

“Hawks as Doves: Military Dissent in Vietnam and Iraq”

Colonel John B. McKinney Lecture

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"I believe that if we had and would keep our dirty, bloody, dollar-crooked fingers out of the business of these nations so full of depressed, exploited people, they will arrive at a solution of their own. That they design and want. That they fight and work for. [Not one] crammed down their throats by Americans."

Those are not the words of Abbie Hoffman, George McGovern, Martin Luther King, an SDS activist or a random “hippie” in the 1960s, but of David Monroe Shoup, a Marine General and Commandant of the Corps between 1960 and 1963.¹ Shoup’s words speak to a crucial yet underrepresented, if not ignored, element in studying modern wars, the dissent of unmistakable and respected military leaders while conflicts are in progress. In the two most recent big wars, Vietnam and Iraq, significant numbers of military leaders—experienced, distinguished, and prominent—have broken ranks and publicly criticized American leaders and the policies they have pursued. From the outset of these conflicts onward, various officers have warned against intervention, advocated different courses of action, challenged official optimism, called for political leaders to be held accountable for likely failures, or called for withdrawal.

Consequently, when these conflicts turned badly—in the later 1960s in Vietnam and almost immediately after the war in Iraq was launched in 2003—their views were already in the public record and have to be reckoned with now as we try to make sense of disasters in both Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

Vietnam: Roots of Involvement, Roots of Dissent

U.S. military officials, who had some direct knowledge of Southeast Asia and would be responsible for any warfare in that area, offered candid and usually negative appraisals of possible interventions into Vietnam as soon as American policymakers began considering their role in that part of the world after World War II. During and right after the war, American officers attached to the Office of Strategic Services [OSS] worked with Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh and took away positive impressions, with Major Allison Thomas of the OSS lobbying for more contacts with Ho and sympathizing with his nationalist ambitions, while General Philip Gallagher, the U.S. advisor to Chinese occupation forces in northern Vietnam, wished that the Viet Minh “could be given their independence.”² General George Marshall, who served as both Secretary of State and Defense, lamented that the Indochina war “will remain a grievously costly enterprise, weakening France economically and all the West generally in its relations with Oriental peoples.”³ In July 1949 the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in policy paper JCS 1992/4, produced their most striking summation of the perils of interference in Indochina. The “widening political consciousness and the rise of militant nationalism among the subject people,” they understood, “cannot be reversed.” To attempt to do so, the JCS presciently argued, would be “an anti-historical act likely in the long run to create more problems than it solves and cause more damage

than benefit." The Army's Plans and Operations division added, likewise pessimistically, that the Viet Minh would drive the French out of Indochina on the basis of popular support alone, not Chinese assistance. Ho enjoyed the support of 80 percent of the Vietnamese people, Army planners reported, yet 80 percent of his followers were not Communists. Such indigenous appeal, as well as limited PRC support, virtually assured Viet Minh success.⁴

Despite such warnings, the Truman administration began to increasingly support the French suppression of Vietnamese nationalism, especially after 1950. But, still, the military balked, with the Joint Strategic Plans Committee seeing no reason for the United States to consider committing its forces to a "series of inconclusive peripheral actions which would drain our military strength and weaken . . . our global position." Army Chief of Staff J. Lawton Collins was more blunt. "France will be driven out of Indochina," he prophesied, and was "wasting men and equipment trying to remain there."⁵ By late 1951, Collins, who would have an important role in Vietnam policymaking and was the military's ranking critic until mid-decade, was challenging the idea that the "loss" of Indochina would lead to a domino-like reaction of Communist success in Asia, a foundation of U.S. foreign policy. When JCS Chair Omar Bradley expressed his doubts that "we could get our public to go along with the idea of our going into Indochina in a military way," Collins agreed and concluded that "we must face the probability that Indochina will be lost." In the meantime the Joint Strategic Plans Committee [JSPC] warned that even limited involvement in Vietnam "could only lead to a dilemma similar to that in Korea, which is insoluble by military action."⁶ Still, Harry S. Truman and his successor, Dwight Eisenhower, continued to pour funding into French Indochina—\$785 million in 1953 alone. And Collins continued his warnings, pointing out that a campaign in Indochina would be worse than

Korea. Any U.S. forces could expect a "major and protracted war Militarily and politically we would be in up to our necks." But he also understood that he spoke "from a military point of view" and that the JCS's judgment was not decisive, and "if our political leaders want to put troops in there we will of course do it."⁷

Collins was of course an experienced and intelligent official, so was conceding the obvious in acknowledging the primacy of politics in decisionmaking, and this is a point that cannot be under-emphasized. Already in the 1950s one could observe the dialectic of military reluctance and civilian enthusiasm for war in Indochina. Collins and others, taking into account "a military point of view," understood that Vietnam was not vital to American interests, was not an area conducive to military success, was engaged in a revolution-cum-civil war brought on by centuries of outside aggression and colonialism, and was likely to be hostile to a U.S. presence. The Viet Minh, as the JCS recognized, held the military initiative and had successfully identified itself with the struggle for "freedom from the colonial yoke and with the improvement of the general welfare of the people."⁸ Civilian policymakers, however, had larger visions, seeing Vietnam as an important piece in the larger reconstruction of capitalism and Japanese economic health in Asia.⁹ Consequently, the United States would fight in Vietnam for well over a decade at odds with itself—with military leaders always aware of the serious barriers to success, while civilian political leaders would escalate the war due to larger concerns about global politics and economics.

Looking back, the early 1950s presented the best opportunity for the United States to avoid what would become such a great tragedy in Vietnam. Rarely does a nation engage in armed conflict with its military leadership so wary of intervention, but that is precisely what

happened in Indochina. In 1954 and 1955, when the Eisenhower administration took over the French role in Vietnam, Generals Collins, Matthew Ridgway, James Gavin and others forcefully pointed out the perils of war there. In the early months of 1954, as the Viet Minh laid siege to a French outpost at Dien Bien Phu, the White House began contemplating intervention, but Ridgway led the battle against American involvement. He pointed out that the Army would have to commit at least seven divisions to fight in Vietnam, even with air and naval support or the use of atomic weapons. Bolstered by the report of a technical survey team, he added that Vietnam lacked adequate port and bridge facilities, that monsoons would limit military operations, and that the local communications system was too primitive to support an American presence there. Even if engineers could build up ports and airfields to handle the influx of U.S. troops, standard Army units were "too ponderous" for combat in Vietnam, a land "particularly adapted to the guerrilla-type war" at which the Viet Minh had been so successful. The Army chief stressed, moreover, that China, not Ho Chi Minh, represented the more viable threat to U.S. interests in Asia. Accordingly, a combat commitment in Vietnam would amount to a "dangerous strategic diversion" of limited U.S. military power to a "non-decisive theater to the attainment of non-decisive local objectives." Ridgway reported such findings to the president in a late May briefing and he believed that "to a man of [Eisenhower's] military experience its implications were immediately clear."¹⁰

The JCS agreed with Ridgway, warning that intervention at Dien Bien Phu would not be a "'one-shot' affair," but rather a "continuing logistic supply requirement" for America's Far East forces and it would ultimately involve U.S. troops in direct military operations, create increasing demands for reinforcement, risk American casualties, and possibly provoke Chinese intervention.

Thus the "real question" attending the debate over Dien Bien Phu was whether the United States would "commence active participation by [American] forces in the Indochina war." But other concerns, such as rearming the Federal Republic of Germany, were of principal interest to service officials, and the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu was doomed, so nonintervention in Vietnam was a reasonably easy recommendation for the brass.¹¹

Throughout the first months of 1954 the military had coordinated a strong campaign against intervention. Though concerned with the ramifications of Communist success in Vietnam, most officers understood that the political and military environment in both America and Indochina militated against U.S. prospects in Southeast Asia. General Thomas Trapnell, past commander of the American advisory group in Saigon, typified the American military dilemma regarding Vietnam. Though an advocate of holding the line against the Viet Minh, Trapnell recognized that Ho was the most respected leader in Vietnam and that Indochinese communism had attracted intellectuals, peasants and urban workers alike. Ho and Giap, moreover, directed an experienced force with about 300,000 troops, including one artillery and six infantry divisions, engineers, and numerous support units. The Viet Minh, Trapnell added, had developed effective regional militia, possessed a "tremendous capability" for mobility and endurance, and was skilled in political and psychological indoctrination. Believing that time--and U.S. and French public opinion--was on their side, Vietnamese Communists were conducting "a clever war of attrition." Though Trapnell believed that the United States should resist the Left in Asia, he insisted that a "military solution to the war in Indochina is not possible."¹²

The Army's assistant chief for planning, General James Gavin, corroborated that assessment in a hundred-page report on Vietnam commissioned by Ridgway. Waging war in

Indochina, Gavin found, would require transferring vast amounts of resources from other programs in more important parts of the world. The Army would also have to extend its terms of service for active personnel, activate Reservists, and increase draft calls. In addition, the services would also need to reopen military bases and increase material production for Indochina, which ran contrary to New Look budget policy. Worse, Gavin estimated that American troops would suffer about 28,000 casualties monthly. And of course, he reminded his superiors, the Viet Minh remained a formidable military force.¹³

Even into mid-1954, Eisenhower and Dulles still sought multilateral action to stem the Communist advance in Vietnam and had not yet dismissed a combat role there. The JCS again moved to scotch any plans for intervention, limited or otherwise. Any involvement, the chiefs explained, "would continue and expand considerably even though initial efforts were indecisive." In time, the United States would have to commit additional naval and air units, "and extensive ground forces to prevent the loss of Indochina." South Korean involvement would, "in effect, constitute U.S. intervention," by proxy, which was a steep price to pay to save a country "devoid" of vital resources and in an area that was "not a decisive theater" in Asia. Defense Secretary Charles Wilson, presumably putting forth the JCS's views, argued that the most desirable course of action in Vietnam was to "get completely out of the area. The chances of saving any part of Southeast Asia were . . . nothing." Gavin was more succinct as he echoed General Omar Bradley's analysis of Korea in asserting that an American military commitment to Vietnam "involves the risk of embroiling the U.S. in [the] wrong war, in the wrong place, at the wrong time."¹⁴

Such views held sway. U.S. forces did not intervene in Indochina, although neither did

the United States dissociate itself from Vietnamese affairs. Despite such overwhelming reluctance, the White House moved ahead with its plans for Vietnam, essentially inventing a country below the seventeenth parallel, the Republic of Vietnam [RVN], putting a regime in place led by the U.S. client Ngo Dinh Diem, and pumping billions of dollars into the fictive nation to enable it to survive. Still, military officials sounded the alarms about such a commitment. Service officials were quick to point out that there was a crisis of political legitimacy in the south. Diem and his family ran the RVN as a personal fiefdom, and had little tolerance for even the trappings of democracy. Even prior to the Geneva armistice which partitioned Vietnam and called for unifying elections in 1956, the JCS conceded that any settlement of the French-Vietnamese conflict "based upon free elections would be attended by the almost certain loss of [Indochina] to Communist control." Diem, as JCS intelligence officials reported, had "no intention of tolerating an election he cannot win."¹⁵

