.....One who has less than 100 days left in country

IN-COUNTRY.....Vietnam

BOOTS ON THE GROUND.....Soldiers who served in Vietnam, some soldiers are considered Vietnam Veterans even though they never actually served in the country on the ground.

DILLIGAF.....Does it look like I give a f@#k

DOWN RANGE.....Any forward-deployed area

BOONIES.....Area not in base camps or cities, usually jungle areas

HOOTCH....Living Quarters

FM.....F@#king Magic-The mysterious way equipment that was broken suddenly begins to work

JODY.....That guy back home that was sleeping with your girl friend while you were gone

THE WORLD.....Home, the US

SCUTTLE BUTT....Rumor

BUTTER BAR....Army Second lieutenant also called Brown Bar

RING KNOCKER....A military academy graduate

MUD MARINE....A ground marine

PINEAPPLE.....Hand grenade

SKATE....Person that gets out of work

BOHICA.....Bend over, here it comes again

DUST OFF.....Huey helicopter medevac

HIGH AND TIGHT.....Fresh hair cut

IN THE BUSH.....On patrol off the base camp in enemy country

HUMP....Hiking long distances

ON YOUR SIX.....On your rear end

90 DAY WONDER.....2nd Lt graduated from Officers Training School

A DEUCE AND A HALF.....A two and a half ton truck

APC....Army personnel carrier, box looking track vehicle used for transportation

FILE 13.....An imaginary file that really means the trash can

OUT IN THE BOONDOCKS.....Out in the field

BRASS....Officers

COMM OR COMMO.....Communication

PRIC 25.....A mobile radio used in the field

FOD.....Flight operations for –Foreign Object Damage

MUSTANG.....A Navy officer who came up through the ranks

CHARLIE, CHUCK, SIR CHARLES.....Vietnamese communist soldier, usually a gorilla type fighter

NVA.....A regular uniformed and trained soldier, part of the North Vietnamese Army

DINK OR GOOK.....A North Vietnamese Soldier

GREASE GUN.....A 45 Cal Sub-machine gun

KABAR.....A fighting knife

MIDNIGHT REQUISTION.....A way to get supplies by un-authorized means

AO.....Area of Operation

UN-ASS THE AO.....Get out of the current location

6 P.....Prior planning prevents piss poor performance

GRAB ASS.....Soldiers messing around or screwing around

HALO.....High altitude low opening parachute jump

FRAG OR FRAGGING.....Killing or injuring a superior officer or enlisted person by use of a fragmentation grenade by ones own soldiers.

SQUID.....Navy Personnel

CIRCLE JERK TO THE RIGHT/LEFT.....Organized confusion

EIGHTY-SIX.....Get rid of

FNG....F@#king new guy

FTA.....F@#k the Army

AWOL.....Absent without leave

GOOD ENOUGH FOR GOVERNMENT WORK.....When a task is completed close to standard

BOUGHT THE FARM.....Got killed

DI DI MAU.....Vietnamese for go and go fast

PUFF THE MAGIC DRAGON.....The Douglas AC-47 Spooky gunship out fitted with numerous Gatling guns

FREEDOM BIRD.....The airplane that took soldiers home from Vietnam

KISS.....Keep it simple stupid

LIFER.....Anyone who has re-enlisted in the military

SNAFU.....Situation normal all f@#ked up

BFD.....Big F@#king deal

RE-UP.....Re-enlist

TOP.....Army or marine first sergeant

SH#T CAN, FILE 13, DEEP SIX, ROUND FILE.....Trash can or throw away

CIVY'S.....Civilian clothing

ZERO DARK THIRTY.....Very early in the morning

FULL BIRD.....Full Colonel in the Army, Marines and Air force

BAHOOV.....It would be wise for you to complete or do it

NONCOM.....Non-commissioned officer

SOP.....Standard operating procedure

FATIGUES.....Field or duty uniform

CLUSTER F@#K.....Mass confusion

SQUARED AWAY.....All in order or taken care of

DOC.....Name used for any enlisted medic or corpsman

P-38.....Small can opener for opening c'rations

5 WILL GET YOU 10.....Asking for a loan until payday

MPC.....Military payment certificates, used as military money

PIASTERS AND DONG.....Vietnamese form of money

HONCHO.....The one in charge

HUA.....Heard, understood and acknowledged

SOS.....Sh#t on a shingle, aka chipped beef gravy on toast

KP.....Kitchen Police, when a soldier serves kitchen duty

5 O'CLOCK FOLLIES.....Military briefing of news media held in Saigon

DOG AND PONY SHOW.....Doing something for the brass or the public

DOG TAGS...Two metal clips usually worn on a chain around the neck. Has name serial number, blood type and religion

BEETLE NUT.....A mild narcotic chewed by Vietnamese, causes severe staining of teeth and mouth and gums to recede

SAIGON TEA.....What the bar girls drank while entertaining and getting the GI's to drink beer

SAME SAME.....Same as

S & R.....Search and Rescue

SHAKE'N BAKE.....An officer straight out of Officer Candidate School

SH#T.....A catch all multipurpose term, i.e., A firefight was 'In the Sh#t', a bad situation was 'Deep Sh#t' to be well prepared and alert is to have your 'Sh#t wired and tight'

BUG JUICE.....Insect repellent

GOOK....Derogatory term for Vietnamese

PUNJI STAKE....Sharpened bamboo stick booby trap smeared with excrement

364 N' WAKE UP.....Count down of the number of days until you go home

AK 47.....AK or Kalashnikov, rifle used by communist. Names after its Russian inventor

ALPHA BRAVO.....Ambush

BIC (BIET).....Vietnamese for I understand

AMF....Adios Mother F@#ker

ARVN.....Army of the Republic of Vietnam (South)

BOOM BOOM....."Short time" with a prostitute

CHERRY.....A new troop replacement

ASH & TRASH.....Way to differentiate between hauling people and supplies

DEEP SH#T.....The worst possible position

DEROS.....Date eligible for return home to USA

BA-MA-BA.....Term for “33” Vietnamese Beer (Tiger Piss)

DUNG LAI.....Vietnamese for Stop or Halt

ETS.....Date for departure from Vietnam

MAD MINUTE.....Concentrated fire of all weapons for a brief period of time at maximum rate

MAMA SAN.....Mature Vietnam woman

PAPA SAN.... Mature Vietnam man

BABY SAN..... Vietnamese children of either sex

MOS.....Military Occupational Specialty – job title

NUOC MAM.....Fermented fish sauce with very strong odor

PUCKER FACTOR.....Assessment of fear factor

**SHORT TIMERS CALENDER....Calendar usually outline of naked girl that was filled in each day,
usually with 2 months to go, to keep up with days to going home**

CLUSTER_F@#K.....Disorganized

BOONDOGGLE.....Any military operation that hasn't been completely thought out

BUMMER.....Bad luck, a real drag

DIDDLY BOPPING.....Walking Carelessly

CLUSTER F@#K....Disorganized

TEE TEE....Very small

WASTED.....Killed

WP or WILLY PETER....White phosphorus

**ARC LIGHT....Code name for B52 bomber strikes along the Cambodian-Vietnam border. They
shook the ground 10 miles from the target**

**SH#T BURNER or Honey Dipper.....Soldier assigned to Latrine duty (toilet). Every day, barrels
that been cut in half (used to catch the excrement) had to be
pulled out of the latrines, and the contents burned**

THE DRAFT VS. ALL VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Quality Has A Quantity All Its Own: In the United States, since the 1970s, the all-volunteer military has greatly reduced the number of Americans who serve in the military. A recent survey revealed that nearly 80 percent of Americans over age 50 served, or were related to someone who did. That was the generation that grew up with the draft. Only about 60 percent of Americans aged 30-49 served or are related to someone who did. For those aged 18-29, it's only about 33 percent. During World War II, over nine percent of Americans were in the military, now it's about a half a percent. But the situation now has been the norm through most of American history, something we tend to forget. Conscription in the U.S. was only used for a few years during the Civil War (between 1863-5), World War I (in 1917 and 18), World War II (1940-47) and the Cold War (1948-73). Actually, very few men were conscripted in 1948 and 1949. But when the Korean War began in 1950, that changed.

Conscription was never popular during its brief history (about two centuries in the West), and never worked very well either. It won't return to use in the United States for the same reason it disappeared in Britain in the late 1950s, and would have gone the same way in the U.S. during the 1960s had there been no Vietnam war. The main reason that conscription doesn't work is that in most countries, there are far more young men becoming eligible for military service each year than the military needs. So someone has to decide who will serve and who won't. This leads to widespread discontent over how unfair it is that some go, and others do not.

In the European nations that first instituted conscription in the 19th century, everyone who was physically able was taken for two or more years, and then assigned to a reserve unit when they left active service. The idea was that the active army was basically a training organization for the wartime army of reservists. This meant that huge armies could be maintained at a fraction of the cost of a standing (full of active duty troops) army. The reserve system was used in a number of wars in the late 19th century, and then in the two World Wars. All that changed after World War II. At that point, atomic bombs and lots of other high tech weapons and equipment made large armies less useful. By the end of the 20th century, it was obvious to all that an army of professional soldiers was far more effective than one that contained a lot of conscripts. To paraphrase an old Russian saying, "quality has a quantity all its own."

Another problem was that, even in those countries where everyone was taken, corruption eventually set in and eventually everyone didn't go. In less corrupt nations, strings were pulled and favored sons went in and received special treatment, spending his two years in some pleasant assignment that kept him out of danger and quite comfortable. This sort of thing even went on in dictatorships. By the time the communist governments in Eastern Europe and Russia collapsed, the corruption in their universal conscription programs was one of the reasons for the collapse.

