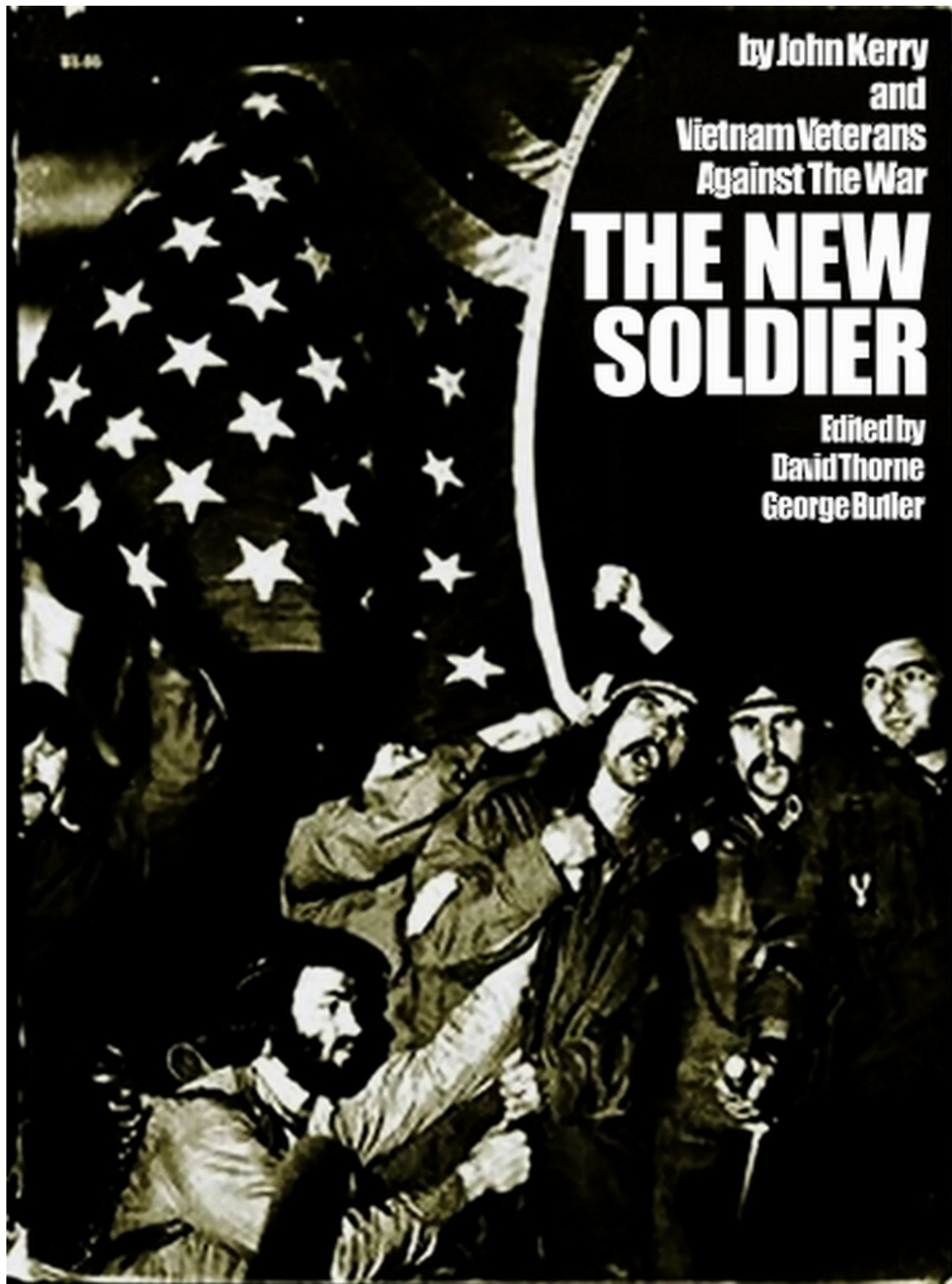


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by John Kerry  
and  
Vietnam Veterans  
Against The War

# THE NEW SOLDIER

Edited by  
David Thorne  
George Butler



**The New  
Soldier**  
by **John Kerry**  
and  
**Vietnam Veterans  
Against The War**

**Edited by  
David Thorne  
George Butler**

**The Macmillan Company, New York, New York  
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All your pictures have made this book  
possible.