Colonel Edward Geary Lansdale, head of an intelligence mission to Saigon in 1954-1955 and a supporter of the Diem junta, found that the Viet Minh, following Mao's axiom that guerrillas needed grassroots support like fish needed water, had "exemplary relations" with the villagers. By contrast, southern soldiers had become "adept at cowing a population into feeding them [and] providing them with girls." An Army study corroborated such views, noting that Ho and Giap could count on about 340,000 soldiers, with about one-fourth of those active *below* the partition line.¹⁶ By late 1954, it was clear to the JCS that Vietnam's internal political situation was "chaotic" and that Diem's government could not even guarantee the loyalty of its military forces. Without native support and sacrifice, the chiefs warned, "no amount of external pressure and assistance can long delay complete Communist victory in South Vietnam." The military's

analysis of Vietnamese politics thus pointed out that government stability was a prerequisite to military credibility. It also made clear--despite later, specious claims that the DRVN "invaded" the south--that the Second Indochina War had deep indigenous roots indeed.¹⁷

General J. Lawton Collins, sent to Vietnam as Eisenhower's special representative in December 1954, also understood that internal turmoil, not outside aggression, was destroying southern Vietnam. Appalled by Diem's authoritarian ways and failure to challenge the various sects involved in southern political and economic affairs, Collins recognized as well that the Viet Minh "have and will retain the capability to overrun Free Vietnam if they wish." He even suggested that U.S. withdrawal, although the "least desirable" option, "may be the only sound solution."¹⁸ Diem, however, rescued his position in April 1955 by beating back the sects' challenge to his leadership, at which point Eisenhower and Dulles decided to stick with him over the long haul.¹⁹ By October 1955, when Diem became president in an election that would have embarrassed a Chicago alderman, the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) was officially established and the United States was heading toward war in Vietnam.²⁰

Despite Diem's successes, the military remained critical of plans to establish a training mission in Indochina. During the siege at Dien Bien Phu, Ridgway scored plans for such a program because American trainers would be in the "invidious position" of bearing responsibility for inevitable failures over which they had no control. He also established preconditions--never met by the French or southern Vietnamese--for the development of any training mission, including full independence for the states of Indochina, American control over indigenous forces, and political stability in southern Vietnam. Without such measures, the JCS cautioned, it was "hopeless to expect a U.S. military mission to achieve success."²¹ Communist troops were

"laying the groundwork for a strong, armed dissident movement" in the south, Gavin and General Paul Adams concluded, and it would be dangerous to put American trainers in the middle of an imminent "civil war," which might well provoke greater intervention by the Soviets and the Chinese.²²

Still the White House did establish a training force, the Military Assistance Advisory Group, or MAAG, headed by the hawkish General Samuel Williams. But even he presented a bleak view of the situation in Vietnam in mid-1956. While he agreed that the southern Vietnamese would have to be responsible for their own security, Williams worried that the Viet Minh outnumbered the VNA [the southern Vietnamese National Army] by a two-to-one ratio and lamented that "large-scale Asiatic support would not appear to be forthcoming." In the event of hostilities, Williams estimated that VNA forces north of Da Nang would "unquestionably be badly mauled" but that if Diem reinforced that area the Communists would simply bypass it. Moreover, the usually-sanguine MAAG leader also provided a laundry list of VNA disadvantages in any war against the Viet Minh: Ho and Giap could not be expected to attack without thorough planning and infiltration along protected routes; enemy morale would be bolstered by claims that Diem was a "puppet" of "Western colonialists"; the ARVN [the Army of the RVN] command would be unable to communicate with field units; and the rainy season would thwart established plans to attack northward via Laos. In effect, then, the VNA's lack of skill and experience put it at an even greater disadvantage than its numerical inferiority. At least two U.S. divisions would be needed to contain the Viet Minh, Williams assumed, but the development of a much larger and stronger indigenous ground force remained the key to successful warfare in Vietnam.²³ Even with American forces, the MAAG was wary of war in

Vietnam due to political conditions there, understanding that "extreme nationalism and anti-Western feeling can not be far below the surface." Maintaining a large number of U.S. forces was thus "a potential source of offense to Vietnamese sensibilities." Accordingly, the U.S. presence should be limited to "absolute needs" while "discretion and circumspect behavior is a must." Despite his apparent satisfaction with the situation, even Williams hoped to "resist pressure to increase American personnel" in Vietnam, in part by employing foreign nationals instead of U.S. representatives where possible.²⁴

And so it went. By the mid-1950s, the pattern was clear. Military officials would either defend involvement in Vietnam but recognize the serious obstacles to an effective deployment there or, more likely, recommend against intervention altogether. Even when officials like General Williams tried to prevent a sanguine view of the war, military officials in Washington tended to be doubters and critics. Naval Commander Arleigh Burke, a hawk in the 1960s, believed that neither Eisenhower nor anybody else "had any intention of committing troops to either South Vietnam or Laos."²⁵ General Lyman Lemnitzer, the Army chief and later JCS chair, observed that the military always expected to limit its role in Vietnam to military assistance and advisory groups because military leaders such as Eisenhower and MacArthur insisted "that we should not get engaged in a land battle on the continent of Asia."²⁶ J. Lawton Collins agreed, adding that he did not "know of a single senior commander that [sic] was in favor of fighting on the land mass of Asia."²⁷ And General Lewis Fields, a Marine representative on the Joint Staff from 1958 to 1960, noted that the JCS "didn't think the United States should get involved in that conflict. It's a morass, it's a swamp." Vietnam, Fields lamented, "just grabs you up and takes so much effort--to accomplish what?"²⁸

Despite such sentiments, American leaders turned Vietnam into a symbol of the Cold War and progressively increased the U.S. stake there. Although military leaders in Saigon and Washington presented an ambivalent view of their prospects in Indochina, American aid continued to flow to a country that was led by the authoritarian Ngo family and that had an ill-prepared army without a credible mission. Although American leaders saw problems with the RVN, 78 percent of U.S. aid to Diem from 1956 to 1960 went into the military budget, while only 2 percent was allocated to health, housing, and welfare programs.²⁹

Though claiming to want to avoid American intervention in Indochina, U.S. leaders, by feeding Diem's and Nhu's addiction to power, guns, and money, made it inevitable. As the Ngos received more resources from the United States they became even more arbitrary and authoritarian and, in turn, unpopular. Ultimately, American "advisors" would enter Vietnam to prop them up. Despite reports from Saigon that stressed the confusion and contradiction inherent in the American policy in Vietnam, military and political leaders never advocated the type of "agonizing reappraisal" that might have led to a different policy. U.S. military officials consistently recognized the enemy's strength as an indigenous force in the south, the fatal weaknesses of Diem and the ARVN, and the questionable priority of Indochina in national security considerations, yet they continued to accentuate whatever positive characteristics they could detect or invent in the RVN. By late 1960, John Kennedy of Massachusetts was awaiting inauguration as president, and the American role in Vietnam was about to expand markedly.

Occupying an Essentially Hostile Foreign Country

What had begun as a limited effort to rebuild Asian capitalism and to appease the French in the aftermath of World War II had become a major endeavor to prevent Ho Chi Minh and his

nationalist-communist followers from achieving democratic leadership of Vietnam by the later 1950s and early 1960s. The Eisenhower and then Kennedy administrations sent billions of dollars, thousands and advisors, and advanced weaponry to southern Vietnam to try to preserve the “nation” they’d invented below the seventeenth parallel, but, by the mid-1960s, to little avail. Hanoi finally yielded to southern pressure to help form the National Liberation Front and begin armed struggle in the south, the Diem regime remained corrupt and repressive—both attacking opposition Buddhists and talking to communist representatives about the possibility of a negotiated, neutralist settlement, the southern army was passive and the enemy held the initiative, and the United States moved closer to full-scale intervention. Kennedy, despite posthumous revisionism attributing “dove” status to him and claiming he would have pulled out of Vietnam, was a committed warrior who sought victory. In fact Kennedy advisors complained that the military was insufficiently bellicose. Roger Hilsman charged that armed forces leaders were tying the president's hands on Indochina policy. In mid-1962, amid continued turmoil in Laos and Vietnam, Kennedy and his chiefs considered possible military responses. Although the president and secretary of state, among others, wanted to deploy U.S. troops to the area--in Rusk's case into the DRVN--Hilsman and NSC staff member Michael Forrestal worried "that the military was going to go soft" in its approach to Indochina. The chiefs, he complained, "beat their chests until it comes time to do some fighting and then [they] start backing down." General Decker, acting JCS chair at the time, had drawn up a list of possible courses of action--including negotiations, diplomatic approaches to the Soviet Union, or committing SEATO defense forces--which Hilsman called "the damndest collection of mush and softness I have seen in a long time." Because of this weakness, he believed, "of course the President was in no position to do the

military moves he wanted." Kennedy was thus "boxed in" because the military had put forth only limited measures for Indochina and Kennedy "hasn't decided enough to deter the Communists but he has decided more than enough to get into all sorts of political trouble . . . at home."³⁰

Just a few years later, there were about 80,000 American troops in Vietnam and, in the aftermath of the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964, the Air Force began flying reprisal air strikes, yet the situation in the south remained grave, with the National Liberation Front and Viet Cong forces retaining the initiative, the ARVN remaining ineffective, and the political situation still chaotic, with about a dozen governments in the aftermath of the November 1963 coup against and murder of Diem. By January 1965, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara feared the worst, and met with the president to tell him "that both of us are now pretty well convinced that our current policy can lead only to disastrous defeat." The United States could no longer "wait and hope for a stable government" while the VC expanded its control over the south, and so urged Johnson to "use our military power . . . to force a change of Communist policy."³¹ General Maxwell D. Taylor, the ambassador to Saigon, was, however, "caught by surprise" when the administration began to press for combat troop deployments to the RVN. "The President was thinking much bigger in this field," he recalled, "than the tenor in Washington" had indicated.³² Clearly, then, America's civilian leadership favored introducing combat troops into Vietnam in early 1965. At the same time, as McGeorge Bundy admitted, "we had no recommendations from the military for major ground deployments."³³ There was in fact no military imperative to intervene. After the VC had bombed an officers's billet in Saigon on Christmas eve, the White House had encouraged Taylor to ask for ground troops, but the Ambassador, the commander of the MACV [Military Assistance

Command, Vietnam] General William Westmoreland, and Taylor's deputy, U. Alexis Johnson, quickly moved to scotch such measures.³⁴