Those of us who were of draft age during the 1960s remember that the unfairness of the system was a major source of discontent. And this discontent was there before the Vietnam War became an issue. Indeed, for most young men during the 1960s, the draft was more of an issue than the war. You could always avoid combat by joining the air force or navy. And if you were a college student or graduate, you could go into the army secure in the knowledge that you would almost certainly get a non-combat job. But so poisonous did the attitude towards conscription become during the 60s that looking for ways to avoid service (faking a physical or psychological problem, or even bribery of draft officials) was done quite openly. Vietnam didn't end the peacetime draft in the United States, having too many people eligible for it did.

The Baby Boom generation was coming of age during the 1960s. That meant over 1.5 million young men turned 18 each year. But the military needed less than half that number. Even in the peak years of the war, there were many more young men available for the draft than were needed. With thousands of young men getting killed in Vietnam each year, parents, as well as the kids, were more than a little upset at how so many kids were never called, or received one deferment (usually for higher education) after another.

The situation hasn't changed. Most kids don't want to go off and be a soldier for a year or two. But there are still plenty of young men and women who want to volunteer. And it's not for the poor and uneducated either. Less than half of those eligible for the draft would qualify to volunteer for the peacetime force. And the army has learned that the volunteers they have been using since the early 1970s make much better soldiers. It was the army that was always getting nearly all the draftees. During the Vietnam period, even the marines were able to get by almost entirely on volunteers. The draftees all went to the army because so many young men realized that they could honorably avoid getting shot at by volunteering for the air force or navy. This meant three, instead of two, years of

service. But what the hell, at least you lived to talk about it. With all those volunteers, and that extra year of service, the air force and navy got more out of their new recruits.

Since 1940, when the first American peacetime draft was started, the army found that they liked being able to grab all those well-educated kids that had rarely, in the past, joined the army. This was the main argument the army made in opposing the end of conscription. The air force and navy were not happy for similar reasons, as the draft had driven a lot of high quality volunteers their way because the alternative was being an army draftee. With no conscription, the air force and navy would have to get out there and hustle for recruits. And then there was the problem of pay. With no draftees filling up the lower ranks, the pay for entry level recruits would have to be competitive with civilian jobs.

But historians, and those noting how the British were doing (they had gone all-volunteer by the early 1960s), realized that there would be no problem with an all-volunteer force. Historians also knew that a professional (all volunteer) army was a more effective one. This did not become generally accepted in the United States until the 1991 Gulf War.

There is a form of the draft that might someday be used. There is, for example, a list of young medical professionals who could be drafted in the event of a major military emergency. The doctors and nurses involved are not all keen on getting called up, but they are not making a lot of noise about their unhappiness. Another list of computer specialists is also under consideration. This concept of only drafting the "best and the brightest" has not, yet, been controversial.

While most people now realize that an all-volunteer force is superior, many still forget why a conscripted force could not compete, survive, or revive. But some politicians are not bothered by reality or historical lessons, and persist in calling for reinstating the draft. It will never happen, as 80 percent of American voters oppose it. Most people in the military would not want draftees either. And the potential draftees themselves are not particularly enthusiastic.

LOOKING AT THE FACTS-VIETNAM WAR

Excerpts from K. G. Sears, PhD

That the American experience in Vietnam was painful and ended in long lasting (albeit self-inflicted) grief and misery can not be disputed. However the reasons behind that grief and misery are not even remotely understood-by either the American people or their government. Contrary to popular belief, and a whole lot of wishful thinking by a crowd tens of millions strong that's made up of mostly draft dodgers and their anti-war cronies, along with their families / supporters, it was not a military defeat that brought misfortune to the American effort in Vietnam.

The United States Military in Vietnam was the best educated, best trained, best disciplined and most successful forces ever fielded in the history of American arms. Why then, did they get such bad press, and why is the public's opinion of them so twisted? The answer is simple. But first a few relevant comparisons.

1. During the Civil War at the Battle of Bull Run the Union Army panicked and fled the battlefield. Nothing even remotely resembling that debacle ever occurred in Vietnam
2. In WWII at the Kasserine Pass in Tunisia elements of the U S Army were overrun by the Germans. In the course of that battle Hitler's General Rommel inflicted 3,100 US casualties, took 3,700 prisoners and captured or destroyed 198 American Tanks. In Vietnam there were no US Military units overrun nor were any US infantry or tank outfits ever captured.
3. WWII in the Philippines, US Army Generals Jonathan Wainwright and Edward King surrendered themselves and their troops to the Japanese. In Vietnam no US General or any military unit ever surrendered.
4. Before the Normandy invasion (D Day 1944) the US Army in England filled its own jails with American soldiers and airmen who refused to fight and they had to rent jail space from the British to handle the overflow. The US Army in Vietnam never had to rent space from Vietnamese to incarcerate American soldiers who refused to fight.
5. During WWII in the European theater alone, over 20,000 US Military men were convicted of desertion. Only about 5,000 men assigned to Vietnam deserted and just 249 of those deserted while in Vietnam. On a comparison basis the overall WWII desertion rate was 55% higher than in Vietnam.
6. During the Battle for the Bulge in Europe, two regiments of the US Army of the 106th Division surrendered to the Germans. In Vietnam no US Army unit of any size much less a regiment ever surrendered.
7. In WWII the highest ranking American soldier killed was Lt. General Leslie McNair. He was killed when American war planes accidentally bombed his position during the invasion of Europe. In Vietnam there were no American Generals killed by American bombs.
8. As for brutality, during WWII the US Army executed nearly 300 of its own men. In the European theater the US Army sentenced 443 American soldiers to death. Most were for rape and murder of civilians.
9. In Korea, the US Army was forced into the longest retreat in its history. A 275 mile with drawl from the Yalu River all the way to Pyontaek, 45 miles south of Seoul. In the process they lost the capitol city of Seoul. The US Military in Vietnam was never compelled into a major retreat nor did it ever abandon Saigon to the enemy.
10. In Korea, Major General William F. Dean commander of the 24th Infantry Division was taken prisoner of war. In Vietnam there were never in US Generals, much less a division commander ever taken prisoner.
11. In Korea the 1st Marine Division was driven from the Chosen Reservoir and forced into an emergency evacuation from the Korean port of Hungman. There they were joined by other US Army and South Korean soldiers and the US Navy eventually evacuated 105,000 allied troops from the

port. In Vietnam there were never any mass evacuations of US Marine, South Vietnamese or allied troops.

12. During WWII 66% of the troops were draftees. In Vietnam only 25% of the US Military who served in Vietnam were draftees.
 - a. On a percentage basis, the Vietnam forces contained three times as many college graduates as did the WWII forces
 - b. The average education level of the enlisted men in Vietnam was 13 Years. Of those who voluntarily enlisted 79% had high school diplomas. This a time when only 65% of the American military age males in the general population high school graduates.
 - c. The average age of the US Military men who died in Vietnam was 22.8 years old. Of the 101, 18 year olds who died in Vietnam seven were black.
 - d. Blacks accounted for 11.2% of the deaths in Vietnam. At the time black males of military age constituted 13.5% of the US population.
 - e. It should also be pointed out that volunteers suffered 77% of the casualties and accounted for 73% of the Vietnam deaths.
13. The Charge that the "Poor" died in disproportionate numbers is also a myth. An MIT study of Vietnam death rates revealed that service men from the richest 10% of the nations communities had the same distribution of deaths as the rest of the nation
14. PTSD: Civil War Veterans suffered, "Soldiers Heart." WWI was, "Shell Shock" and WWII and Korea the term was "Battle Fatigue." Military records show Civil War psychological casualties averaged 26 per thousand men. In WWII some units experienced over 100 psychological casualties per one thousand men. In Korea nearly one quarter of all battle field evacuations were due to mental stress. That works out to be 50 per one thousand men. In Vietnam the comparable average was 1 per one thousand men.

To put the American/Vietnam War in its proper perspective

It is essential to understand that the US Military was not defeated in Vietnam and that the South Vietnamese government did not collapse due to mismanagement or corruption. Nor was it overthrown by revolutionary guerrillas running around in rubber tire sandals wearing black pajamas and carrying home made weapons. There was no "General Uprising" or "Revolt" by the southern population. South Vietnam was overrun by a conventional army made up of seventeen conventional divisions and supported by a host of regular army logistical support units. This totally conventional army that was trained, armed and equipped as well supplied by Red China and the Soviet Union. All this and they were spearheaded by 700 Soviet tanks launched against South Vietnam and conquered the south in the same manner Hitler conquered most of Europe in WWII.

A synopsis of the American/Vietnam War will clarify and summarize the Vietnam scenario

1. Prior to 1965: US Advisors and AID only
2. 1965-1967: Build up of US Forces
3. 1968-1970 Communist invasion halted and the Communist insurgency destroyed to the point that 90% of the towns and villages in South Vietnam were free from communist domination. By 1971 throughout the entire heavily populated Mekong Delta the monthly rate Communist insurgency dropped to an average of 3 incidents per 100,000 population. Most US cities would envy a crime rate that low. In 1969 Nixon started the US Troop withdrawals that that were essentially complete by late 1971
4. December 1972: Paris Peace Agreements negotiated by North Vietnam, South Vietnam Communist South Vietnam and the United States.
5. January 1973: Paris Peace Agreement officially signed by all four parties
6. March 1973: POWs released from the Hanoi Hilton and in accordance to the Peace Agreements the last US Combat soldier leaves South Vietnam. Those US Military who remained were assigned to the Defense Attaché Office and began performing as diplomatic administrative staff.