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All proceeds from this book---due to the  
authors and editors---will go to Vietnam  
Veterans Against the War.

To the survivors of the Indochina War---  
In the hope that forgiveness will ease  
the pain and understanding will produce  
a lasting peace.

## **Preface**

Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) began inconspicuously in 1967 when six Vietnam veterans marched together in an anti-war demonstration in New York. This small group of veterans, taking the first step in spreading the concept of anti-war Vietnam veterans, questioned by many about their authenticity, and lacking in funds, were more interested in putting across their ideas through the media than in building a big organization. The organization grew slowly.

During the political campaigns of 1968 the idea began to spawn, and many peace campaigns included small contingents of anti-war veterans. Gradually, through chance more than through the concerted efforts of any one group, the idea of a separate veteran's peace group spread and a growing number of these veterans joined VVAW. Yet by April 1970 the organization had only 600 members.

In August 1970, VVAW members confronted the national convention of American Legionnaires in Portland, Oregon. Two weeks later, groups of veterans gave public witness to their experiences in Vietnam with vivid performances of guerilla theater on an 80-mile walk from Morristown, New Jersey, to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Armed with rifles and red paint and using professional actors as "innocent civilians," they attempted to bring home what search and destroy missions in Indochina were really all about.

In February 1971, about 150 anti-war veterans met in a Howard Johnson's motor lodge in Detroit and conducted hearings on the acts of violence which they had either committed or witnessed during their tours in Vietnam. The hearings were called The Winter Soldier Investigation, a term derived from Thomas Paine, who had written in 1776: "The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country." These veterans identified with those soldiers who had endured the grueling winter of 1776 at Valley Forge, and they came together in Detroit

to tell Americans what their country was really doing in Vietnam. Many wanted to purge the guilt which grew out of an inability to find any moral reason for the brutality, the waste, the destruction, which they had seen. Some of their anguished testimony appears in the following pages. (The entire testimony was read into the Congressional Record by Senator Mark Hatfield, April 6-7, 1971).

Television barely covered the event in Detroit. It was a time when the news of the war crimes trial of Lieutenant William Calley was being broadcast over network television almost every night. Numerous people, including those connected with the news media, did not believe that many of these men were Vietnam veterans.

Something positive had to come out of Detroit, some hope for the future. It was difficult for these men to swallow the public's indifference. Out of the frustration grew the idea of a march on Washington. On April 18, 1971, about a thousand Vietnam veterans, each bearing some proof that he had been in Vietnam, arrived in Washington and set up a campsite near the Lincoln Memorial, ready to try once again to bring their case before the country. The pictures in this book recount what happened to them during the remarkable week which ensued.

But behind the pictures of the events in Washington lie the anti-war veterans themselves. Who are they? John Kerry spoke eloquently before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about why the veterans had come to Washington. A study conducted while the veterans were encamped on the Mall was even more revealing (see Appendix). Most of these veterans had come from the very heart of Middle America. Few had finished college, unable to capitalize on college draft deferments. Most were under twenty-five and had enlisted in the service. But perhaps most significantly, the study reveals that the majority of the anti-war veterans in Washington, once of moderate conservative outlook, had been radicalized by their experiences in Vietnam. It

is their hope that Vietnam will not be just an immoral and obscene memory, but rather, as Kerry said before the Senate committee, "the place where America finally turned and where soldiers like us helped it in the turning." Thus, the New Soldier.

D.T.

G.B.

## **How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?**

I would like to say for the record, and for the men behind me who are also wearing the uniform and their medals, that my being here is really symbolic. I am not here as John Kerry, but as one member of a group of one thousand, which in turn is a small representation of a very much larger group of veterans in this country. Were it possible for all of them to sit at this table they would be here and present the same kind of testimony.