In a prescient analysis of U.S. policy, Westmoreland and his staff explained their resistance to employing combat forces, and recommended that the United States continue on its flawed path of providing operational support and improving the advisory system. As the MACV staff saw it, the United States had already spent a great deal of time trying to develop the ARVN, and "if that effort has not succeeded, there is even less reason to think that U.S. combat forces would have the desired effect." The Vietnamese, Westmoreland assumed, would either let Americans carry the burden of war or actively turn against the U.S. presence in their country. Given such circumstances, MACV officers concluded that the involvement of American ground forces in the RVN "would at best buy time and would lead to ever increasing commitments until, like the French, we would be occupying an essentially hostile foreign country."³⁵

Army Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson was not unduly optimistic either, telling an audience in Los Angeles that he expected U.S. military involvement in Indochina to last a minimum of five years, and possibly as long as two decades.³⁶ Johnson, as well as other officers, would overcome their reservations about sending ground troops to Vietnam only two months later. Maxwell Taylor, however, continued to virulently oppose such steps. In a series of memoranda to the president and others throughout the winter months of 1965, the ambassador detailed the risks of U.S. intervention and the bleak prospects facing American soldiers in southern Vietnam. Above all, he still insisted that political turmoil in the RVN was the major obstacle to success, and one which American troops could not remove. In early January, as General Nguyen Khanh maneuvered to return to power, Taylor called for "hard soul searching" to

decide whether U.S. officials ought to tolerate another coup, or instead reject Khanh altogether and accept the consequences, "which might entail ultimate withdrawal."³⁷

To Taylor, the choices were so stark because the United States could ill afford to fight a ground war in Vietnam. The RVN simply lacked the resources and resolve to engage an impressive enemy and it was not "reasonable or feasible" to expect U.S. or third-country forces to assume the burdens of guerrilla war. As another MACV study found, the United States would need to commit about 34 battalions of infantry with additional logistics support, a total of about 75,000 troops, just to provide security to American personnel and facilities already in Vietnam. To the Ambassador, this "startling requirement" would inevitably "bring us into greater conflict with the Vietnamese people and the government."³⁸ After Khanh had staged another coup on 27 January, Taylor advised against recognizing the new government, telling Bundy that the United States should prepare to "reduce [its] advisory effort to policy guidance [or] disengage and let the [RVN] stand alone."³⁹

The ambassador thus had "one basic conclusion" about Vietnam: the United States "is on a losing track and must change course or suffer defeat, early or late as one chooses to interpret the known facts."⁴⁰ Secretary of State Dean Rusk also interjected a note of caution into the proceedings, but offered different advice on future policy. As McGeorge Bundy told the president in his memorandum of 27 January, the secretary of state, like Westmoreland weeks earlier, believed "that the consequences of both escalation and withdrawal are so bad that we simply must find a way of making our present policy work."⁴¹

Unlike Rusk, Taylor continued to see air power as a virtual panacea to America's problems. Graduated air strikes against the DRVN, he believed, would signal to Ho the cost of

supporting the insurgency, provide leverage in any negotiations, and improve RVN morale. While Taylor, and most other military and political officials, did not expect an air campaign to decisively alter the situation in Vietnam, they did see it as a way of "producing maximum stresses in Hanoi minds."⁴² With the war going so badly, the president had little choice but to finally accept Taylor's strategy. Thus, by mid-February, the United States was beginning a full-scale air campaign in Vietnam.

The immediate cause of the air war came on 7 February, when the VC mortared an Army barracks in Pleiku, killing 9 and wounding 109 Americans, and destroying or damaging 22 aircraft. U.S. officials then cited the attack at Pleiku to justify American retaliation, but any provocation would have satisfied the administration's desire to expand the war. Indeed, McGeorge Bundy was in Vietnam at the time and, looking to justify stronger military measures, saw the incident as the vehicle by which the president could authorize an air campaign against the north, even sarcastically observing that "Pleikus are like streetcars."⁴³ Thus, Johnson authorized Operation ROLLING THUNDER, which in three years would unleash more tonnage of bombs than all previous air wars combined. A new bombing campaign, as Bundy saw it, would demonstrate American credibility, for in the RVN he had found a "widespread belief" that the United States lacked the will and patience to stay in Vietnam. Without a significantly increased American effort, the national security advisor warned, "defeat appears inevitable."⁴⁴ Accordingly Bundy, in a memorandum that McNaughton drafted, urged the president to execute a program of "sustained reprisal" against the DRVN, with U.S. air and naval attacks to be justified by and calibrated according to the VC's activities in the south. As enemy "outrages" continued in the RVN, the American air strikes against the north would take their toll.⁴⁵

The president thus authorized reprisal strikes, Operation FLAMING DART, against the DRVN on 8 and 9 February, and ROLLING THUNDER on 13 February. As Mark Clodfelter has shown, Johnson's decisions did not satisfy everyone. While Taylor, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, and McNaughton thought that the president had demonstrated American resolve, William Bundy and Rusk doubted that air strikes would deter Ho.⁴⁶ The JCS, although satisfied that Johnson had finally acted, continued to press for intensified air operations against the north.⁴⁷ Harold K. Johnson continued to decry the emphasis on the air war over the DRVN since the United States, he believed, still had to focus on defeating the insurgency in the south and did not have to destroy the north to force a settlement in the RVN.⁴⁸ Westmoreland, also taking the Army line, "doubted that the bombing would have any effect on the North Vietnamese," although he did hope that it might boost southern morale.⁴⁹

The bombing, however, did not appreciably change conditions inside southern Vietnam, so, in March, Johnson deployed the first ground troops, a Marine brigade, to guard the U.S. base at Da Nang. Westmoreland remained wary, cautioning that it was "most important . . . to avoid the impression by friends and enemies that [the] U.S. has taken over responsibility for war from the Vietnamese."⁵⁰

American officers had not recommended the use of combat troops before February 1965 and, in Westmoreland's case, had firmly rejected such proposals earlier. But with civilian authorities in Washington rushing in that direction, Wheeler, the MACV commander, and others fell in line, as concerned with the political impact of decisionmaking as with the war in Vietnam itself. The deployment to Da Nang resulted from civilian pressure, not military factors, and was in the cards even prior to the events of early 1965. As General DePuy later observed, the

commitment of combat forces was not the "product of a Westmoreland concept for fighting the war." The MACV staff, he explained, still expected U.S. troops to advise and assist the ARVN, not fight the war themselves.⁵¹

So did Maxwell Taylor. Although he had to acquiesce in the troop commitment, the ambassador persisted in warning about a wider war. Expressing his "grave reservations" about committing ground forces to Vietnam, the soldier-cum-diplomat warned that "once this policy is breached, it will be very difficult to hold [the] line" on future troop moves. As soon as RVN leaders saw that the United States was willing to assume new responsibilities, they would certainly "seek to unload other ground force tasks upon us," which would inevitably lead to increased political tension with the local population and friction with the RVNAF over command arrangements. Taylor recognized the need to defend U.S. airfields at sites such as Da Nang or Bien Hoa, but thought that accepting a combat role against the VC was just not feasible. The "white-faced soldier armed, equipped, and trained as he is" was "not [a] suitable guerrilla fighter for Asian forests and jungles," he explained. Pointing to the French failure in the First Indochina War, Taylor had to "doubt that US forces could do much better."⁵² By mid-March, Westmoreland's request for more troops to protect an American radio unit in Phu Bai, about 50 miles below the DMZ, reinforced Taylor's fear that such proposals would continue unabated and might induce the ARVN to perform even "worse in a mood of relaxation at passing the Viet Cong burden to the US."⁵³

In March 1965, however, U.S. officials were concerned with getting more ground forces into Vietnam amid the continued deterioration there. The initial deployments had not alleviated the situation in the south and Wheeler, as MACV historians explained, "feared that the VC gains

might have reached the point where, regardless of US action against [the DRVN], the RVN would fall apart."⁵⁴ Other officials had equally forthright reservations. The commitment to Da Nang had alienated various Marine generals who pointed out to Greene that the Corps "was overcommitted . . . and unable to meet any kind of challenge in the Atlantic area."⁵⁵ Army General Arthur Collins, a planning officer who believed that the United States was going to "nibble away at this Vietnamese problem" and that the southern Vietnamese had no will to fight, urged MACV official Bruce Palmer to oppose the moves to the RVN in early 1965.⁵⁶ Collins and the Marines both got nowhere with their complaints. The United States had already passed the point of no return in Vietnam, and in March and April 1965 American policymakers seemed solely concerned with sending more troops to the RVN, not in debating whether they should be there. Within months, by July 1965, the commitment to Vietnam would become irreversible, with Johnson approving a major reinforcement of about 50,000 troops, with more to be deployed "as requested," and increasing draft calls to 35,000 monthly. The war had been "Americanized" despite over a decade of military misgivings, and within a few years, by Tet 1968, the fears and bleak predictions of so many officers had been borne out.

Who's to Blame?

Not surprisingly, with White House and service officials at odds over Vietnam, civil-military relations were at a low point. Indeed, the military, sensing early on that conditions in Vietnam were not conducive to American success, looked for ways to avoid responsibility for what they saw a likely disaster there. So, in addition to fighting a war in Vietnam, U.S. officials found themselves involved in political conflict at home over who would bear the blame for failure in Southeast Asia.

Such concerns were evident early on. In a thorough and candid analysis of the political and military factors that were conditioning U.S. policy in Indochina, the MAAG Commander, Lionel McGarr revealed that the type of political acridity that was dragging down the American experience in Vietnam. The MAAG chief, moving beyond the usual military behavior of accepting orders and trying to find practical solutions for them, even if disagreeing with civilian decisions, actually questioned the assumptions driving the U.S. role in Indochina from not only a military but a political viewpoint as well. To McGarr, it was clear that the military was at odds with the state department, embassy, and Vietnam Task Force appraisals and recommendations for Vietnam. Their reports of deterioration in the south and the urgent need for action from Washington, McGarr wrote to Lemnitzer, were "written primarily for high level civilian consumption to cover [the] State Department with paper in the eventuality that the situation here goes from bad to worse." Recent bleak reports had merely "point[ed] up dangers . . . of which we were already well aware and previously reported." Diplomatic officials, McGarr complained, had only just started "reading their mail" and learning the details of the war.⁵⁷

Clearly McGarr feared that the civilian establishment would try an end run around the military in Saigon so, "for the protection of the Armed Forces of the United States and specifically the Army which runs MAAG Vietnam," he wanted Lemnitzer to see his unfiltered judgment of the "presently worsening situation here." State Department officials, McGarr believed, were overlooking past mistakes and "basic differences of opinion between them and the military" in Vietnam. Both Foggy Bottom and the embassy, he added, had ignored or opposed the need to build up the ARVN and develop counterinsurgency capabilities, and it was only "Kennedy's pronouncements on Vietnam as well as Vice President Johnson's visit here, not to

mention increasing Viet Cong pressure, [that] made [the ARVN increase] imperative." Worse, the RVN's leaders, also bypassing reluctant U.S. military officials, now "feel they can get anything they want, regardless of MAAG recommendations, by going through the Ambassador to top American levels." While McGarr was not as pessimistic as he had a right to be, he did see a "slimmer and slimmer" chance to "pull this one out of the fire." Aware of the political factors involved in developing Vietnam policy, the MAAG chief concluded with striking honesty that "as I am jealous of the professional good name of our Army, I do not wish it to be placed in the position of fighting a losing battle and being charged with the loss."⁵⁸