7. August 1973: Congress passed the Case-Church Amendment which forbade US Naval forces from sailing on the seas surrounding Vietnam. US ground forces from operating on the land and US Air forces from flying over, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The Case-Church Amendment was in effect an un-conditional guarantee by the US Congress to the North Vietnamese Communist that the US would not oppose their efforts to conquer South Vietnam. This virtually nullified the Paris Peace Agreement and the US Congress gave them the win that they could not have won on the battle fields of Vietnam.
8. Congress at a time when America had drawn its Cold War Battle lines, as a result they had the US Navy protecting Taiwan, 50,000 troops in South Korea, and 300,000 troops in Western Europe. Along with those military commitments were ironclad guarantees that if communist forces should cross any Cold War lines or Soviet armor should roll across either the DMZ in Korea or the Iron Curtain in Europe there would be an unlimited response by the armed forces of the USA, to include if necessary the use of nuclear weapons. In 1975 when Soviet armor rolled across the international borders of South Vietnam, the US military response was nothing. In addition, Congress cut off all AID to South Vietnam and would not provide them with as much as a single dollar or a single bullet. From 1974 through April 1975, the Soviet Union and Red China supplied over 832,000 tons of war materials to North Vietnam.
9. August 1974: Nixon resigns
10. September 1974: North Vietnamese communist hold special meeting to evaluate Nixon's resignation and to test the implication.
11. December 1974: North Vietnam invade South Vietnam Province of Phouc Binh north of Saigon near the Cambodian line.
12. January 1975: North Vietnam captures Phouc Long the capitol of Phouc Binh Province. They sit and wait for a reaction from US, which never comes.
13. March 1975: North Vietnam mounts a full scale invasion with 17 conventional divisions (more than the US Army has had since WWII). Because the US Congress had unconditionally guaranteed that there would be no US Military response against North Vietnam they used their entire military. This attack was spearheaded by 700 Russian tanks that was burning Russian fuel and using Russian ammunition.
14. Comparative POW Statistics:

Americans taken POW during WWII.....	130,201
American taken POW during Korea War.....	7,140
Americans taken POW during the Vietnam War.....	771

The American POW numbers for the Vietnam/American War raises the question. If the Vietnamese Communist were such a superb, uncanny, and divinely lead fighting force that always out foxed the Americans, why did they not take more prisoners? It is because the communist were defeated on the field of battle in every single major engagement of the War. In order for the Communist to have taken a significant number of prisoners they would have had to win battles and over-run American positions. The majority of the 771 captured were airmen shot down over North Vietnam. Less than 200 were captured on the ground in South Vietnam. Just these figures alone totally dispel the notion that somehow the US Soldier in Vietnam were not on par with those who served in earlier wars. These figures also dispel the notion that the US Military in Vietnam were a group of unmotivated hapless souls led by inept leaders.

This is implying that the American Military did not experience a lot of hard fighting. In Vietnam the US Marines lost 5 times as many killed as they did in WWI. 3 times as many killed in Korea, and during all of WWII. This is quite a record for a force that was supposedly made up of uneducated, inadequately trained, drug addicted, bumbling draftees, who were poorly motivated, led by officers who were less than competent and continually outsmarted by the pajama clad enemy with home made weapons. During the Normandy battles in 1944 the US 90th Infantry Division (roughly 150,000+men) had to replace 150% of its officers and 100% of

its enlisted men. The 173rd Airborne Brigade (normally 3 Brigades to a Division) served in Vietnam for a total of 2,301 days and holds the record for the longest continuous service under fire of any American unit ever. During that (6 years, 3+months) period the 173rd lost 1,601 (about 31%) of its men killed in action.

Casualty Statistics

The US War College Library provided the numbers. South Vietnam was made up of provinces. The province that claimed the most American lives was Quang Tri which bordered on North Vietnam and Laos. 53% of Americans killed were in the four northernmost provinces. All four shared borders with Laos. An additional 6 provinces accounted for 26% of the Americans killed in action. These 6 provinces shared borders with either Laos or Cambodia or shared a border with a province that did share those 2 countries. The southern most provinces (IV Corps) which was home to 40% of South Vietnam's population accounted for just under 5% of US killed in action (KIA). The remaining 19 provinces accounted for 16% of US KIA's. These statistics are sufficient enough to completely dismiss the popular American belief that South Vietnam was a flaming inferno of violent revolutionary dissent. The overwhelming majority of Americans killed in the war died in border battles against regular North Vietnam Army units. The policies established by Johnson and McNamara prevented the American Military from crossing those borders and destroying their enemies.

To put it in WWII terms, those policies were functionally equivalent of having sent American soldiers to fight in Europe but restricting them to France, Belgium, Holland, Italy, etc. and not letting them cross the borders of Germany. General Curtis LeMay aptly defined Johnson's war policy in Vietnam as, "We are swatting flies in the South when we should be going after the manure piles in Hanoi."

Looking back it is clear that the American Military role in Vietnam was in essence one of defending international borders against a conventional communist invasion. The US Military was not driven from Vietnam; they left under the terms of the Paris Peace Agreement. They were then barred from returning by the US Congress. This same Congress then turned around and abandoned its former ally South Vietnam by kowtowing to the anti-war / draft dodging voting hoard. Congress abandoned an ally that they had promised America would support and protect.

The Media and the War in Vietnam

In spite of the hullabaloo the US Media puts out about freedom of speech and the public's right to know, the US media's foremost motivation is profits. It is a business. The people who own and manage the nation's television and radio networks, electronic forums, its newspapers and other print media are in the business of making money. The US media understands what the American public wants to see and more importantly, "feel." These media managers comprehend that the American people in general are not driven by intellect but by emotions.

Once the draft dodging anti-war crowds' numbers started to climb up into the millions the media and the politicians started to pander to those numbers. (With Media its circulation or Nielson ratings, with politicians its votes). Media unrestrained by a formal Declaration of War (a Johnson mistake), quickly moved to the forefront of the anti-Vietnam War. Multi-million dollar salaries are not paid to people for reporting but for entertainers. One does not get to be or continue to be a superstar unless one gives one's audience what it wants. At the point where those draft dodging anti-war audience numbers reached critical mass the media decided it had no choice but to pander to that mushrooming mass.

A 1969 Life magazine feature article is an excellent example. Life magazine published the portraits of 250 men that were killed in Vietnam during one "routine week." This was supposedly done to demonstrate Life's concern for the sanctity of human life. And to starkly illustrate the Vietnam tragedy with a dramatic reminder that the sons, fathers and neighbors in America were dying in Vietnam. In 1969 the weekly average death toll from highway accidents in the US was 1,082. If indeed Life's concern for the sanctity of American lives, why not publish the 1,082 portraits of people killed in one "routine week." Life knew full well were its number (circulation) were.

The infamous "Siege of Khe Sanh" is another example. A 1968 Newsweek story of the siege of Khe Sanh displayed 29 pictures, 18 of these showed US Marines huddled under fire wounded or dead. None of the pictures showed the Marines firing back, in spite of the fact that the Marines artillery fired 10 rounds at the enemy for ever one received. So biased was the news coverage that even today Khe Sanh is perceived as a defeat for the American Military. In fact when the fighting was over the US Marines had lost a total of 205 men killed as opposed to the 15,000+ NVA killed.

Television

In October 1983 Newsweek said, "At a certain point television became more important than the war itself." That one point was the 1968 "Tet Offensive," Vietnam was the US first television war and the nation did not handle it well. Early on the media recognized the amazing potential for television to exploit war's sensationalism. Unrestrained by formal Declaration of War and mesmerized by the power they possessed the media quickly spun out of control. The media's influence exerted power far beyond description and eventually altered the war's outcome in the communist favor. Conventional wisdom has it the 1968 Tet offensive was the "turning point" of the war were the American people lost faith in the war. President Johnson stated "when we lost Walter Cronkite (the most trusted reporter) we lost the war. The single most important incident in shaping this "turning point" was the story by Peter Arnett (who was later fired for giving another false story about Vietnam) that the communist had captured the US Embassy in Saigon. This was totally a fictitious report.

The Fact: In the early morning of 1 February 1968, communist sappers (soldiers with explosives) blew a small hole in the outer wall of the US Embassy. Then entered the embassy grounds and engaged in a brief firefight with embassy guards. They never entered the embassy. Later an investigation revealed that the sappers had no mission other than to enter the embassy grounds and make a psychological gesture for the benefits of the American television. It was a suicide mission aimed at the American psyche that was a total success. Astounded American Television viewers were being told that the communist had captured the American Embassy in Saigon. Even though this was a false report and was later corrected it mattered not to Americans. General David Palmer is quoted as saying, "thirty thousand communist dead in the first 10 days of the Tet offensive-non would achieve as much as the 20 who blew a hole in the embassy wall and survived for 4 hours." One observer noted, "The American might not understand the power of television propaganda but the enemy sure as hell did."

When asked a well known American reporter who had covered the war extensively why they never reported on the outside communist support, his answer was essentially that the North Vietnamese would not let the reporters into North Vietnam. Because they had no access to the North during the war there were huge gaps in accurately conveying what was happening north of the DMZ.