I would like to talk about the feelings these men carry with them after coming back from Vietnam. The country doesn't realize it yet but it has created a monster in the form of thousands of men who have been taught to deal and to trade in violence and who are given the chance to die for the biggest nothing in history -- men who have returned with a sense of anger and of betrayal that no one so far has been able to grasp. We are angry because we feel we have been used in the worst fashion by the administration of this country.

In 1970 at West Point Vice President Agnew said "some glamorize the criminal misfits of society while our best men die in Asian rice paddies to preserve the freedom which most of those misfits abuse," and this was used as a rallying point for our effort in Vietnam. But for us, as boys in Asia whom the country was supposed to support, his statement is a terrible distortion from which we can only draw a very deep sense of revulsion, and hence the anger of some of the men who are here in Washington today. It is a distortion because we in no way consider ourselves the best men of this country; because those he calls misfits were standing up for us in a way that nobody else in this country dared to; because so many who have died would have returned to this country to join the misfits in their efforts to ask for an immediate withdrawal from South Vietnam; because so many of those best men have returned as quadriplegics and amputees -  
- and they lie forgotten in Veterans



Administration hospitals in this country which fly the flag which so many have chosen as their own personal symbol -- and we cannot consider ourselves America's best men when we are ashamed of and hated for what we were called on to do in Southeast Asia.

In our opinion, and from our experience, there is nothing in South Vietnam which could happen that realistically threatens the United States of America. And to attempt to justify the loss of one American life in Vietnam, Cambodia, or Laos by linking such loss to the preservation of freedom, which those misfits supposedly abuse, is to us the height of criminal hypocrisy.

We are probably angriest about all that we were told about Vietnam and about the mystical war against communism. We found that not only was it a civil war, an effort by a people who had for years been seeking their liberation from any colonial influence whatsoever, but also we found that the Vietnamese whom we had enthusiastically molded after our own image were hard put to take up the fight against the threat we were supposedly saving them from. We found most people didn't even know the difference between communism and democracy. They only wanted to work in rice paddies without helicopters strafing them and bombs with napalm burning their villages and tearing their country apart. . . . They practiced the art of survival by siding with whichever military force was present at a particular time, be it Viet Cong, North Vietnamese, or American.

We found that all too often American men were dying in those rice paddies for want of support from their allies. We saw firsthand how monies from American taxes were used for a corrupt dictatorial regime. We saw that many people in this country had a one-sided idea of who was kept free by our flag, and blacks provided the highest percentage of casualties. We saw Vietnam ravaged equally by American bombs and search-and-destroy missions, as well as by Viet Cong terrorism, and yet we listened while this country tried to blame all of the

havoc on the Viet Cong. We rationalized destroying villages in order to save them. We saw America lose her sense of morality as she accepted very coolly a My Lai and refused to give up the image of American soldiers who hand out chocolate bars and chewing gum. We learned the meaning of free-fire zones, shooting anything that moves, and we watched while America placed cheapness on the lives of Orientals.

We watched the United States' falsification of body counts, in fact the glorification of body counts. We listened while month after month we were told the back of the enemy was about to break. We fought [with] weapons against those people which I do not believe this country would dream of using were we fighting in the European theater. We watched while men charged up hills because a general said that hill has to be taken, and after losing one platoon or two platoons, they marched away to leave the hill for reoccupation by the North Vietnamese. We watched pride allow the most unimportant battles to be blown into extravaganzas, because we couldn't lose, and we couldn't retreat, and because it didn't matter how many American bodies were lost to prove that point, and so there were Hamburger Hills and Khesahns and Hil181s and Fire Base 6s, and so many others.

And now we are told that the men who fought there must watch quietly while American lives are lost so that we can exercise the incredible arrogance of Vietnamizing the Vietnamese. Each day to facilitate the process by which the United States washes her hands of Vietnam someone has to give up his life so that the United States doesn't have to admit something that the entire world already knows, so that we can't say that we have made a mistake. Someone has to die so that President Nixon won't be, and these are his words, "the first President to lose a war."