McGarr's views may be as close as one comes to finding a "smoking gun" on the politics of Vietnam in the Kennedy years. In his report the MAAG chief had crystallized the major factors that were dooming the U.S. experience in Vietnam. Not only clearly recognizable battlefield deterioration--caused principally by an imposing enemy as well as a deficient ally--but, just as importantly, domestic political brawls would make it virtually impossible for America to meet its objectives in Vietnam. Civilian officials apparently felt the same way. In a bluntly honest memorandum to President Johnson in 1964, his close advisor Jack Valenti advised him to "sign on" the JCS before making any "final decisions" about Vietnam. Fearing the "future aftermath" of such decisions, and invoking Omar Bradley's support of Harry Truman at the MacArthur hearings during the Korean War, Valenti wanted the JCS's support of the president's policy to be made public so as to avoid future recriminations. In that way the chiefs "will have been heard, they will have been part of the consensus, and our flank will have been covered in the event of some kind of flap or investigation later."⁵⁹

During the deliberations over sending in combat troops in early 1965, Admiral U.S. Grant

Sharp, the Pacific Commander, was ambivalent over the growing commitment. Though recognizing the deterioration in southern Vietnam, Sharp believed that long-term success would require "a positive statement of national policy and specifically a command decision as to whether or not we are or will participate actively in the fighting in [the] RVN, or whether we will continue to adhere to our long standing policy that this is a Vietnamese war and that we are only advisors."⁶⁰ Sharp, as U.S. officers had done since the original commitments to Southeast Asia, was once more pressing the civilian establishment in Washington to take responsibility for Vietnam.

By mid-1965, service leaders were obviously suspicious of their civilian counterparts and worried about their conduct of the war. Earle Wheeler bemoaned what he saw as "overcontrol and overmanagement" by Pentagon civilians and wanted his field commanders to be free of having "their hands tied by . . . theorists at higher headquarters." Admiral David McDonald, the naval commander, likewise was concerned that Johnson's graduated bombing campaign would fail, but that the president would eventually leave office and "the only group left answerable for the war would be the military."⁶¹ Admiral Sharp explicitly addressed such political considerations in his instructions to Westmoreland. Although the ambassador had already told MACV commanders that they could commit their forces to battle against the VC, and Sharp had reiterated that authorization, the Commander-in-Chief of Pacific Forces [CINCPAC] also urged that Westmoreland "realize that there would be grave political implications involved if sizable U.S. forces are committed for the first time and suffer a defeat." The commander should thus "notify CINCPAC and JCS prior to [the] commitment of any U.S. ground combat force."⁶²

Indeed, such political maneuvering would be an implicit yet critical element in Vietnam

policymaking from that point on because military men were aware that civil-military relations as well as battlefield conditions would determine the nature of U.S. involvement in the war. American officers--although not usually as candid as Sharp in discussing the "grave political implications" of their decisions--did recognize that the president and defense secretary would never authorize unlimited resources or operations in Vietnam. Military policy was not made in a vacuum; public opposition to the war, Johnson's domestic agenda, and international political considerations, as well as the situation on the ground in the RVN, would always be significant elements in the formulation of strategy. The president himself made this clear at a mid-June NSC meeting on Vietnam. To Johnson, dissent at home, trouble in the field, and the threat of PRC intervention meant that the United States had to limit both its means and ends in Vietnam. It thus had to contain the enemy "as much as we can, and as simply as we can, without going all out." By approving Westmoreland's reinforcement request in mid-year, he explained, "we get in deeper and it is harder to get out We must determine which course gives us the maximum protection at the least cost."⁶³

The president's concern about a deeper commitment was revealing, indicating that he would not authorize unlimited resources to or wholly unrestrained operations in Vietnam. Johnson would, however, escalate the war to levels not imagined just years earlier. Military leaders, despite recognizing the risks of intervention in Vietnam and having arrived at no consensus on how to conduct the war, nonetheless continually pressed the White House to expand the U.S. commitment. Unable to develop any new ideas to alter conditions in the RVN, or to admit that they were not likely to reverse the situation there, American officers asked for more of the same. The president in turn would both "get in deeper" but not fully satisfy the

military's requests. Either way, Lyndon Johnson would be responsible for what happened in Vietnam.

As the war continued on, without appreciable improvement, in 1967 and thereafter, civil-military jockeying to avoid blame for the war intensified. The military, in fact, began to plant the idea that they had to fight with "one hand tied behind their backs," a staple of postwar conservative revisionism on the war, while the conflict was in progress. Time and again, though they recognized that the Johnson administration was not going to escalate the war without restraint, take the battle to the north, or activate reserves, military leaders would request those very measures to make the civilians responsible for fighting short-handed, as it were.

Admiral Sharp, in another of his candid political evaluations, virtually admitted as much. The reinforcements that the JCS requested "are simply not going to be provided," he understood. "The country is not going to call up the Reserves and we had best accept that." On the other hand, Sharp, like Marine leaders, saw Westmoreland's plans, a war of attrition, as a "blueprint for defeat." The Pacific commander, as unimaginative as ever, still hoped to rely on air power to alter conditions in Vietnam, but also urged Westmoreland to keep the pressure on the White House. "Continue to state your requirement for forces," he told the commander, "even though you are not going to get them."⁶⁴ Sharp later alleged in his memoirs that politicians in Washington stabbed the military in the back, but the Admiral must have seen the knife headed his way well before the war had ended. Westmoreland too understood the political considerations involved in developing strategy. In a somewhat contradictory reply to Sharp's charges, the commander "caution[ed] against too gloomy an appraisal" of his campaign plans, but he also told the Admiral that their analyses of the situation in Vietnam were "identical."

Accordingly, Westmoreland decided to seek a third course, somewhere between the JCS call for reinforcement and Reserves and his own plans.⁶⁵

In the end, of course, Westmoreland would develop no new approach to the war. Instead he continued to request more troops and resources, despite Sharp's blunt awareness that they would not be forthcoming, and despite similar warnings from Harold K. Johnson. "You are painfully aware of the problems ahead of us," the Army chief cabled Westmoreland, "if we cannot some way to bring our authorized and operating strengths into line." Calling for "personnel economy" and greater "discipline" in requisitioning resources, Johnson asked for the commander's support to stem the problem before the defense department began to investigate the Army's handling of manpower issues.⁶⁶

Everything, of course, would come to a boil in early 1968, as the enemy staged its countrywide Tet Offensive. In the aftermath of Tet, which had undermined Westmoreland's recent claims that there was "light at the end of the tunnel," Wheeler traveled to Saigon where he offered a gloomy appraisal of conditions in Vietnam—his famous "it was a very near thing" report. But he and Westmoreland also requested 206,000 more troops and the activation of about 200,000 reservists. But it was clear that major reinforcement was not forthcoming in February and March 1968. Wheeler recognized the pervading gloom in the White House, admitting that "Tet had a tremendous effect on the American public . . . on leaders of Congress . . . on President Johnson." General Dave Richard Palmer, remembering the April 1967 request, observed that "the ground had already been fought over, the sides were already chosen." As a result, while Wheeler was in Vietnam, Bruce Palmer, now a MACV commander, informed Westmoreland that General Dwight Beach, the Army's Pacific commander, had been aware of the new reinforcement

request and "had commented that it would shock them [Washington officials]."⁶⁷ As Westmoreland himself admitted, he and Wheeler "both knew the grave political and economic implications of a major call-up of reserves." Westmoreland tried to be upbeat but saw that Wheeler was "imbued with the aura of crisis" in Washington and thus had dismissed any optimistic briefings. "In any event," the MACV Commander added, the JCS chair "saw no possibility at the moment of selling reinforcements" unless he adopted an alarmist tone to exploit the sense of crisis. "Having read the newspapers," Westmoreland wondered, "who among them [civilian leaders] would even believe there had been success?" Wheeler's approach to the issue notwithstanding, Westmoreland suspected that "the request may have been doomed from the first in any event" due to long-standing political pressure to de-escalate.⁶⁸

Harold K. Johnson suspected as much. In their initial meetings after the Tet attacks began, the chiefs decided to wait for the dust to settle before making recommendations for future strategy. Within days, however, it was clear that the JCS and MACV did not have that luxury, and would have to make a prompt policy statement. Instead of deliberating over the proper course for the future, Johnson observed, the chiefs just endorsed a program for major reinforcements. "I think this was wrong," the Army chief later asserted. "There should have been better assessment" of the situation before forwarding military plans to the White House. The chiefs, despite their misconceptions, approved the reinforcement request anyway, essentially because they did not want to reject the chair's suggestion. "If you want it bad," Johnson sardonically remarked, "you get it bad."⁶⁹

And the brass did get it bad. Political leaders had also made it clear that substantive reinforcements would not be forthcoming. Even before Tet, the PAVN strike at Khe Sanh had

alarmed Johnson. Now, meeting with his advisors, the president charged that "all of you have counseled, advised, consulted and then--as usual--placed the monkey on my back again . . . I do not like what I am smelling from those cables from Vietnam."⁷⁰ During his first post-Tet press conference the president asserted that he had already added the men that Westmoreland thought were necessary. "We have something under 500,000," Johnson told reporters. "Our objective is 525,000. Most of the combat battalions already have been supplied. There is not anything in any of the developments that would justify the press in leaving the impression that any great new overall moves are going to be made that would involve substantial movements in that direction." By the following week, with more advisors expressing their concern about Tet and the war in general, it was clear to the president that the military could exploit White House division over Vietnam. "I don't want them [military leaders] to ask for something," Johnson worried aloud, "not get it, and have all the blame placed on me."⁷¹

That, to a large degree, was precisely what happened. In the aftermath of Tet and the reinforcement request, Johnson found himself in an untenable position, unable to send more troops to Vietnam given the shocking nature of the enemy offensive, and unwilling to admit defeat and move on. Politically, he was weakened beyond repair, with Democratic Senators Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy opting to challenge for the party's nomination for president, and thereby forcing the President to withdraw from the race, and thus opening the door for Richard Nixon's triumph, based on his pledge to get out of Vietnam. Subsequently, conservatives and military officials began to attack Johnson for his tentative approach to Vietnam, for not activating reserves, for not conducting operations north of the seventeenth parallel, for not giving the military the resources it needed to win, for making American soldiers

fight “with one hand tied behind their back.”

Vietnam Redux?