The Reason it all hangs like a Pall

There always has been and there will always be American opposition to war. The Revolutionary War had the highest (estimated 80%). Opposition to WWI was 64%, WWII peaked at 32%, Korea was 62% and 65% opposed Vietnam. What makes Vietnam so different is the draft dodging anti-war disaster. Of the 2,594,000 who served in Vietnam only about 25% or 648,000 were drafted. Compare that to the 16,000,000+ who dodged and it works out to be 25 dodgers for every draftee who went.

In America today in the fields of media, academia and entertainment they are chocked full of dodgers. America's schools, colleges and universities are overloaded with faculty who either dodged or were members of the anti-war movement. Even to this day the dodgers have a need to rationalize away their acts of cowardice and a compulsion to malign and belittle the source of their guilt, Vietnam.

The anti-war movement was akin to a national temper tantrum that eventually engulfed and then afflicted the entire nation with its warped rational. This group along with the dodgers was responsible for poisoning the American public's mind on the subject of Vietnam. Along with the media this group influenced politics

To elect a Congress that stripped the soldier who fought in Vietnam of their victories and voted to cut and run in the face of adversity. The Reason Vietnam will not go away is because the story perpetuated by the dodgers and anti-war group is not true, and it sticks into the craw of the non dodging population. The supposed facts just don't add up.

Today, movie actors, sports stars, and politicians cast sinister shadows over Iraq and Afghanistan. In WWII these groups all readily volunteered for military service. During the Vietnam War the dodging anti-war and anti-military multitudes led to the stars and politicians taking decisively anti-war, anti-military and anti-American positions. As noted earlier one does not get to, much less continue to be a star or superstar unless one gives one's audience what it wants. The problem is that the American public tends to look up to and bestow credence on their stars. Subsequently stars who are merely actors and in many cases have no real life experiences or training outside of acting or pretending, become looked up to as leaders. Public confusion results in actors becoming anointed as leaders who then can exert tremendous influence. Today actors who are anti-American and in many instances, pro Islamic terrorist are held in high esteem and quoted over and over again.

War is a very serious undertaking. But starting with Vietnam and up through today. It is being treated as a new form of video entertainment intended to create new big name news mongers, enhance the images of existing celebrity reporters, generating billions of dollars in advertising revenue for the American media. Today in Iraq or Afghanistan when a gang of thugs kidnap an ordinary citizen and threaten to execute him, the media immediately confers world class status on the thugs. They are miraculously transformed and presented by media as equal to legitimate world leaders.

During the entire period of American involvement in Vietnam only 2,594,000 US Military actually served inside Vietnam. Compare this with the 50 million plus draft dodger and their supporters you have the answer to why the American perspective of its Vietnam experience is so skewed. The bulk of the bulk of American draft dodging multitudes shares one common emotion, "Guilt." This guilt was well summarized in an April 6, 1980 Washington Post article by Arthur Hadley who said, "Those who avoided the Vietnam through loopholes in the draft, being in the main honorable men, now feel guilty. They relieve these feelings either by venomous attacks on all things military, including the draft or become 200% American and make Attila the Hun sound like Mother Goose."

The Government of South Vietnam

The Government of the Republic of Vietnam came into being as a result of the 1954 Geneva Accord which legally established both North and South Vietnam as separate independent countries. Neither the United States nor South Vietnam signed those accords. The first president of South Vietnam was Ngo Dinh Diem. He was overthrown and murdered in November 1963. There were military coups and leadership changes for the next 19 months, and then the government stabilized in June 1965 with Nguyen Kao Ky as Prime Minister. With elections held in 1967 Nguyen Van Thieu became president and Kao became Vice-president. Thieu was elected in a democratic election in which 9 different parties fielded candidates. Thieu won with just 35% of the vote. But the majority of the US media claimed the election was rigged. In 1975 the UN Security Council voted 8 to 1 (the Soviet Union was the only dissenting vote) and the General assembly voted 59 to 9 to admit South Vietnam. During the war 45 countries sent men, money or supplies to help South Vietnam defend itself.

The Government of South Vietnam allowed a free press and thousands of reporters traveled to South Vietnam and traveled freely around the country. When South Vietnam fell the South Vietnamese media consisted of 28 Vietnamese language daily newspapers and 11 others printed in Chinese, English and French. There was also weekly, biweekly and monthly publications' covering politics and a full range of topics. There were 24 radio stations and 3 television stations all competing in a free market. At newsstand all over the country there was a free flow of foreign publications available. The idea of a brutally repressive, corrupt all powerful dictatorship operating under merciless and constant surveillance of the media is just a myth.

The Communist Government of North Vietnam

There are several versions of a widely held belief that the communist government of North Vietnam was popular even revered (especially with those draft dodging anti-war hoards). The 1954 Geneva Accords called for free elections to be held in 1956. Conventional wisdom has it that if South Vietnam and its American ally had agreed to those country wide free elections in 1956 then the South Vietnamese people would have overwhelmingly elected to join Ho's communist government. This is totally nonsense. The Vietnamese communist have never held a truly free election. In 1956 Ho and the communist government were in the midst of their land reforms and in the process they were murdering tens of thousands of their own people. Even peasant farmers with as little as one acre of land were being executed for having a "Land Lord mentality." According to Edgar O'Ballance (a historian) in 1956 these mass killings stirred such resentment in the North Vietnamese that it triggered a real crisis for Ho and his communist government that Ho was forced to step in to prevent a national uprising. Over radio Hanoi, Ho read an apologetic letter to the people. The communist released some 12,000 who were waiting to be executed and declared the 50,000 murdered resisting land reform to have been "executed by mistake" and declared them national heroes of the revolution.

Myths and truths of the Vietnam/American War.

1. Dien Bien Phu: The Chinese account of Dien Bien Phu dispels more Vietnamese communist myths surrounding General Giap. Research on the Chinese Communist Party archives conducted by Qiang Zhai, a Chinese born American scholar, provides interesting insight. According to these records, when the French decided to fortify and expand their base at Dien Bien Phu, Chinese General Wei Guoging was quick to recognize this as an exceptional opportunity. This was the blunder that the "advisor" Chinese General had been waiting for. Giap the Vietnamese communist general wanted to attack the French in the Red River delta and plan with no chance of success. Wei overruled Giap with support from Mao. The Chinese then committed an army of laborers, a thousand trucks and the updated 17th Century tactics that had been perfected in Korea to the battle of Dien Bein Phu. Note the US was paying for 78% of the French cost of the war.
2. The government of South Vietnam, its military and the people of South Vietnam. It's ironic that in spite of all the media hypes and hullabaloo about the Viet Cong and the American soldiers both were absent from the final battles for South Vietnam. During the "Tet" battles of 1968 the so-called Viet Cong had literally been bludgeoned to death on the streets of the cities, towns and hamlets of South Vietnam. The Americans had left under the terms of the Paris Peace Agreement and were then barred by the US Congress from ever returning. The end came about in the form of a cross country border crossing and fought it out using strategies and tactics of warfare. During the 1968 "Tet Offensive" the communist attacked 155 cities, towns and hamlets in South Vietnam. In not one instance did the South Vietnamese people rise up to support the communist. The people did rise, but in revulsion and resistance to the communist invaders. At the end of 30 days there were no communist flags was flying over any of those 155 cities, hamlets or towns. The South Vietnamese civilians no matter how apathetic they appeared to be toward their own government turned out to be overwhelmingly ant-communist. The "Great Spring Victory" by the communist was spearheaded by a total of 700 Soviet tanks, burning Soviet fuel and firing Soviet ammunition. By contrast, the South Vietnamese had only 352 US supplied tanks and they were committed to guarding the entire country's borders with Cambodia, Laos and North Vietnam. And because of the US Congressional action the Army of the Republic of Vietnam were critically short of fuel, ammunition and spare parts with which to maintain and support these tanks.
3. Myth, Vietnam was one country: The widely held myth that Vietnam was really one country but had been artificially divided by blundering foreign governments is just that a myth. Fact shortly after ousting the Chinese in the 15th century the southern Nguyen and the northern Trinh became engaged in a series of bitter bloody struggles that lasted for nearly 200 years. In the 1630s the southern Nguyen

officially divided Vietnam into two countries by constructing two huge walls across the narrow waste of Vietnam near Dong Ha, and the Northern and Southern Vietnamese continued to fight for the next 1
It is true there are language differences and similarities between the North and South Vietnamese.

After the Communist Takeover

If things were so bad for the South Vietnamese people when the South Vietnamese government was in power and the Americans were supporting them, then why no one fled. (There were no Boat People)? But as soon as the communist takeover was complete the Vietnamese fled by the millions, a first in the 4,000 year history of the country. Once the true colors of the communist were shown the conditions got so bad that not only people from the south fled by the millions they were also joined by northerners who fled as well. For some strange reason almost every western writer along with politicians and the great majority of the talking heads of the media seem to actually believe that the South Vietnamese actually wanted to be ruled by the communist of North Vietnam.

Comments

Vietnam was another battle of the Cold War. This war officially started when the communist came to power in Russia. This divided the world into two main opponents. The Free World led by the United States and the Communist world led by the Soviets. In brief the cold war death toll far exceeded that of WWII. Communist Vietnam had itself come into being as a direct result of the Cold War and the worldwide communist movement. After the communist take over of China in 1949 they had offered the North Vietnamese sanctuaries, weapons, war materials and training. The communist victory at Dien Bien Phu was made possible by the end of the Korean War making it possible to start shipping enormous amounts of weapons and other war materials to the Vietnamese communist.

In all China sent 327,000 uniformed troops and several hundred thousand expert workers to North Vietnam. The Soviets had some 55,000 advisors in North Vietnam installing air defense systems, building, operating and maintaining SAM sites, plus training and logistical support to the North Vietnamese communist.