We are asking Americans to think about that because how do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam? How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake? But we

are trying to do that, and we are doing it with thousands of rationalizations, and if you read carefully the President's last speech to the people of this country, you can see that he says, and says clearly, "but the issue, gentlemen, the issue is communism, and the question is whether or not we will leave that country to the Communists or whether or not we will try to give it hope to be a free people." But the point is they are not a free people now, and we cannot fight communism all over the world. I think we should have learned that lesson by now.

Suddenly we are faced with a very sickening situation in this country, because there is no moral indignation and, if there is, it comes from people who are almost exhausted by their past indignations. . . . The country seems to have lain down and shrugged off something as serious as Laos, just as we calmly shrugged off the loss of 700,000 lives in Pakistan, the so-called greatest disaster of all times. But we are here as veterans to say we think we are in the midst of the greatest disaster of all times now, because they are still dying over there -- not just Americans, but Vietnamese -- and we are rationalizing leaving that country so that those people can go on killing each other for years to come.

Americans seem to have accepted the idea that the war is winding down, at least for Americans, and they have also allowed the bodies which were once used by a President for statistics to prove that we were winning that war, to be used as evidence against a man who followed orders and who interpreted those orders no differently than hundreds of other men in Vietnam.

We veterans can only look with amazement on the fact that this country has been unable to see there is absolutely no difference between ground troops and a helicopter crew, and yet people have accepted a differentiation fed them by the Administration. No ground troops are in Laos, so it is all right to kill Laotians by remote control. But believe me the helicopter crews fill the same body bags and they wreak

the same kind of damage on the Vietnamese and Laotian countryside as anybody else, and the President is talking about allowing that to go on for many years to come. One can only ask if we will really be satisfied only when the troops march into Hanoi.

We are asking here in Washington for some action, action from the Congress of the United States of America, which has the power to raise and maintain armies, and which by the Constitution also has the power to declare war. We have come here, not to the President, because we believe that this body can be responsive to the will of the people, and we believe that the will of the people says that we should be out of Vietnam now.

We are here in Washington also to say that the problem of this war is not just a question of war and diplomacy. It is part and parcel of everything that we are trying as human beings to communicate to people in this country -- the question of racism, which is rampant in the military, and so many other questions such as the use of weapons; the hypocrisy in our taking umbrage in the Geneva Conventions and using that as justification for a continuation of this war when we are more guilty than any other body of violations of those Geneva Conventions; in the use of free-fire zones, harassment interdiction fire, search-and-destroy missions, the bombings, the torture of prisoners, the killing of prisoners, all accepted policy by many units in South Vietnam. That is what we are trying to say. We are also here to ask, and we are here to ask vehemently, where are the leaders of our country? Where is the leadership? We are here to ask where are McNamara, Rostow, Bundy, Johnson, and so many others? Where are they now that we, the men whom they sent off to war, have returned? These are commanders who have deserted their troops, and there is no more serious crime in the law of war. The Army says they never leave their wounded. The Marines say they never leave even their dead. These men have left all the casualties and retreated behind a pious shield of public rectitude. They have left

the real stuff of their reputations bleaching behind them in the sun.

Finally, this Administration has done us the ultimate dishonor. They have attempted to disown us and the sacrifices we made for this country. In their blindness and fear they have tried to deny that we are veterans or that we served in Nam. We do not need their testimony. Our own scars and stumps of limbs are witness enough for others and for ourselves.

We wish that a merciful God could wipe away our own memories of that service as easily as this Administration has wiped away their memories of us. But all that they have done and all that they can do by this denial is to make more clear than ever our own determination to undertake one last mission -- to search out and destroy the last vestige of this barbaric war, to pacify our own hearts, to conquer the hate and the fear that have driven this country these last ten years and more, so when thirty years from now our brothers go down the street without a leg, without an arm, or a face, and small boys ask why, we will be able to say "Vietnam" and not mean a desert, not a filthy obscene memory, but mean instead the place where America finally turned and where soldiers like us helped it in the turning.