If David Shoup’s words were an appropriate way to introduce this topic, then Anthony Zinni provides a nice bookend to this topic as one moves on to Iraq. Zinni, a Marine General and past commander of the U.S. Central Command [CENTCOM] as well as a special envoy to the Middle East for the White House, was among the earliest and most outspoken military critics of George Bush’s war on Iraq, and his words, along with many other officers—as in the Vietnam era—offer a compelling indictment of the current war and the political leaders who started it.

In the summer of 2002, as the administration was ramping up for war with its now-discredited claims of Iraqi WMDs and links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda, Zinni was already speaking out. To the General, Iraq was a dangerous diversion from the more critical issues of developing a Middle East peace process, actually giving priority to containing terrorism, and repairing America’s image and political influence. As he saw it, “our relationships in the region [the Middle East] are in major disrepair . . . we need to quit making enemies we don’t need to make enemies out of. And we need to fix those relationships. There’s a deep chasm growing between that part of the world and our part of the world. And it’s strange, about a month after 9/11, they were sympathetic and compassionate toward us. How did it happen over the last year?” Zinni also took a shot at White House civilians who were committed to war against Iraq while well-known military leaders like Norman Schwarzkopf, Brent Scowcroft, Wesley Clark and others had misgivings about intervention. “It might be interesting,” Zinni said to crowd laughter, “to wonder why all the generals see it the same way and all those that never fired a shot in anger and really hell-bent to go to war see it a different way. That’s usually the

way it is in history.”⁷²

At the same time, Brent Scowcroft, a retired Air Force general, past National Security Advisor, and probably the closest colleague of George Herbert Walker Bush, wrote an editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* making similar points. “Any campaign against Iraq, whatever the strategy, cost, and risks, is certain to divert us for some indefinite period from our war on terrorism. Worse, there is a virtual consensus in the world against an attack on Iraq at this time . . . The shared view in the region is that Iraq is principally an obsession of the U.S.” General Joseph Hoar, who as a Marine general was the CENTCOM commander from 1991 to 1994, also warned against intervention in Iraq. In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in August 2002, Hoar maintained that an invasion would be “risky” and unnecessary and was especially concerned that American forces would be virtually alone in Iraq, as Turkey and other regional allies were not supportive of the U.S. mission there. Without allies on the ground, the American commitment would have to be extensive, the general observed, and current troop estimates emanating from the pentagon, in the 70,000-100,000 range, were much too small. “It seems to me at the end of the day,” he pointed out, you’re going to have to put people on the ground.”⁷³

Throughout the fall of 2002, as the administration ratcheted up the pressure on Iraq, Zinni and General Wesley Clark were outspoken voices of dissent. Zinni continued to see Iraq as a sideshow to more important issues, especially the Israeli–Palestine peace process, which he saw as “the single issue that drives everything in the Middle East,” but was “at the lowest point that it’s probably ever been.” Some officials, Zinni pointed out, had argued that a war in Iraq might facilitate the peace process in the region, a notion the general found outlandish—“I don’t know

what planet they're on," he observed, "because it isn't the one that I travel." To Zinni, the larger political crisis in the Middle East meant that Iraq just was not a priority. Saddam, he believed, had been contained by U.N. sanctions and the ongoing inspection process, so Palestine and other issues like encouraging reform in Iran and repairing the American image in the Arab world were far more critical. In his "personal view," as Zinni put it, Iraq "isn't number one; it's maybe sixth or seventh." Perhaps most telling, Zinni anticipated that, after a successful intervention, serious problems would emerge. As he explained, "Expectations grow rapidly. The initial euphoria can wear off. People have the idea that Jeffersonian democracy, entrepreneurial economics and all these great things are going to come. If they are not delivered immediately, do not seem to be on the rise, and worse yet, if the situation begins to deteriorate -- if there is tribal revenge, factional splitting, still violent elements in the country making statements that make it more difficult, institutions that are difficult to reestablish, infrastructure damage, I think that initial euphoria could wane away. It's not whether you're greeted in the streets as a hero; it's whether you're still greeted as a hero when you come back a year from now."⁷⁴

As Zinni was making the rounds trying to temper the Bush administration rush to war, another respected general, Wesley Clark, was actively dissenting as well. Clark had been the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe from 1997-2000 and prosecuted the Kosovo attacks as such. To Clark, that intervention had succeeded because it had multilateral support and was done under NATO auspices, but the Bush "war on terror" was taking on an increasingly unilateral character, which would lead to American isolation and even further damage relations with Middle Eastern states. With regard to Iraq specifically, Clark was more blunt, and bleak. While he assumed that the initial invasion would be short and successful, the longer-term consequences

of a war in Iraq would be much more troubling. The food distribution and health care systems were likely break down, while there would be “violence and revenge” in the streets as the old regime fell apart. Even worse, a quick and devastating defeat of Iraq would cause “a deepening of the Arab sense of humiliation across the region” as they saw the U.S. triumph as “a reimposition of colonialism” in a war which they believed was principally fought for control of the world’s oil supply, and, Clark cautioned, “there is little our American soldiers can do to prevent this.”⁷⁵

As the White House continued to sound the war alarms in the fall and winter of 2002, the generals continued to speak out. Zinni, in a prescient analysis before the Center for Defense Information, an organization of retired officers critical of American foreign policy, offered ten conditions for a successful military campaign in Iraq, which included building a coalition to intervene; keeping the destruction to a minimum; keeping “the street, the populace, quiet; maintaining public order; sharing the burden with allies and the Iraqis; making certain that the change in power from Saddam to a new regime is orderly; taking care to see that “the military is not stuck” in Iraq; and continuing to meet other commitments.⁷⁶ Zinni’s concerns apparently were shared by active-duty officers as well. The Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, and the Marine Commandant, General James Jones, were reported to be worried by “excessive confidence” in the pentagon that any resistance to the American presence would collapse quickly, and they warned that a campaign in Iraq could be “a protracted and bloody affair.” To some degree, such blunt appraisals reflected their fears about war in Iraq, but they were also part of civil-military tensions, as in the Vietnam era, between the brass and the Secretary of Defense. As soon as the U.S. began planning to invade Iraq, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Donald Rumsfeld, the Defense Secretary, had planned on a quick invasion with a light force and a short

occupation, while service chiefs advocated longer-range planning with a much larger force for both the invasion and inevitable occupation.⁷⁷

Indeed, the debate the number of US forces needed in Iraq would serve as a defining issue in the war and the greatest source of friction between Rumsfeld and his military subordinates. Unlike most policy conflicts, which are kept inside the pentagon or gradually leaked to the press, this debate was public from the first. In February 2002 the Army Chief, Shinseki, appearing before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, publicly disagreed with Rumsfeld's estimates on the troop strength needed in Iraq. While Rumsfeld and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, insisted that the war could be fought and Iraq occupied with no more than 100,000 forces, Shinseki insisted that "several hundred thousand soldiers" would be needed to fight the war and then pacify the country. Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz were visibly irritated by Shinseki's numbers, finding them "far off the mark" and claiming that a smaller force would be adequate because there was no history of ethnic strife in Iraq, as there had been in Kosovo, and that the Iraqi people would welcome the Americans as liberators.⁷⁸

The warnings of Zinni, Clark, Hoar, Shinseki and others notwithstanding, the Bush administration attacked Iraq on 19 March 2003, and within weeks U.S. soldiers were facing many of the problems the officers had anticipated in the run-up to the war, which led in turn to more military criticism and civil-military acrimony. Although the invasion itself did not meet much resistance and Bush declared an end to major combat operations, and "one victory" in the war on terror and Iraq, during a photo opportunity aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln with a "Mission Accomplished" banner in the background, military leaders were not as sanguine. Although Rumsfeld and Commanding General Tommy Franks believed that continued fighting

by fedayeen, Iraqi paramilitaries, were merely speedbumps on the way to quelling Baghdad and the entire country, many other commanders believed that the continued insurgency represented a larger threat. The Army commander in the Gulf, General William Wallace, angered pentagon officials when he publicly anticipated a longer and tougher war than initially projected. “The enemy we’re fighting is a bit different than the one we war-gamed against,” he admitted, “because of those paramilitary forces. We knew they were here, but we did not know how they would fight.”⁷⁹ Wallace’s words seemed to open up a spigot of military criticism in late March and early April 2003, especially as American forces, despite Rumsfeld’s denials, had a “pause” in the war to meet logistics demands. The media reported that Rumsfeld had continued to refuse the generals’ requests for more troops, perhaps as many as six times, and micromanaged the conflict to the military’s constant frustration. One colonel, speaking off-the-record, blasted the defense secretary, observing that “he wanted to fight this war on the cheap. He got what he wanted.” In late May, after Bush’s virtual declaration of victory, Marine General David McKiernan countered that “the war has not ended”, and that continuing guerrilla attacks by Saddam loyalists “are not criminal activities, they are combat activities”. Other officers contended that the problems facing American troops in Iraq had vindicated Shinseki’s testimony before congress, and relations between the military and civilian establishments were being compared to the acrimony that was present during the tenure of Robert McNamara during the Vietnam⁸⁰

Amid the unusual criticism from officers in the field, the retired generals weighed in as well. Joseph Hoar, writing on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*, criticized Rumsfeld for ignoring military advice on the troops strength needed in Iraq and for seeming to transfer

responsibility for problems there to the military rather than be accountable himself. Wesley Clark insisted that Iraq was not a theater in the war on terror, but a diversion from it, and early on observed that a quick victory was “not going to happen” due to the continued resistance of Iraqis to the American presence—“plenty of venom” against the U.S. remained, he observed—and the failure of Americans to enlist a larger group of allies in the war. Zinni was more direct. “This is in fact the wrong war at the wrong time,” he remarked. “We’re applying military action to places where it isn’t necessary,” and, if continued, he did not believe that Americans “will stand for a series of wars like this.” As Zinni saw it, the Arab world would be relieved that Saddam was ousted from power, but “on the other hand, there will be great apprehension about this world power that bullied its way in, ignored international arguments and now has decided to impose a form of government on this country.”⁸¹

As the dissent of the brass continued, the chair of the Joint Chiefs, General Richard Myers, publicly rebuked officers, active-duty and retired, as “misinformed, inaccurate and harmful to American forces in combat.” Myers specifically targeted media analysts like Wesley Clark and General Barry McCaffrey, claiming that criticizing the war on television had become “great sport here inside the Beltway.” These critics, he added, “either weren’t there, or they don’t know, or they’re working another agenda. It is not helpful to have those kind of comments come out when we’ve got troops in combat.” McCaffrey, however, took a shot at Rumsfeld in return. “This war is too important to be left to the secretary alone,” he asserted. “At the end of the day I think they ought to value my public opinion.”⁸² Shinseki, who gained increasing credibility throughout 2003 as his prewar appraisals were proven right—some classmates reportedly wore “Ric Was Right” caps at his West Point Reunion—offered his public opinion too, lamenting that

the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq “didn’t have to be this difficult.” Shinseki, like Clark and others, particularly criticized the administration for its unilateral approach in the Middle East. “We will need the help of others, our friends, our allies and even former adversaries,” he observed.⁸³