1. The so-called Southern Communist organizations were created by Hanoi and after the northern communist took over the south none of the Southern Communist representatives had any role in the government.
2. All during the war the US media again and again accused the US Military of over estimating and over reporting enemy casualties. Today the North Vietnamese openly admit to losing nearly 1,300,000 of their military far exceeding what was reported by the US Military.
3. News reporter Peter Arnett was fired by CNN for false reporting when he purported that the US Military in Vietnam supposedly gassed their own men. In 2003 he was fired by both NBC and National Geographic for his anti-American and prejudiced coverage of the US Military.
4. Prime Minister Ky was originally from North Vietnam and was a Buddhist. So much for the South Vietnamese government being completely dominated by Catholics.
5. In the US and international media, Giap is widely held to be a military genius. The North Vietnamese now openly admit that they lost close to 1,300,000 military deaths. According to the 1974 US census this is equivalent of the Americans losing over 12,000,000 men killed in Vietnam. If any US general had lost 12,000,000 men he would not be considered a genius.
6. China shares common borders with both the Soviet Union and Vietnam making in effect both countries into a large strategic military and logistical support bases for North Vietnam.

Dr. K. G. Sears has raised some interesting points about the real story of the American/Vietnam war and dispels many of the widely held opinions and myths that have been spread about the war and the soldiers that fought in it.

The American Vietnam War

And It's Myths

MYTH: The 1968 Tet Offensive was a Communist Victory during the Cease Fire.

Truth: The 1968 Tet offensive was a total and complete military disaster for the North Vietnamese Communist. The NVA and VC had counted on a "Peoples Uprising" to carry them to victory, however there was no such uprising. The NVA and VC did exactly as the American Military wanted them to do. They massed in large formations that were vulnerable to the fire support of the US Military. The NVA and VC mostly only attacked ARVN installations with the exception of the US Embassy in Saigon. Despite reports to the contrary by all major television news networks and the print media, the VC sapper team of 15 men never entered the chancery building and all 15 VC were dead within 6 hours of the attack. Other than the fence around the embassy they did no damage to the property. But they killed 4 US Army MPs and a Marine guard. The South Vietnamese Police guarding the Embassy fled at the first sound of gunfire.

The NVA/VC launched major attacks on Saigon, Hue, Quang Tri City, Da Nang, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, Kontum City, Ban Me Thout, My Tho, Can Tho, and Ben Tre. With the exception of Hue the NVA/VC were forced to retreat within 24 hours of the beginning of the offensive. During the offensive they suffered devastating losses among the southern VC. Using the Southern VC as the spearhead was an intentional device to on the part of the North Vietnam political leadership. Not wanting to share the leadership with the southerners after the war, they sent them out to the inevitable slaughter. NVA General Vo Nguyen Giap held the main force NVA in reserve to exploit any breakthroughs.

In the first week of the offensive the NVA/VC lost 32,204 confirmed kills, 5,803 captured with US losses at 1,015 killed and ARVN losses at 2,819 killed. Casualties among the people whom the NVA/VC claimed to be "Liberating" were in excess of 7,000. With an additional 5,000 tortured and killed in Hue by the NVA/VC. In Hue alone 2,800 burial sites were found containing mutilated bodies of local Vietnamese teachers, doctors and political leaders.

MYTH: BLACKS SERVED IN DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBERS

TRUTH: Of all of those serving in Vietnam, 275,000 or 10.6% were black. The remaining 88.4% were Caucasian or other races. At the time of the Vietnam War Blacks represented 12.1% of the American population. There is a persistent **MYTH** that Blacks were used as cannon fodder by assigning them to infantry units. This is not supported by casualty data which shows that 12.1% or 5,711 were Black. Leaving 86.8% of the casualties Caucasian and other races. This myth was probably generated by the anti-war movement in an effort convincing blacks that they were being used as pawns to be sacrificed.

MYTH: MOST MEN WHO SERVED WERE DRAFTED

TRUTH: Only 25% of those who served on the ground in Vietnam were drafted. The remaining 75% volunteered for one of the military services. Less than 38% of those killed were draftees.

MYTHS: DRAFT DODGERS PROTESTED AGAINST THE WAR

TRUTH: The fact is they protested because they did not want to be inducted into the military. When the draft was ended by Congress in 1972, anti war protests almost ceased entirely. After this period protest were conducted mostly by the hard-core paid anti-war movement that had close ties with the North Vietnamese Communist Party. While protesting against the US involvement in Vietnam may have made some sense for those who were trying to avoid military service, it is not clear why they displayed Viet Cong flags and burning American flags. Those who protested and today claim they were only expressing their conscience cannot explain why they needed to display the flag of our enemy and burn the American flag. The War lasted more than 10 years, 58,202 Americans lost their lives attempting to preserve the sovereignty of South Vietnam. Approximately 56,000 Americans are killed each year by drunk drivers, yet Tom Hayden or Jane Fonda have never lead a violent demonstration against liquor.

MYTH: DRUG USE WAS RAMPANT IN VIETNAM

TRUTH: The overwhelming percentages of American Drug users were civilians and a very high percentage of the anti-war activist were drug users. The number of arrest by the military during the war represents a much smaller percentage of drug use among the military than in overall civilian population during the War

MYTH: AMERICAN ATROCITIES WERE WIDESPREAD

TRUTH: If they were, they were covered up with extraordinary skill and precision. There are only two documented cases of War Crimes can be attributed to American Military personnel. One was the senseless murder of civilians in March 1968 at the village of My Lai by the 1st Platoon of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 23 Infantry (Americal) Division. The other was the murder of 16 noncombatant women and children at a village named Son Thang-4 southwest of Danang, on February 19th 1970 by 5 US Marines of Bravo Company, 7th Marines 1st Marine Division. In both cases the accused were found guilty in court martials.

TRUTH: The anti-war movement trotted out these terrible crimes at every opportunity very little attention was paid to the horrendous atrocities committed by the NVA/VC on South Vietnamese people. During the 1968 Tet Offense the NVA/VC rounded up and murdered as many as 5,000 civilians, doctors, lawyers, teachers, political persons and businessmen. These murders were not reported by the press and the anti-war movement just chose to overlook them. Not much if any fuss has been made over the intentional murder of American civilians, missionaries, and USAID workers by the NVA/VC. Nor the murder and torture of American and South Vietnam POWs. Under the Geneva Convention these atrocities are considered War Crimes. The lunatic fringe of the radical left condoned these as justifiable.

MYTH: BODY COUNTS WERE FALSIFIED

TRUTH: This myth had its roots with the South Vietnamese Army during the period when Americans were strictly advisors to the ARVN. The South Vietnamese Government was courting favor with the Kennedy Administration. In order to make it appear that they were doing a better job than they were they faked the number of VC they claimed to have killed.

The NVA/VC took great lengths to remove their dead from the battlefields in order to conceal their true losses. They used "body hooks" to haul away their dead from the battlefield. This led to the practice of adding estimates of the number of probable's to the account of the confirmed killed. On April 3rd 1995 on the 20th anniversary of the end of the fall of Saigon, the North Vietnamese Communist finally admitted their true casualties. The US Command had officially stated that the number killed to be about 750,000. The Communist in an official press release stated that 1.1 million NVA/VC had been killed

Introduction

The Vietnam War: From Myth to History

For most Americans today, the history of the Vietnam War is like a play that unfolds in ways quite different from the audience's preconceptions. Ticket holders take their seats expecting a drama about American soldiers. But once the curtain goes up, there are some surprises—the Vietnamese characters dominate the stage at the outset, the American characters arrive late (soldiers among the last), the play proves far longer than anticipated, and the plotline takes some unfamiliar twists. This collection of documents—snippets from a real drama—should also shatter some expectations that readers carry in their heads. The materials gathered here suggest that the Vietnam War was not mainly about U.S. soldiers and that it spanned a good deal more than the decade of direct U.S. combat.

MISUNDERSTANDING AN UNPOPULAR WAR

Many Americans feel instinctively that they know the Vietnam conflict in large measure because of popular myths and misconceptions incorporated and propagated, if not actually created, through the movies and other widely consumed U.S. media. Hollywood, with its trademark capacity for neat packaging and simple messages, tackled the war in the late 1970s, and in a steady output over the following decades, it became the single most important source for public memory. One movie critic commented wryly, "Since 1977, Hollywood has been succeeding where Washington consistently failed: namely, in selling Vietnam to the American public."¹ The Hollywood version of the war—perpetuated in DVDs and television reruns—worked its magic above all by draining the war of much of the controversy that would have gotten in the way of entertainment. In often powerful, frequently reiterated images, Vietnam became a fantasy world where Americans tested their manliness, underwent youthful rites of passage, embarked on perilous rescues, suffered personal corruption, or replayed frontier dramas with the Vietnamese as the

1. Thomas Doherty, "Full Metal Genre: Stanley Kubrick's Vietnam Combat Movies," in *Perspectives on Stanley Kubrick*, ed. Mario Falsetto (New York: Hall, 1996), 307.

A Documentary History from
American and Vietnamese Perspectives

VIETNAM WAR READER

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"wild Indians." Seldom do the serious political issues raised by the war come into view, and the Vietnamese rarely figure as anything more than bit players in an American drama.