From John Kerry's statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, April 22, 1971.

## **Chronology: Operation Dewey Canyon III**

Operation Dewey Canyon I took place during January and February 1969. During a five-day period in February, elements of the Third Marine Division invaded Laos. Operation Dewey Canyon II was the name given to the first seven days of the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos in February 1971. The name of the operation was subsequently changed. Operation Dewey Canyon III took place in Washington, D.C., April 19 through April 23, 1971. It was called "a limited incursion into the country of Congress."

### **Sunday / April 18, 1971**

Anti-war Vietnam veterans from nearly every state begin filtering into West Potomac Park. By nightfall, only 900 have registered and the veteran leaders are worried that they will not have the requisite numbers for the desired impact.

### **Monday / April 19, 1971**

About 1,100 veterans move across the Lincoln Memorial Bridge to Arlington Cemetery, some in wheelchairs, some on crutches. Mothers who lost their sons in Vietnam (Gold Star Mothers) head the procession.

A brief ceremony for the war dead on both sides is conducted by Reverend Jackson Day on the small plot of grass outside the Cemetery beneath the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the grave of John F. Kennedy. (Reverend Day had resigned his military chaplainship a few days before.)

After the ceremony, a small delegation of mothers and veterans is barred from entering the Cemetery and lays two memorial wreaths at the entrance. The march re-forms and makes its way to the Capitol.

The march reaches the Capitol steps. Congressman Paul McCloskey, who joined the march en route, and Representatives Bella

Abzug, Donald Edwards, and Ogden Reid address the crowd. Jan Crumb, member of the executive committee of VVAW, formally presents sixteen demands to Congress.

The veterans march to the Mall and establish a campsite on a small grassy quadrangle between Third and Fourth streets. Some veterans go directly into the halls of Congress to lobby against the war.

Washington District Court of Appeals lifts an injunction barring veterans from camping on the Mall. The injunction had been requested by the Justice Department.

### **Tuesday / April 20, 1971**

About 200 veterans attend hearings by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on proposals to end the war.

Veterans lobby all day in Congress.

A contingent of 200 veterans, feeling that the affront of the day before cannot be overlooked, marches from the Mall back to Arlington Cemetery. They march single file across the Lincoln Memorial Bridge. The Superintendent tries to stop the veterans at the gates but then backs down.

In the afternoon, a guerilla theater performance is given on the steps of the Capitol.

Senators Claiborne Pell and Philip Hart hold a fund-raising party for the veterans. During the party, it is announced that Chief Justice Warren Burger has reversed the decision of the Court of Appeals -- allegedly, the speediest process of an appeal to the Supreme Court on record. The injunction is once again in effect and the veterans are given until 4:30 the following afternoon to break camp.

### **Wednesday / April 21, 1971**

A contingent of fifty veterans marches to the Pentagon to turn themselves in as war criminals. They are not arrested.

Lobbying on Capitol Hill continues all day. Guerilla theater is performed in front of the Justice Department.

At 4:30 PM, the appointed hour of eviction from the camp, an alarm clock rings over the microphone on the speaker's platform. No police are in sight. The area is packed with curious onlookers. The Supreme Court is meeting in special session.

At 5:30 PM, Ramsey Clark announces that the Supreme Court has offered the veterans an option: Stay on the Mall, don't sleep, and the government won't arrest you; or sleep on the Mall and the government will arrest you. The veterans retire into their various delegations and vote, in effect, on whether to sleep or not to sleep. By a close vote a majority choose to sleep. All agree to abide by that decision.

Washington Park Police state they have no intention of inspecting the campsite during the night. The cast of the musical Hair entertains the troops.

Senator Edward Kennedy makes a midnight visit to the Mall. He remains for one hour, talking and singing with the veterans.

The veterans sleep on the Mall without interruption.

#### **Thursday / April 22, 1971**

A large group of veterans march to the steps of the Supreme Court to ask the Court why it has not ruled on the constitutionality of the war. They sing God Bless America. One hundred and ten are arrested for disturbing the peace and are led off the steps with their hands clasped behind their heads.