By the latter part of 2003, the military and pentagon, reminiscent of Vietnam, were engaged in a virulent political battle over the war. The journalist Seymour Hersh, who always had impressive contacts in the military, reported in November that Rumsfeld was contemptuous of many of the Clinton-era generals still in the pentagon and he complained that many of them had “the slows,” invoking Lincoln’s attack on General George McLellan during the Civil War. Military men, however, countered that Rumsfeld simply did not anticipate the problems encountered in Iraq, so he provided American forces with insufficient equipment—from tanks to armored vehicles to personal armor—and inadequate reserves. One general lamented that Rumsfeld and his colleagues “believed their own propaganda” and, instead of planning for warfare, relied on “McNamara-like intimidation by . . . a small cell.”⁸⁴ Zinni was even more angry, and blunt. Speaking before Marine and Naval officers, the general invoked his previous experience to condemn the current situation. “My contemporaries, our feelings and sensitivities were forged on the battlefields of Vietnam,” he said passionately, “where we heard the garbage and the lies and we saw the sacrifice. I ask you, is it happening again?” Indeed, Zinni’s experience in Southeast Asia was forming his opinions of Iraq. While recovering from serious wounds from an AK-47 attack, he promised himself “if I’m ever in a position to say what I think is right, I will . . . I don’t care what happens to my career.” As early as 1998 Zinni had publicly argued that a “weakened, fragmented, chaotic Iraq, which could happen if this isn’t done

carefully, is more dangerous in the long run than a contained Saddam is now.” Five years later, the general’s views seemed prescient. Even Saddam’s capture, he contended, would provide only a short morale boost. “Since we’ve failed thus far to capitalize” on any opportunities in the war, “I don’t have confidence we will do it now. I believe the only way it will work out now is for the Iraqis themselves to somehow take charge and turn things around. Our policy, strategy, tactics, et cetera, are still screwed up.” Wesley Clark likewise continued to criticize the war, even calling for a full congressional investigation into why the U.S. invaded Iraq. “We don’t know what the motivation was. We just don’t know. We’ve spent \$180 billion on it, we’ve lost 480 Americans, we’ve got 2/500 with life-changing injuries . . . “ Going beyond his critique of the war, Clark added that he feared “we’re at risk with our democracy” because Bush headed “the most closed, imperialistic, nastiest administration in living memory. They even put Richard Nixon to shame. They are a threat to what the nation stands for, and we need to get him out of the White House.”⁸⁵

Clark’s verbal bombshells were part of a much larger campaign of military dissent as the war dragged on. By mid-2004, as the first anniversary of the start of the Iraq campaign passed, more dissension among military leaders was visible. Thomas Ricks, the well-regarded military writer for the *Washington Post* began an analysis of the war in May with the observation that “deep divisions are emerging at the top of the U.S. military over the course of the occupation of Iraq, with some senior officers beginning to say that the United States faces the prospect of casualties for years to come without achieving its goal of establishing a free and democratic Iraq.” Many officers, echoing Vietnam, noted that American forces were causing large numbers of enemy casualties but not achieving strategic successes. One senior general at the pentagon

bluntly observed that the U.S. was likely to lose in Iraq; “it is doubtful we can go on much longer like this,” he believed. “The American people may not stand for it—and they should not.” The general, like so many other officers, singled out Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz for blame, both because they did not have a coherent war strategy or an exit strategy. One younger general likewise criticized the pentagon’s leadership. “Like a lot of senior Army guys, I’m quite angry” at the Bush administration, he admitted and listed two reasons—“One is, I think they are going to break the Army,” and even worse, “I don’t think they care.” Zinni similarly went after the pentagon’s leaders, accusing Rumsfeld and his associates of “at a minimum, true dereliction, negligence and irresponsibility, at worse, lying, incompetence and corruption.”⁸⁶

Indeed, dissenting generals played an increasing role in the public debate in 2004, in large measure because many of them endorsed and worked for the election of John Kerry, the Democratic challenger to Bush. At the same time, media reports on generals who were criticizing Bush became common. General Jack Keane, who had been Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, testified before the House Armed Services Committee that the pentagon had been “seduced by Iraqi exiles” and thus engaged in unrealistic planning for the invasion, and discounted the likelihood of an insurgency. General Hoar added that it was “ludicrous” to believe that the war was going well. “There are no good options,” he believed, just barely a year after the campaign began. “We’re conducting a campaign as though it were being conducted in Iowa, no sense of the realities on the ground. It’s so unrealistic for anyone who knows that part of the world. The priorities are just all wrong.” General William Odom, past head of Army Intelligence and an NSC official, scoffed at the White House’s optimistic reports on the war. “Bush hasn’t found the WMD. Al-Qaida, it’s worse, he’s lost on that front. That he’s going to

achieve a democracy there? That goal is lost, too. It's lost. Right now, the course we're on, we're achieving Bin Laden's ends." Odom then strikingly claimed that Iraq was already "far graver than Vietnam. There wasn't as much at stake strategically, though in both cases we mindlessly went ahead with the war that was not constructive for US aims. But now we're in a region far more volatile, and we're in much worse shape with our allies."⁸⁷

Not surprising, such views could have consequences. In May 2005 General John Riggs was forced into retirement and lost one of his stars because of infractions that were considered too minor to be even entered into his official record. Riggs' real offense, many of his fellow officers claimed, was being too critical of Rumsfeld's conduct of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, in particular his decision to fight the war without the troop strength recommended by Army officers like Shinseki. Army General Jay Garner, who was the first head of reconstruction in Iraq appointed by Bush, observed that, in the pentagon, "They all went batshit when that happened. The military part of [Rumsfeld's office] has been politicized. If [officers] disagree, they are ostracized and their reputations are ruined." General Odom, however, was retired and more free to speak out, and in the summer of 2005 went further than any of his colleagues but openly advocating that the U.S. "cut and run" from Iraq. Since Bush and his supporters were often accusing war critics of advocating "cutting and running" from Iraq, Odom took the question head on. As the general saw it, the various reasons against pulling out had little or no merit. American forces were already involved in a civil war, he argued, which began when the U.S. invaded and could not be ended by a continued presence there. Nor, the general added, was it possible for the U.S. to create a democratic government in Iraq, so remaining in-country for that reason was invalid. "Any government capable of holding power in Iraq will be anti-American,"

he observed, “because the Iraqi people are increasingly becoming anti-American.” As Odom saw it, Bush’s statements about progress in Iraq were becoming too similar to Lyndon Johnson’s statements during the Vietnam War. Iraq, the general also believed, was actually making the so-called war on terror harder to conduct, since Iraq had become a breeding ground for anti-American terrorists. Odom also believed the global consequences could be dreadful, as the U.S. lost prestige among allies, as the war potentially spread to other areas in the region, and as Iranian influence grew as a direct result of the American occupation of its neighboring country. To Odom, the Iraq War was the greatest strategic mistake that the U.S. had ever made and it had the potential to undermine the very ideology of constitutional democracy given the unilateral and summary way the Bush administration had acted.⁸⁸

Odom’s criticism was not unique, and by 2006, as the American intervention in Iraq surpassed the length of U.S. involvement in World War II, military dissent was stronger than ever. In January Colin Powell’s deputy at the State Department, Colonel Larry Wilkerson, charged that Iraq policy had been taken over by a “cabal” at the pentagon and that the war demonstrated “the worst ineptitude in governance, decision-making and leadership I’ve seen in 50-plus years . . . That includes the Bay of Pigs, that includes—oh my God, Vietnam. That includes Iran-Contra, Watergate . . .” While Wilkerson was making a media splash with his charges, an army report concluded that American forces in Iraq were stretched to the breaking point due to inadequate troop levels and being overextended. With recruiting numbers down and young officers leaving the services at a much higher than usual rate, the army had become a “thin green line,” as Colonel Andrew Krepinevich, lead author of the study, pointed out. Rumsfeld, however, ostensibly dismissed the report, merely claiming that the troops were “battle hardened”

and able to fight on.⁸⁹

Rumsfeld, by this point, was even more of a lightning rod for criticism and the level of public opprobrium for the defense secretary among military leaders was unprecedented. In April, several retired officers –including General Paul Easton, who had been in charge of training the Iraqi Army in 2003 and 2004; Zinni; Riggs; Clark; Hoar; General Gregory Newbold, a Marine who had been the military’s ranking operations officer during the run-up to the war; General John Batiste, who commanded an Army division in Iraq in the early stages of the war; General Charles Swannack, who had commanded the 82d Airborne in Iraq; Marine General Paul Van Riper, a veteran of Vietnam and Desert Storm and lecturer at the National Defense University; General David Irvine, an Army expert on interrogation and military law; and Rear Admiral John D. Hutson, who served as the Navy’s Judge Advocate General from 1997 to 2000—called on Rumsfeld to resign.⁹⁰ Bush, naturally, dismissed the generals’s criticism, but the demand for the defense secretary’s ouster truly had shown how badly the U.S. experience in Iraq had devolved. Even during the depths of Vietnam there had not been such a public outcry by military officials in defiance of civilian leadership.

Collectively, the dissent of military officials, some retired and publically critical, some on-duty and anonymous in their blunt and often bleak views, offers a striking and insightful glimpse into the way the Iraq War unfolded. Many of the generals who opposed the war did so prior to the invasion of March 2003 and time has proven their evaluations at the time to be prescient. U.S. forces remain mired down in Iraq, as Zinni, Clark, Hoar and so many others anticipated. The insurgency in Iraq grows, there is no sign of a democratic renaissance in Baghdad, casualty numbers go up daily, and the so-called war on terror remains a sideshow to the

quagmire in the Middle East.

Like David Shoup and so many Vietnam-era military officials, U.S. generals in the twenty-first century have spoken out against a war that not only is costing huge amounts of blood and treasure but also is daily damaging American interests all over the globe.