What comes across most forcefully in Tinseltown products is the notion that Vietnam as a disembodied force somehow made a victim of Americans. Witness the treatment of soldiers in combat films such as *Go Tell the Spartans* (1978), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Platoon* (1986), and *Hamburger Hill* (1987). The theme of victimization is also central to the movies that show veterans returning home twisted in mind and ruined in body. The once normal young Americans made into psychopaths, paraplegics, and enraged muscle men inhabit such films as *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Coming Home* (1978), and the Rambo series (1982 and 1985). Some, such as *The Deer Hunter* (1978) and *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), manage to develop both themes—the wounds inflicted on soldiers in the field and in the lives of warriors back home. *Forrest Gump* (1994), perhaps the most widely viewed of these films, offers a lighthearted version of this conventional story line of the soldier as victim during and after the fighting. These stories of victimization have reduced the war to easily grasped terms to reach and hold a broad audience. Their appeal may be rooted in the way soldiers as victims serve as stand-ins for their country whose innocence the war destroyed. Personal victimization becomes an easily understood expression of national victimization.

Public opinion polls conducted in the early 1990s suggest a popular acceptance of Hollywood's simple but symbolically loaded version of the war.² Consistent with the view that Vietnam somehow managed to do bad things to the United States, about 70 percent of those surveyed held that the Vietnam commitment was a mistake (up from around 60 percent in the early 1970s, during the last phase of U.S. troop involvement, and virtually unchanged when the question was asked again in 2000). Nearly as many (68 percent) carried the indictment further and said that Vietnam was not a "just war." Also consistent with Hollywood's portrayal, the public strongly identified with the American soldier. Overwhelmingly (87 percent) the public thought favorably of those who served and sacrificed

in a conflict that respondents thought was more costly in American lives than any other in the twentieth century. (In point of fact, each of the two world wars resulted in more Americans killed in action than did Vietnam.) In line with the fixation on victimization, a substantial majority (69 percent) regarded veterans as ill used by their government and unappreciated by their countrymen. Indeed, 64 percent believed U.S. officials so indifferent that they had abandoned servicemen to permanent captivity in Southeast Asia.

Where Hollywood provided less clear guidance, Americans were more divided in the early 1990s polls. They split evenly on whether any good came out of the war, such as slowing the advance of communism in Southeast Asia or contributing to the decline of communism worldwide. Respondents also split when asked whether American warriors died in vain. Fifty-one percent said "yes," while 41 percent answered "no." Finally, the public divided on how to appraise the protest movement at home. In 1990, 39 percent of respondents had a favorable view, and the exact same percentage had an unfavorable view. Asked three years later about dissent from another angle—whether draft avoidance by all legal means was justified—the public again divided (with the "no's" outnumbering "yes's" 53 to 41 percent).

HOW HISTORY MATTERS

What is remarkable about the films and the polls is their omissions. Popular conceptions of the war have little room for the Vietnamese, even though the war was fought on their soil, resulted in deaths and injuries in the millions, and imposed lasting societal costs. Vietnamese appear at best on the periphery, limited to cameo appearances. The enduring American images of the Vietnamese at war—the shadowy foe darting through the underbrush or lying crumpled on the ground, the prostitute camped outside an American base, the child in frightful flight from napalm—first appeared in contemporary media. Soldiers' memoirs and Hollywood films have perpetuated this extraordinarily limited, invariably superficial, and often caricatured treatment. So dim has the public sense of the Vietnamese political context grown that a fifth of those polled in 1990 thought that the United States had fought alongside, not against, North Vietnam.

2. The polling data in this and the following paragraphs come from George Gallup Jr., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1990* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1991), 47–50; George Gallup Jr., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1993* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1994), 228; George Gallup Jr., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1995* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1996), 228; and *Gallup Poll Monthly*, November 2000, 44.

Because the popular view of the Vietnam War focuses on Americans in combat and thus is concerned only with the period of direct U.S. engagement, it is fundamentally ahistorical. The U.S. war was but one phase

in a string of conflicts in Vietnam that began with the struggle against the French and continued as an insurgency against the U.S.-backed government in Saigon, which in turn morphed into the American war that spilled over into Cambodia and ultimately gave way to the ceasefire war of 1973–1975. Within each of these phases, the nature of the conflict varied from place to place (for example, large cities versus remote villages; highlands versus river deltas). And because this long-lasting, far-flung struggle incorporated elements of social revolution, national liberation, and civil war, it swept up a wide variety of people, turning their lives upside down.

As the documents that follow suggest, the Vietnam War was not a single, neatly played out drama featuring the Americans, and it was never primarily about U.S. soldiers. It was more like a long, loosely unfolding story by a playwright who had lost control of his plot and players. Characters wander onto the stage, often barely mindful of the other members of the cast. They deliver their lines, often speaking past each other. And then they exit, sometimes never to reappear. They don't even agree on the name of their shared drama. What Americans call the Vietnam War their Vietnamese foe thought of as the American war or "the war of resistance against American aggression."

Even the chronology of the play is off-kilter. For Vietnamese the war had its roots in the nineteenth century; it encompassed at least three generations, going back to resistance to the French conquest. By the time the play reached the final act in the 1970s, virtually all segments of Vietnamese society had made an appearance—from nationalist intellectuals to political activists, to peasants pulled into the struggle, to ordinary soldiers, to those who hitched their fortunes to the French and then American causes. The Americans walked onto the stage relatively late—in the 1940s—and even then acted only as minor players, largely unaware of previous plot developments. Despite their late appearance, an impressive range of Americans did manage to get into the act. They included, notably, a string of seven U.S. presidents, well over 3 million Americans who saw service in Vietnam, and many ordinary Americans who felt the war's effect in deepened social ferment and political embitterment at home during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

THE TET OFFENSIVE GAMBLE, JULY 1967–MARCH 1968

Beginning in early 1967, party leaders desperately sought a way to break the stalemate in the war with the Americans. Only by achieving a battlefield success could they hope to force the Americans into negotiations, bring an end to the bombing of the North, and secure the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the South. Complicating matters, Nguyen Chi Thanh, the Communist commander in the South responsible for the conduct of any offensive, died in Hanoi in early July during a working visit. At this point Le Duan took the initiative. Working with Vo Nguyen Giap's associate General Van Tien Dung, he devised an audacious plan for "a general offensive and a general uprising," a strategic concept for ultimate victory in the South that had been on the minds of party leaders at least since late 1963 (document 3.2). Also known as the Tet Offensive, this attack envisioned all-out assaults by the NLF, backed by PAVN units, on both the enemy military and major cities. Inflicting heavy casualties on U.S. and ARVN units and seizing the enemy's urban strongholds were sure to break the battlefield stalemate and shake the Johnson administration and deepen public dissent at the very start of a presidential election year.

4.4 Hanoi's difficult strategic decision, July 1967 and January 1968

Le Duan's plan deeply divided the top party leadership. Defense Minister Giap, the architect of the Dien Bien Phu victory, warned that the success of any major offensive depended on first crippling ARVN and U.S. forces. Also

doubtful was the old and ailing Ho Chi Minh. The following meeting notes taken by General Dung record Ho's doubts and offer a rare glimpse into inner-party debate. Le Duan pressed ahead, elaborating his plan over the second half of 1967 and securing final Central Committee approval (with Ho abstaining) in January. Immediately after the meeting, Le Duan offered last-minute guidance to COSVN (now headed by Pham Hung, Thanh's successor), including an optimistic reading of the situation and an outline of the strategic concept behind the military campaign scheduled to begin the night of 30-31 January.

a. Ho Chi Minh's objections, Politburo meeting, 18-19 July 1967

1. This [Le Duan-Van Tien Dung] draft is good, comprehensive, and optimistic, but we need to consider whether the report . . . is subjective [unrealistic].
2. We may strive to win a quick victory, but we must pay attention to the need to be able to fight a protracted war.
3. We have many advantages, but we also must recognize our difficulties, such as in the area of rear services [logistics] and support.
4. The draft talks about winning a military victory, but we must also pay attention to the need to preserve the strength of our people. If our people and our resources become exhausted, then we will not be able to fight, no matter how many troops we have.
5. We must pay attention to the need to expand guerrilla warfare and to provide additional equipment to our guerrillas.
6. We must make sure that we grow stronger as we fight, that we fight continuously, and that we are able to fight for a long time [i.e., that we are able to fight a protracted war].

HANOI PREPARES FOR WAR, OCTOBER 1964-MAY 1965

Party leaders met in August and September—in the immediate wake of the Gulf of Tonkin incident—to decide on countermeasures to what seemed a U.S. escalation of the conflict. Le Duan, as Communist Party head and the leading voice on policy toward the South, presided over this effort. Aiding him was Pham Van Dong. From a gentry family in central Vietnam, Dong had embraced communism in the mid-1920s and had, for his party activities, done time in a French prison (1931-1937). He helped Ho organize the Viet Minh and went on to become a mainstay in the government of the DRV, serving as premier from 1955 to 1986.

3.8 Conversations between Vietnamese and Chinese leaders, October 1964 and April 1965

On one key front, the party leadership proceeded confident of continued Chinese support. The Tonkin Gulf incident had caused Mao Zedong, the chair of China's Communist Party, to reiterate his commitment to resist a U.S. invasion and convinced him to beef up air defenses along the DRV border and base some aircraft in the DRV itself. By December China had agreed to a major troop commitment, mainly engineer and anti-aircraft units to be stationed in the northern provinces of the DRV to free PAVN forces to go south. The first of these Chinese deployments arrived in June 1965. Together senior Viet-

namese and Chinese representatives worked out this program of assistance while also trying to gauge the Johnson administration's likely course. In this Chinese record of two meetings, Pham Van Dong and Le Duan spoke for the Vietnamese side. They addressed Mao and Liu Shaoqi, the number two figure in the party.

a. Pham Van Dong and Mao Zedong, conversation in Beijing, 5 October 1964

[MAO ZEDONG:] Whether or not the United States will attack the North, it has not yet made the decision. Now, it [the United States] is not even in a position to resolve the problem in South Vietnam. If it attacks the North, [it may need to] fight for one hundred years, and its legs will be trapped there. Therefore, it needs to consider carefully. The Americans have made all kinds of scary statements. . . .