John Kerry testifies before a special session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for two hours.

Lobbying on Capitol Hill continues all day.

A District Court judge angrily dissolves his injunction order, rebuking Justice Department



lawyers for requesting the court order and then not enforcing it.

Veterans stage a candlelight march around the White House. A huge American flag is carried upside down as a signal of distress. The march ends back at the camp when the flag carriers mount the stage (see cover).

**Friday / April 23, 1971**

Veterans cast down their medals and ribbons on the steps of the Capitol.

Congressman Jonathan Bingham holds hearings with former intelligence and public information officers over distortion of news and information concerning the war.

Senators George McGovern and Philip Hart hold hearings on atrocities committed by U.S. soldiers in Vietnam.

Veterans begin breaking camp. A tree, donated by the veterans, is planted as a symbolic plea for the preservation of all life and the environment.

The quadrangle on the Mall is vacant. Not one act of violence has been committed. They came in peace.

\* \* \*

The war in Indochina continues.

## Jon Birch

B Company 3rd Shore  
Party 11th Marine  
Regiment May '65-Feb. '66

I went into the Marine Corps one week after graduating from high school, and boy, I really loved it. When we sang the Marine Corps Hymn tears would get in my eyes. There was no Vietnam for us then, no Gulf of Tonkin or anything. After training we went to Hawaii with the 1st Marine Brigade and got orders. They said: "Well you're going back to invade California. Thirty days leave. A mock invasion. Get to see your parents and all that stuff. . . go anywhere on the mainland!" Off we sailed. Three mornings later after the sun had been rising three times over the stern of our transport we figured we weren't heading for California. On we sailed, until six o'clock one morning, 7,500 of us and all our equipment landed in Chou Lai. It was a pretty wild experience. There was no air strip, no air base, no kind of giant complex. . . just sand dunes and little houses. Really beautiful beaches. A lot of little fishing villages along the shore. And they told us: "Well fellows, here we are! Landing on the beach!" And we were all loaded down with bullets

and ammo and the whole bit. . . and the little school girls were really beautiful looking. These exotic women came down to us and put leis around our necks, flower things. After that we never saw them again. They had been flown in from Danang -- special. By helicopter.

And there we were. No runways. No PX. We lived in the sand for three months and ate C-rations and put in an expeditionary landing field. The first month and a half we were there, the only casualties we had were our patrols firing at each other's patrols.

One morning we'd gone down -- kind of borrowed a truck -- to take a swim call on the beach. Red Beach, where the original landing was. And when we'd got there, the MP's had a little cage built of beach matting. . . the steel you throw down on sand so heavy trucks won't sink in. It was about ten foot square. No shelter from the sun.

They had an old Vietnamese man in there. They took him out just as we drove up. We stopped pretty close by. One of our guys yelled over, "What's happening?" "Oh," they said, "we're interrogating. Want to watch?"

We said, "Fine! Yeah! That'll be really good." We'd never seen this before and we thought we'd see some really super sophisticated information-getting. We were pretty gung-ho, all of us. We were over there fighting Communists and saving America.

So the MP's starting pushing him around a little bit, asking him questions and everything. Then they hobbled him at the knees and put a blindfold on and drug him around in the sand. He started stumbling and they thought it was funny. After a while they got angry. He wasn't saying anything. One of the MP's got a can of lighter fluid out of his back pocket and poured it over the man's little wispy beard, and lit up the beard. Then the laughing stopped.

After that year, and I'd come home, I didn't want to be reminded of anything I'd seen or done in Vietnam. All I wanted to do was hear, "Welcome back," and give me a chance to just become a person again. I joined the VFW. I became Junior Commander of that VFW Post in Connecticut and was doing a lot of speaking for them. Pretty soon I got really turned off because all they did was sit around and talk war stories.