1. Shoup speech at Junior College World Affairs Day, Los Angeles, 14 May 1966, reprinted in U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Present Situation in Vietnam*, 90th cong., 2d sess., 1968, 47 [hereafter cited as SCFR, with hearing title].
2. Commanding General (hereafter CG), U.S. Forces, India-Burma Theatre, memorandum to War Department, CG, U.S. Forces, China Theatre, and CG, U.S. Army Liaison Section in Kandy, Ceylon, 11 September 1945, CRAX 27516, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Record Group 218, Chairman's File, Admiral Leahy, 1942-1948, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter RG 218, with appropriate filing information); Gallagher, Hanoi, to General R.B. McClure, Kunming, 20 September 1945, in ed. Gareth Porter, *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions* (Stanfordville, N.Y., 1979), volume I: 77-8, document 41 (hereafter cited as Porter, *Vietnam*, with appropriate volume, page, and document designations). See also Report on Office of Strategic Services' "Deer Mission" by Major Allison Thomas, 17 September 1945, Porter, *Vietnam*, I: 74-7, doc. 40; memorandum for the record: General Gallagher's Meeting with Ho Chi Minh, 29 September 1945, *ibid.*, I:80-1, doc. 44; and U.S. Congress, House Committee on Armed Services, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967: Study Prepared by the Department of Defense*, 12 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1971), Book 1, I.C.3., C-66-104 (hereafter *USVN Relations* with appropriate volume and page designations).
3. Marshall telegram to Caffery in Paris, 13 May 1947, in Porter, *Vietnam*, I:145-46, doc. 101; Marshall telegram to Caffery, 3 July 1948, *ibid.*, I:176-77, doc. 118. See also Marshall telegram to Reed, 17 July 1947, *ibid.*, I:156-57, doc. 104; It became standard practice for the military to question any large commitment to Vietnam. In JCS studies of national security priorities in 1947, Southeast Asia was consistently ranked at the bottom, while officials in the Navy and War Departments more specifically recognized Ho Chi Minh's Bovertures to the United States and realized that he was not a puppet of Stalin. Melvyn P. Leffler, *Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Palo Alto, CA., 1992), 148, 166.
4. JCS 1992/4, "U.S. Policy Toward Southeast Asia," 9 July 1949, 092 Asia to Europe, case 40, Records of the U.S. Army Staff, Record Group 319 (hereafter RG 319, with appropriate filing information); Plans and Operations position paper, "U.S. Position with Respect to Indochina, 25 February 1950," RG 319, G-3 091 Indochina, TS.
5. JSPC 958/5, "U.S. Military Measures in Southeast Asia," RG 218, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48), section 9; U.S. Minutes of U.S.-U.K. Political-Military Conversations, 26 October 1950, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950* (Washington, 1976), 3:1696 (hereafter cited as *FRUS* with appropriate year, volume, and page designations).
6. Substance of Discussion of State-JCS Meeting at the Pentagon Building, 21 December 1951, *FRUS, 1951* (Washington, 1977) 6:568-70; and JSPC memorandum to JCS, "Conference with France and Britain on Southeast Asia," JSPC 958/58, 22 December 1951, RG 218, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48), section 20.

7. Substance of discussion of State-JCS Meeting at the Pentagon Building, 10 July 1953, *FRUS, 1952-1954* 13:648ff.
8. JCS Paper, "The Situation in Indochina," 7 February 1954, RG 218, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48), section 57.
9. Andrew Rotter, *The Path to Vietnam: Origins of the American Commitment to Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1987) ; Lloyd Gardner, *Approaching Vietnam: From World War II to Dienbienphu* (New York, 1988) ; William Borden, *The Pacific Alliance: United States Foreign Economic Policy and Japanese Trade Recovery, 1947-1954* (Madison, WI, 1984).
10. Army position on NSC Action 1074-A, n.d., *USVN Relations*, Book 1, II.B.1., B-10, Book 9, 333; Chief of Staff, USA, memorandum to JCS, 6 April 1954, *FRUS, 1952-1954* 13:1269-70; Ridgway quoted in Robert Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History* (Garden City, N.Y., 1975), 817-8; Ridgway interview with Maurice Matloff, 2-6, Military History Institute [MHI]. See also JCS memorandum for Secretary of Defense, "Indochina," 8 April 1954, RG 218, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) section 62; *PP-Gravel* I:93; CSUSA memorandum to JCS, "Reconnaissance of Indochina and Thailand," JCS 1992/359, 14 July 1954, 15 July 1954, RG 218, CCS 092 (6-25-48), section 75; Ridgway, *Soldier*, 276.
11. JCS memorandum for Secretary of Defense, "French Request for Additional Aid," 27 April 1954, RG 330, Records of the Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs [ASD/ISA], 091 Indochina, May-December 1954.
12. General Thomas Trapnell comments at debriefing, 3 May 1954, *USVN Relations*, Book 9, 406-20.
13. Supplement to Outline Plan for Conducting Military Operations in Indochina with United States and French Union Forces, Spring (April-May) 1954, RG 319, G-3 091, Indochina TS (5 April 1954) FW 23/5.
14. JCS 1992/334, "Military Situation in Tonkin Delta," 7 June 1954, RG 218, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48), section 71; ; JCS 1992/348, "Rhee Offer of One Corps for Commitment in Indochina," 29 June 1954, RG 218 CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48), section 73; Wilson in 215th Meeting of National Security Council, 24 September 1954, Dwight Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File--NSC Series, Box 6; Gavin, G-3, memorandum for Chief of Staff, USA, "Military Implications of Cease-Fire Agreements in Indochina," 22 July 1954, RG 319, G-3 091 Indochina. See also JCS memorandum for Secretary of Defense, sub: Additional Aid for Indochina, 24 June 1954, RG 330, ASD/ISA 091 Indochina, May-December 1954.
15. JCS 1992/287, "Preparations of Department of Defense Regarding Negotiations on Indochina for the Forthcoming Geneva Conference," 11 March 1954, RG 218, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48), section 59. See also JCS memorandum for Secretary of Defense, 12 March 1954, *USVN Relations*, Book 9, 266-70. On the inevitability of Communist victory in any elections in

Vietnam see George McT. Kahin, *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam* (Garden City, NY, 1987), 53, 450; Admiral Edwin T. Layton, Deputy Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff, memorandum for Director Joint Staff, 22 December 1955, "Emerging Pattern--South Vietnam," RG 218, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48), section 17.

16. Lansdale Team's Report on Covert Saigon Mission in 1954 and 1955, *Pentagon Papers--Senator Gravel Edition [PP-Gravel]* I:573-83, doc. 95; G-3 Staff Study, "Long-Range (Through FY 56) for Development of Minimal Forces Necessary to Provide Internal Security for South Vietnam," 2 November 1954, RG 319, G-3 091 Indochina.

17. JCS 1992/412, "Indochina," 5 November 1954, RG 218, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48), section 86.

18. Collins to Dulles, 20 January 1955, *DDRS*, 78, 295A; Collins to Dulles, 13 December 1954, *USVN Relations*, Book 1, IV. A. 3., 20-22; Many of Collins's reports from Vietnam can be found in *FRUS*, Vietnam, 1955-57 (Washington, 1985), 1:200-370. See also David Anderson, J. Lawton Collins, John Foster Dulles, and the Eisenhower Administration's 'Point of No Return' in Vietnam," *Diplomatic History* 12 (Spring 1988): 127-47.

19. To Eisenhower and Dulles, it was Collins, not Diem, who might have to be replaced. During a meeting with the president in early March 1955, Eisenhower told Dulles to consider replacing Collins with Maxwell Taylor and suggested that a special law be developed to allow the general to serve as special ambassador without giving up his military rank. Taylor, however, became the Army chief shortly thereafter, while Collins was replaced by Elbridge Durbrow, who became ambassador to the RVN. Dulles's Memorandum of Conversation with the President, 7 March 1955, White House Memorandum Series, John Foster Dulles File, folder: Meetings with the President (7), Eisenhower Library.

20. Anderson, *Trapped By Success: The Eisenhower Administration and Vietnam* (New York, 1991), chapters 5 and 6.

21. F.W. Moorman memorandum to Gavin, "Indochina," 11 May 1954, RG 319, CS 091 Indochina; JCS 1992/367, "U.S. Assumption of Training Responsibility in Indochina," 3 August 1954, RG 218, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48), section 77. See also *USVN Relations*, Book 1, III.A.2., A-19-20; Cable, CH MAAG to DEPT AR, 20 June 1954, NR: MG1750A, RG 218, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48), section 72; *USVN Relations*, Book 1, IV.A.3., 7-9, and Book 10, 701-02; Gavin and Adams to Ridgway, "U.S. Policy Toward Indochina," 10 August 1954, RG 319, G-3 091 Indochina. For background on military criticism regarding training see *USVN Relations*, Book 2, IV, A. 4., 2-5; Brink to General Reuben Jenkins, Office of Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, Department of Army, 16 April 1952, 091 Indo-China 1952, RG 218, Chair's File, General Bradley; memorandum of conversation, Director PPS (Nitze), 12 May 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-1954 13:141-4; JSPC memorandum to JCS, "Report of U.S. Joint Military Mission to Indochina," JCS 1992/246, 3 November 1953, RG 218, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) section 48; Admiral Davis memorandum to Nash, "U.S. Military Advisors in Indochina," 27 November 1953, RG 330,012.2-742 Indochina.

22. Gavin and Adams to Ridgway, "U.S. Policy toward Indochina," 10 August 1954, RG 319, G-3 091 Indochina.
23. CH MAAG, Vietnam, telegram to CINCPAC, 9 June 1956, RG 218, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48), section 23.
24. CS Bulletin, MAAG, n.d., Williams Papers, box 1, folder 138, MHI, emphasis in original.
25. Arleigh Burke Oral History, (Columbia Oral History Project), 165-72, Eisenhower Library.
26. Lyman Lemnitzer Oral History, (Columbia Oral History Project), 46-8, Eisenhower Library.
27. Collins interview at Combat Studies Institute, Army Command and General Staff College, 14, MHI.
28. Lewis Fields Oral History, 251, Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard, [Hereafter cited as MCHC with appropriate information].
29. David Anderson, *Trapped by Success*, 133.
30. Hilsman Memorandum, 9 May 1962, Hilsman Papers, box 2, folder 6, JFKL. This document, a hecticly-written, somewhat stream-of-consciousness effort, was untitled, but a close reading indicates that Hilsman, who referred to himself in the third person singular throughout, was the author; Hilsman also quoted in Stephen E. Pelz, "Documents: 'When Do I Have Time to Think?' John F. Kennedy, Roger Hilsman, and the Laotian Crisis of 1962," *Diplomatic History* 3 (Spring 1979), 22; It is indeed ironic that Hilsman would score the military's alleged softness in Indochina in May 1962, for the JCS--urging a military emphasis in Vietnam--had criticized his "Strategic Concept for South Vietnam" which had viewed the insurgency as a primarily political problem and urged a program of civic action. Hilsman report, "A Strategic concept for South Vietnam," 2 February 1962, *FRUS*, Vietnam, 1962, 73-90; "Memorandum of a Discussion at Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting," 9 February 1962, *Ibid.*, 113-6.
31. McGeorge Bundy to Johnson, 27 January 1965, NSC History--Troop Deployment, UPA, emphasis in original; see also M. Bundy 1557 to Taylor, 28 January 1965, NSC History --Troop Deployment, UPA; Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency* (New York, 1971), 122-3.
32. Maxwell Taylor Oral History, interview by Ted Gittinger, 14 September 1981, interview 3, 2-5, Lyndon B. Johnson Library [LBJL], Austin, Tx.
33. McGeorge Bundy to Johnson, 24 July 1965, "The History of Recommendations for Increased US Forces in Vietnam," VN C.F., NSF, box 74-75, folder: 2 E, 5/65-7/65, 1965 Troop Decision, LBJL.
34. Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares* (New York, 1972), 333-4.