PHAM VAN DONG: This is also our thinking. The United States is facing many difficulties, and it is not easy for it to expand the war. Therefore, our consideration is that we should try to restrict the war in South Vietnam to the sphere of special war [directed against the U.S.-backed ARVN], and should try to defeat the enemy within the sphere of special war. We should try our best not to let the U.S. imperialists turn the war in South Vietnam into a limited war [involving a substantial and direct U.S. role in the fighting], and try our best not to let the war be expanded to North Vietnam. We must adopt a very skillful strategy, and should not provoke it [the United States]. Our Politburo has made a decision on this matter, and today I am reporting it to Chairman Mao. We believe that this is workable.

MAO ZEDONG: Yes.

PHAM VAN DONG: If the United States dares to start a limited war, we will fight it, and will win it.

MAO ZEDONG: Yes, you can win it.

b. Le Duan and Liu Shaoqi, conversation in Beijing, 8 April 1965

LE DUAN: We want some volunteer pilots, volunteer soldiers . . . and other volunteers, including road and bridge engineering units.

LIU SHAOQI: It is our policy that we will do our best to support you. We will offer whatever you are in need of and we are in a position to offer. . . . If you do not invite us, we will not come; and if you invite one unit of our troops, we will send that unit to you. The initiative will be completely yours.

5.18 "K-11" (PAVN private first class), comments on morale building, January 1969

To fend off the war weariness reflected in Son's songs, Hanoi relied on a well-developed system of morale building. The determined effort to get soldiers to see the political cause behind the military struggle began with basic training that took up themes already sounded in public propaganda. Sustaining morale was the job of the political officers assigned down to the company level. Lower down, at the basic unit level, the task fell to the three-man cell. Headed by a party member, it created cohesion and confidence and quickly integrated replacements. In addition, units held regular criticism sessions to get complaints and difficulties into the open, and before and after operations the men had a chance to ask questions and raise concerns. Finally, soldiers could be confident of the priority given the recovery of the dead and wounded and of the help given to soldiers' families far away in the DRV.

A private first class designated by his Rand interview team "K-11" offers a perspective on the state of morale amid hardship and heavy losses in 1968. He came from a large family in Phu Tho province (in the Red River Delta, about fifty miles from Hanoi). In March 1967, then age seventeen and still a student, he was called to duty. His infantry unit, which arrived in the South the following October, fought in the Saigon area during the Tet Offensive and in the attack on the capital of Tay Ninh province the following May. Wounded in battle and taken prisoner in October 1968, K-11 was interviewed in January 1969.

[On the political officer and political commitment:] The political officer's main job was to motivate the men's morale. He educated the men on the Party's policies. Sometimes he even commanded the unit during the fighting. His deputy was in charge of removing the wounded and dead soldiers. During the fighting, the deputy political officer motivated the men to move their wounded comrades out from the battlefields for medical care, and to move the dead ones out from the battlefields for burying them properly....

After each battle, the political officer gathered the men in the unit together to motivate their morale. The political officer informed the men about the good results that the men had gained from their action, this made the men feel enthusiastic....

We all liked the political officer. He was a nice person, he was very gentle and very modest. He treated all of us like brothers....

I had fought very enthusiastically in the army rank for a year because I

fully understood the revolutionary line of the Party and of Uncle Ho, I was told about the political situation and about the American aggression in Vietnam, I am strongly determined to take the way the Party had planned in order to liberate the country from the American imperialist. I always believe that the Liberation Front and our army have been fighting for the just cause, and sooner or later the people who fight for the just cause will win the war....

... [E]ven if I know that I would be killed in fighting, I wouldn't hesitate to keep on fighting because I fight for the just cause, and dying for the just cause, for the nation and for the people is glorious.

[On the three-man cell:] The three-man cell was the smallest unit in the army. It helped the men in the unit stay close and be friendly to each other....

... [I]n combat the three men in the cell always kept close to each other. They moved forward together and withdrew together in case they had to....

... [W]hen I had [a] problem, the other men in the cell helped me to solve [it]. When I quarreled with someone, the other two men helped me to calm down and they explained to me about the problem. When I got sick, the other two men called the nurse and got medicine for me.

[On support for the families of soldiers:] Before I left for the South, I was told that the government was going to help my family. When I was still in the North, I had known many families who had sons and husbands fighting in the South, they were not only helped by the government, but were also helped by the people living in their areas. Sincerely speaking, I don't worry about my people, they should now be in good shape.

3.11 Johnson, comments to Robert McNamara, 21 June 1965

Remarkably Johnson himself harbored deep doubts about a large-scale U.S. military intervention. The following selection, taken from a telephone conversation that Johnson had secretly recorded, enumerates most of the weaknesses in the U.S. position that historians today would list.

I think that in time it's going to be like the Yale professor [antiwar historian Staughton Lynd] said — that it's going to be difficult for us to very long prosecute effectively a war that far away from home with the divisions that we have here, particularly the potential divisions. And it's really had me concerned for a month, and I'm very depressed about it 'cause I see no program from either [the Department of] Defense or State that gives me much hope of doing anything except just prayin' and gasping to hold on during the monsoon [season of heavy rains] and hope they'll quit. I don't believe they [are] ever goin' to quit. I don't see how, that we have any way of either a plan for victory militarily or diplomatically. And I think that's something that you and [Secretary of State] Dean [Rusk] got to sit down and try to see if there's any people that we have in those departments that can give us any program or plan or hope; or, if not, we got to see if we have you go out there or somebody else go out there and take one good look at it and say to these new people [the newly installed government headed by Generals Nguyen Cao Ky and Nguyen Van Thieu], "Now, you've changed your government about the last time and this is it." Call the Buddhists and the Catholics and the generals and everybody together and say, "We're going to do our best." And be sure they're willing to let new troops come in and be sure they're not gonna resent us. "If not, why y'all can run over us and have a government of your own choosing. But we just can't take these changes all the time." That's the Russell plan. [Richard] Russell [a Democratic senator from Georgia, the influential conservative chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and a former Johnson mentor] thinks we ought to take one of these changes [in the Saigon government] to get out of there. I don't think we can get out of there with our treaty [under SEATO?] like it is and with what all we've said. And I think it would just lose us face in the world, and I shudder to think what all of 'em would say.

3.12 Under Secretary of State George Ball argues against a major troop commitment, June–July 1965

Of those in the Johnson inner circle, this senior State Department official argued most persistently against the expanded U.S. military role. On the one hand, Ball offered a rationale for disengagement, and on the other, he drew on his understanding of the troubled French war to suggest that the long odds against military success made a diplomatic settlement the wiser course. His reference in the second document to "white foreign (U.S.) troops" raises the interesting question of whether he was warning about cultural differences, about possible racial antagonism, or about the dangers of assuming the French imperial role.

a. Memo to Rusk, McNamara, Bundy, and others, 29 June 1965, proposing "re-education" on the U.S. Vietnam commitment

It should by now be apparent that we have to a large extent created our own predicament. In our determination to rally support, we have tended to give the South Vietnamese struggle an exaggerated and symbolic significance (*Mea culpa*, since I personally participated in this effort).

The problem for us now — if we determine not to broaden and deepen our commitments — is to re-educate the American people and our friends and allies that:

(a) The phasing out of American power in South Vietnam should not be regarded as a major defeat — either military or political — but a tactical redeployment to more favorable terrain in the overall cold war struggle;

(b) The loss of South Vietnam does not mean the loss of all of Southeast Asia to the Communist power ...;

(c) We have more than met our commitments to the South Vietnamese people. We have poured men and equipment into the area, and run risks and taken casualties, and have been prepared to continue the struggle provided the South Vietnamese leaders met even the most rudimentary standards of political performance;

(d) The Viet Cong — while supported and guided from the North — is largely an indigenous movement. Although we have emphasized its cold war aspects, the conflict in South Vietnam is essentially a civil war within that country;

(e) Our commitment to the South Vietnamese people is of a wholly different order from our major commitments elsewhere. . . . We have

never had a treaty commitment obligating us to the South Vietnamese people or to a South Vietnamese government. Our only treaty commitment in that area is to our SEATO partners, and they have—without exception—viewed the situation in South Vietnam as not calling a treaty into play. To be sure, we *did* make a promise to the South Vietnamese people. But that promise is conditioned on their own performance, and they have not performed.

b. Memo to Johnson, "A Compromise Solution in Vietnam," 1 July 1965

The South Vietnamese are losing the war to the Viet Cong. No one can assure you that we can beat the Viet Cong or even force them to the conference table on our terms no matter how many hundred thousand *white foreign* (U.S.) troops we deploy.