35. Westmoreland analysis in Taylor 2058 to Johnson, 5 January 1965, *The War in Vietnam: Classified Histories by the National Security Council*. University Publications of America. "Deployment of Major U.S. Forces to Vietnam: July 1965." and *Declassified Documents Reference System (DDRS)*, 83, 2793.
36. Harold K. Johnson, MHI Oral History Program, 8, Center of Military History (CMH), Washington, D.C..
37. Taylor to Johnson, 6 January 1965, NSC History--Troop Deployment, UPA; see also Taylor to Johnson, 27 January 1965, NSC History--Troop Deployment, UPA; Taylor to Johnson, 2 February 1965, *DDRS*, 77, 34D.
38. Among the missions for the 34 battalions would be protection of 23,000 U.S. military personnel, 16 airfields, 9 communications centers, 1 large POL storage area, and 289 separate installations where Americans lived or worked. Taylor 2056 to Johnson, 6 January 1965, NSC History--Troop Deployment, UPA.
39. Taylor to M. Bundy, 1 February 1965, NSC History--Troop Deployment, UPA; Westmoreland also pointed out that, amid the political turmoil of late January, ARVN soldiers in Da Nang were participating in anti-U.S. demonstrations. Westmoreland Memorandum for the Record, 28 January 1965, "Discussion with General Khanh," Westmoreland Papers, box 5, folder: #13 History Backup (I), LBJL.
40. Taylor to Johnson, 2 February 1965, *DDRS*, 77, 34D.
41. McGeorge Bundy to Johnson, 27 January 1965, "Re: Basic Policy in Vietnam," NSC History--Troop Deployment, UPA; see also Dean Rusk with Richard Rusk, *As I Saw It*, edited by Daniel S. Papp (New York, 1990), 447; Johnson, *Vantage Point*, 122-3.
42. Taylor 2052 to Johnson, 6 January 1965, NSC History--Troop Deployment, UPA; Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, 329-38.
43. Bundy in Halberstam, *The Best and The Brightest* (New York, 1972), 646.
44. McGeorge Bundy to Johnson, 7 February 1965, "The Situation in Vietnam," NSF, NSC Meetings File, box 1, folder: volume 3, tab 29, LBJL; see also Johnson, *Vantage Point*, 125-8.
45. McGeorge Bundy, 7 February 1965, "A Policy of Sustained Reprisal," *P.P.-Gravel*, 3: 687-9; see also sources cited in previous note.
46. Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam* (New York, 1989), 56-62.
47. Colonel H.M. Darmstandler, 15 December 1967, "Chronology of Significant Requests and Decisions Affecting the Air War Against North Vietnam," Warnke-McNaughton, box 7, folder:

VNS 2 [Vietnam, 1966-1968] (1), LBJL; JCS to CINCPAC, 12 February 1965, "Courses of Action Southeast Asia--First 8 Weeks," NSC History--Troop Deployment, UPA; for the JCS's air plans see Annex to JCS to McNamara, 7 March 1965, "Air Strike Program Against North Vietnam," VN C.F., NSF, box 193, folder: Vietnam, JCS Memos, volume 1 [2 of 2], LBJL.

48. Vincent Demma, "Suggestions for the Use of Ground Forces, June 1964-March 1965." Unpublished Manuscript, CMH.

49. William Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, NY, 1976), 115.

50. Westmoreland to Sharp, 27 February 1965, "Use of U.S. Air Power," Westmoreland Papers, box 5, folder: #13 History Backup, LBJL; see also Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 123.

51. Demma, "Suggestions for Ground Forces"; DePuy in William Gibbons, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part III: January-July 1965* (Princeton, NJ, 1989). 125.

52. Taylor 2699 to Rusk, 22 February 1965, NSC History--Troop Deployment, UPA.

53. Taylor 3003 to Secretary of State, 16 March 1965, NSC History--Troop Deployment, UPA.

54. MACV Command History, 1965, 31.

55. General Norman Anderson, Oral History, 170-2, MCHC.

56. Gibbons, *Government and Vietnam War*, 170.

57. McGarr to Lemnitzer, 12 October 1961, *FRUS*, Vietnam, 1961, 347-59.

58. See sources in previous note. Ironically, McGarr has been essentially ignored in all major works on Vietnam, but, with the publication of the *FRUS* volumes on Vietnam, the MAAG chief's insight and worries about the war are clear.

59. Valenti to Johnson, 14 November 1964, CF, CO 312, VN, box 12, folder: CO 312, Vietnam, 1964-65, LBJL. A handwritten note at the bottom of the document indicates that the president discussed this memorandum with Valenti.

60. Sharp to Wheeler and Westmoreland, 26 February 1965, "Security Situation in Southeast Asia," Westmoreland Papers, box 5, folder: #13 History Backup, LBJL.

61. Wheeler and McDonald in Richard K. Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises* (Cambridge, MA, 1971), 11.

62. U.S.G. Sharp to Westmoreland in NMCC to White House, 13 June 1965, NSC History--Troop Deployment, UPA; for background see Westmoreland to Taylor, 3 June 1965, "Authority

for the Commitment of US Ground Combat Forces," Westmoreland Papers, folder 511: #16 History Backup, 10 May-30 June 1965, Washington National Records Center [WNRC], Suitland, MD; Taylor 4036 to Secretary of State, 3 June 1965, NSC History--Troop Deployment, UPA.

63. Bromley Smith, summary Notes of 552d NSC Meeting, June 11, 1965, NSF, NSC Meetings File, box 1, folder: volume 3, tab 34, LBJL; see also Kahin, *Intervention*, 348-52.

64. Sharp to Westmoreland, 13 June 1967, Westmoreland v. CBS, LC, box 18, folder: MACV Backchannel Messages to Westmoreland, 1-30 June 1967, WNRC.

65. Westmoreland MAC 5601 to Sharp, 13 June 1967, Westmoreland v. CBS, LC, box 18, folder: MACV Backchannel Messages from Westmoreland, 1-30 June 1967, WNRC; U.S.G. Sharp, *Strategy for Defeat: Vietnam in Retrospect* (San Rafael, CA, 1978).

66. Johnson WDC 8419 to Westmoreland, 27 June 1967, Westmoreland v. CBS, LC, box 18, MACV Backchannel Messages to Westmoreland, 1-30 June 1967, WNRC.

67. Wheeler in Merle Miller, *Lyndon: An Oral Biography* (New York, 1980), 611; Dave Richard Palmer, *Summons of the Trumpet: U.S.-Vietnam in Perspective* (San Rafael, CA, 1978), 261; Record of COMUSMACV Fonecon with General Palmer, 0850, 25 February 1968, Westmoreland Papers, folder 450: Fonecons, February 1968, WNRC.

68. Westmoreland added, disingenuously it would seem, that he and Wheeler "had developed our plans primarily from the military viewpoints, and we anticipated that other, nonmilitary considerations would be brought to bear on our proposals during an intensive period of calm and rational deliberation." Westmoreland paper, "The Origins of the Post-Tet 1968 Plans for Additional Forces in the Republic of Vietnam," April 1970, Westmoreland Papers, folder 493 [1 of 2]: #37 History Files, 1 January-31 June 1970, WNRC; Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 469. Ironically, both Westmoreland and Gabriel Kolko believe that Wheeler was trying to exploit the circumstances of Tet with his alarmist reports in order to get reinforcements and a reserve callup. In Kolko's case, however, he argues that Wheeler was "conniving" for more troops principally to meet U.S. needs elsewhere, see *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, The United States, and the Modern Historical Experience* (New York, 1985), 315.

69. Harold K. Johnson interview, MHI Senior Officer Debriefing Project, section 11, 14-5, used at CMH.

70. Notes of the President's Meeting with Senior Foreign Policy Advisors, 9 February 1968, Tom Johnson's Meeting Notes, box 2, folder: February 9, 1968--10:15 p.m., LBJL.

71. Johnson in *NYT*, 2 February 1968; Notes of the President's Meeting with Senior Foreign Affairs Advisory Council, 10 February 1968, Tom Johnson's Meeting Notes, Box 2, Folder: February 10, 1968--3:17 p.m., LBJL.

72. Comments of General Anthony Zinni during a speech before the Florida Economic Club, 23 August 2002, transcript of audio version on NPR's "Morning Edition," <http://www.npr.org/programs/morning/zinni.html>.

73. Scowcroft in *Wall Street Journal*, 15 August 2002; Hoar testimony cited in *New York Times*, 1 August 2002, and Tufts University newsletter [Hoar is a Tufts Alumnus], 5 August 2002, <http://www.tufts.edu/communications/printerversion/080502InvadeIraq.htm>.

74. Zinni cited in BBC story, "US envoy warns against Iraq war," 9 September 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/2245632.stm>; Zinni address to George C. Marshall Foundation, 10 September 2002, reprinted in <http://www.truthout.org/cgi-bin/artman/exec/view.cgi/4/3204/printer>; Zinni in *Salon*, 17 October 2002, <http://archive.salon.com/news/feature/2002/10/17/zinni/print.html>.

75. Wesley Clark, "An Army of One?" *Washington Monthly*, September 2002, <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2001/0209.clark.html>; Clark in *International Herald Tribune*, 9 October 2002.

76. Anthony Zinni, "A General Speaks Out on Iraq," 31 October 2002, <http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/zinni-iraq-conditions-pr.cfm>.

77. "US military chiefs break ranks to say war 'will be bloody,' *The Independent*, 19 December 2002, reprinted in Commondreams.org, <http://www.commondreams.org/cgi-bin/print.cgi?file=/headlines02/1219-08.htm>.

78. Shinseki's prepared statement at <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2003/February/Shinseki.pdf>; see also "Threats and Responses . . . Pentagon Contradicts General on Iraq Occupation Force's Size," *New York Times*, 28 February 2003.

79. Wallace in *New York Times*, 28 March 2003, and *The Guardian/UK*, 28 March 2003.

80. "Scorned general's tactics proved right," and "War tactics split is denied by US," in *The Guardian*, 29 and 31 March 2003; "Rumsfeld's Design for War Criticized on the Battlefield," *New York Times*, 31 March 2003; "U.S. Commander Says War Not Over in Iraq," *Washington Post*, 30 May 2003.

81. Joseph Hoar, "Why Aren't There Enough Troops in Iraq," *New York Times*, 2 April 2003; Clark on CNN, 26 March and 7 April 2003, <http://cnn.com>; Zinni speech at Canisius College, *Buffalo News*, 4 April 2003.

82. "Top General Denounces Internal Dissent on Iraq," and "Ex-Generals Defend Their Blunt Comments," in *New York Times*, 2 and 3 April 2003.

83. "Shinseki criticizes U.S. fight in Mideast," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin Hawaii News*, 20 September 2003.
84. "Offense and Defense: The Battle Between Donald Rumsfeld and the Pentagon," *The New Yorker*, 7 November 2003.
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