No one has demonstrated that a white ground force of whatever size can win a guerrilla war—which is at the same time a civil war between Asians—in jungle terrain in the midst of a population that refuses cooperation to the white forces (and the *svn[ese]*) and thus provides a great intelligence advantage to the other side. Three recent incidents vividly illustrate this point:

(a) The sneak attack on the Danang Air Base which involved penetration of a defense perimeter guarded by 9,000 Marines. *This raid was possible only because of the cooperation of the local inhabitants.*

(b) The B-52 raid that failed to hit the Viet Cong *who had obviously been tipped off.*

(c) The search-and-destroy mission of the 173rd Airborne Brigade which spent three days looking for the Viet Cong, suffered 23 casualties, and never made contact with the enemy *who had obviously gotten advance word of their assignment....*

... So long as our forces are restricted to advising and assisting the South Vietnamese, the struggle will remain a civil war between Asian peoples. Once we deploy substantial numbers of troops in combat it will become a war between the United States and a large part of the population of South Viet-Nam, organized and directed from North Viet-Nam and backed by the resources of both Moscow and Peiping.

The decision you face now, therefore, is crucial. Once large numbers of US troops are committed to direct combat they will begin to take heavy casualties in a war they are ill-equipped to fight in a non-cooperative if not downright hostile countryside.

Once we suffer large casualties we will have started a well-nigh irreversible process. Our involvement will be so great that we cannot—without national humiliation—stop short of achieving our complete objectives. *Of the two possibilities I think humiliation would be more likely than the achievement of our objectives—even after we had paid terrible costs.*

... Should we commit US manpower and prestige to a terrain so unfavorable as to give a very large advantage to the enemy—or should we seek a compromise settlement which achieves less than our stated objectives and thus cut our losses while we still have the freedom of maneuver to do so?

... In my judgment, if we act before we commit substantial US forces to combat in South Viet-Nam we can, by accepting some short-term costs, avoid what may well be a long-term catastrophe.

KISSINGER: That is true.

PRESIDENT NIXON: And goddamn, if that isn't morality....

KISSINGER: ... I actually think we can settle it [an agreement with Hanoi]. On terms, however. [*Unclear*]—

PRESIDENT NIXON: On our terms [*unclear*] but not Thieu's.

KISSINGER: On ... close to our terms. But—and I also think that Thieu is right, that our terms will eventually destroy him.

PRESIDENT NIXON: You're convinced of that, Henry?

KISSINGER: ... [G]iven their weakness, their disunity, it will happen—

PRESIDENT NIXON: [*Unclear*] fear—they're scared to death of these people, the North....

KISSINGER: ... We can improve the situation in South Vietnam drastically [by military operations], but we can't get our prisoners back. And before they [*unclear*] they will offer us our prisoners for a withdrawal. And in that case, we've got, I think at this point, we have to take that....

PRESIDENT NIXON: That's a deal we have to take, Henry.

KISSINGER: That's right, but that will also collapse the South Vietnamese, except we won't be so responsible for the whole settlement....

PRESIDENT NIXON: Well, if they're that collapsible, maybe they just have to be collapsed.... [W]e cannot keep this child sucking at the tit when the child is four years old. You know what I mean? ...

KISSINGER: ... You may get it [a peace agreement] before the election....

PRESIDENT NIXON: Well, I don't want it before the election with a Thieu blow-up.

KISSINGER: Right.

PRESIDENT NIXON: If we do, it's gonna hurt us very badly.

4-16 Nixon on the Saigon government's survival after a peace agreement, October–November 1972

In August in the secret Paris talks, Le Duc Tho made a major concession: he accepted the Thieu government as one player in the transitional process following the end of fighting in the South. This concession made it possible for the two sides to reach mutually agreeable terms in October. The key elements were U.S. disengagement, the return of U.S. prisoners, and the continuation of the Thieu government. Nixon now found himself with a major headache. Privately he recognized that the emerging peace agreement would leave the Saigon government vulnerable. But at the same time he had to bring Thieu on board or face the politically embarrassing charge of abandoning a U.S. ally. In a string of personal letters to Thieu backed up by a parade of American emissaries, Nixon sought to present the peace terms in a positive light while offering assurances of continued support and highlighting the damage any refusal to cooperate would inflict on U.S.–South Vietnamese ties. Ultimately Nixon sought to placate his balky client by presenting Hanoi with a long list of changes to the October agreement and by threatening U.S. military action if Hanoi did not help Nixon out by making fresh concessions.

a. Nixon and Kissinger, taped conversation, 6 October 1972

[KISSINGER:] [S]omewhere down the road he'll [referring to Thieu] have no choice except to commit suicide....

PRESIDENT NIXON: ... We don't want him to—him personally or the 17 million South Vietnamese collectively—to commit suicide.

KISSINGER: That's right.

PRESIDENT NIXON: Or, to be murdered. Now, that's all this thing is about.

THE NCO

A balloonist in a hot air balloon realized he was lost. He reduced altitude and spotted a man below. He descended a bit more and shouted, "Excuse me, can you help me? I promised a friend I would meet him an hour ago, but I don't know where I am."

The man below replied, "You're in a hot air balloon hovering approximately 30 feet above the ground. You're between 40 and 41 degrees north latitude and 60 degrees west longitude."

"You must be a NCO," said the balloonist.

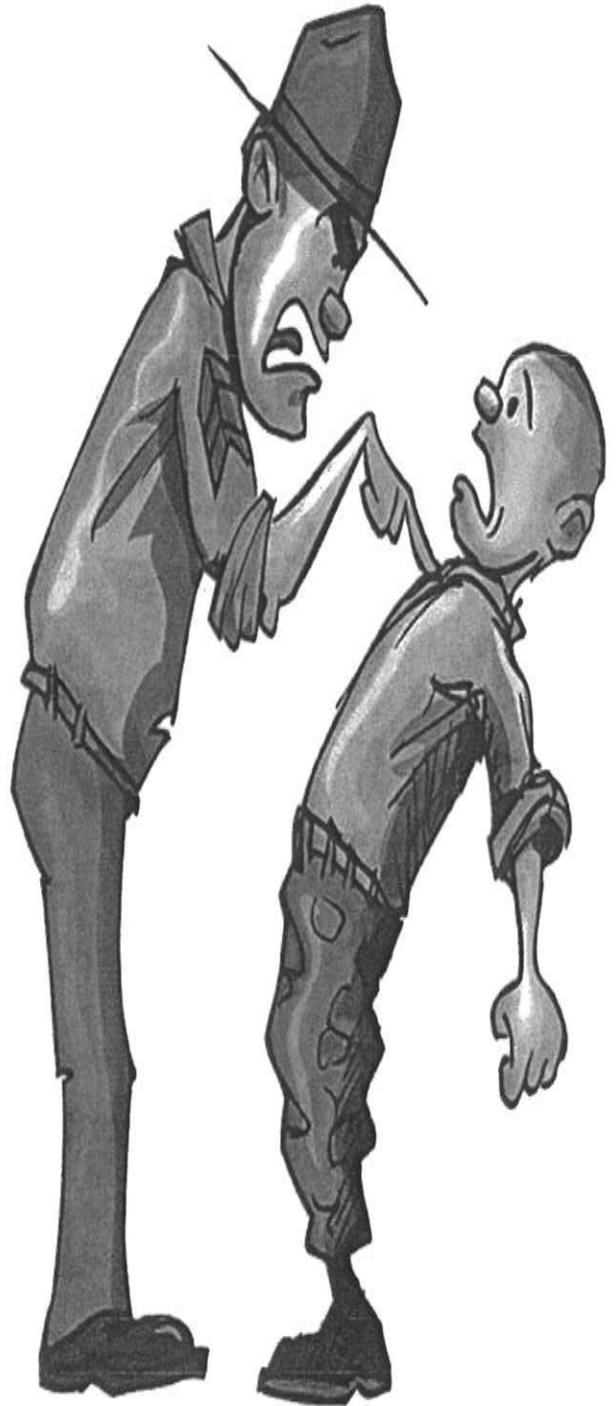
I am, "replied the NCO, "How did you know?"

"Well," answered the balloonist, "everything you told me is, technically correct, but I've no idea what to make of your information, and the fact is I'm still lost. Frankly, you've not been much help at all. If anything, you've delayed my trip.

The NCO below responded, "you must be an officer".

"I am," replied the balloonist, "but how did you know?"
"

Well, said the NCO, "you don't know where you are or where you're going. You have risen to where you are due to a large quantity of hot air. You made a promise which you've no idea how to keep, and you expect people beneath you to solve your problems. The fact is, you're in exactly the same position you were in before we met, but now, somehow, it's my fault.



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GLOBAL COMMUNITY SERVICE FOUNDATION

DONG HA STREET CHILDREN CENTER

Dong Ha Street Children Center was established by Netherland Red Cross and put under the management of Dong Ha city Authority in 1997. In 2004, the Center was fully under the funding and management of Dong Ha Authority.

The Center is built on a piece of land of 2,438 square meters in the Center of Dong Ha city, next to the Quang Tri Handicapped Children which accommodate 130 children with hearing impairment and autism.

Currently, at the Center, there are 30 children, including 11 boys and 19 girls. Their age ranges from 4 to 17. These children come from very poor families all over Quang Tri province, which are not able to support them and have to have them work locally or travel to Dong Ha city to work. They used to work as street vendors, lottery sellers, shoeshine boys, and waitresses. They became vulnerable since they were still young and could be exposed to abuse.

The city have brought them to the Center and provided them with accommodation, education and vocational training. Scholarships are provided to the children who still can continue schooling and those who can not will be provided tuition-free vocational training at local Vocational Training School.

For such children, entertainment is quite limited because they only can get a basic support from local government. Recreation is sometimes luxury for them and a playground is always a dream for these disadvantaged kids. The playground is put in a protected area and can be accessed by all children in the area, including the 130 children with disabilities in Quang Tri Handicapped School