## **Jim Weber**

Sgt. (E-5) "A" Company  
1/6 & 1/46, 198 L.I.B.  
American Div. Nov. '67-  
Nov. '68 [Congressional  
Record 4/7/71]

I, I didn't care about anyone else. You know, I cared about myself and I, I got drafted into the army and it made quite a big change because I was waving flags all the time that I was on my train, you know, down to South Carolina where I got my murder training. And I . . . okay, I went in there and my complete moral worth was completely destroyed. I mean I was a worthless human being. The worst thing that you can be in the military is to be called a civilian. And so they had to completely re-socialize us, which they were very effective at doing. I didn't agree with everything, but I went along with it. Then I was sent on to advanced genocide training down at Fort Polk, Louisiana. And this is where I got, you know, this is where I started to hate, hate anything that wasn't exactly like me. Anything that wasn't a fighting machine. Gooks.

By the time I had left Fort Polk, Louisiana, I wanted to kill my mother, you know. Or anyone, that, that wasn't you know, completely in agreement with me. I wanted to just

kill everything, you know. It's really bad. I went over to Vietnam with the same attitude because I, I had been trained and I knew I was an effective fighting machine. That I was going to kill everything in my path and it started out and it . . . it lasted for about one day. When I got there and saw the shit being beat out of a few children, you know. And from there on, it was all downhill and, man, like I was a great American, and I think I still am a great American, you know.

## **Skip Roberts**

Cpl.-USMC (2537332)  
Force Logistic Command  
(FLC) 1st FSR/FMF PAC  
Sept. '69-Sept. '70

And this Spec/4 at the Army induction center turns to me and says, "Roberts, you're going into the Marines."

No. No. Yeah. Was it me? Was it really happening to me? A tidal wave. No. It's not supposed to . . . my God, you know, this can't be real! You know, it's happening to the poor, smug George O. Roberts, you know, 2537332 type thing, not really happening to me. It's not supposed to . . . I'm from Fairfield County, Connecticut!

And I just sort of absolutely panicked: "My God!" The Marine Corps

drafts people. They don't talk about it often. They're supposed to be gung-ho. In a way it's a good sign. They can't meet their quotas any more.

I learned at Parris Island that terror works. It's a very effective means of control. I mean me, a Georgetown Foreign Service School man, a former congressman's aide! The drill instructor would go on: "All right, Professor. Come out here in front of your buddies. Now since you know it all, show us how to disassemble this." And he'd throw me a pistol. I'd never seen a pistol before and I'd make a mistake. Five hundred push-ups. The DI would explain, "See, your college education don't mean a thing."

## **Scott Shimabukuro**

L/Cpl. (E-3) "C" Battery 1st  
Bn. 13th Marine Reg. 3rd  
Marine Div. Oct. '67-Nov.  
'69 [Congressional Record  
4/6/71]

Before I went into the Marine Corps, I grew up in an all-white and Chicano neighborhood and I encountered a moderate amount of racism; it didn't bother me much. When I went into the Marine Corps, I thought I was going to serve my country and be brave, a Marine and a good American. As I

stepped off the bus at UCMD, San Diego, the first words that greeted me were when the DI came up to me and said, "Oh, we have a gook here today in our platoon." This kind of blew my mind because I thought I was a pretty cool guy myself. But, ever since then, all during boot camp, I was used as an example of a gook. You go to a class, and they say you'll be fighting the VC or the NVA. But then the person who is giving the class will see me and he'll say. "He looks just like that, right there."

### **Joe Bangert**

Sgt. (E-5) 1st Marine Air Wing 1st Marine Div. Oct. '68-Oct. '69 [Congressional Record 4/6/71]

You can check with the Marines who have been to Vietnam -- your last day in the States at staging battalion at Camp Pendleton you have a little lesson and it's called the rabbit lesson. The staff NCO comes out and he has a rabbit and he's talking to you about escape and evasion and survival in the jungle. He has this rabbit and then in a couple of seconds after just about everyone falls in love with it, he cracks it in the neck, skins it, disembowels it. He does this to the rabbit -- and then they throw the guts out into the audience. You

can get anything out of that you want, but that's your last lesson you catch in the United States before you leave for Vietnam, where they take that rabbit and they kill it, and they skin it, and they play with its organs as if it's trash and they throw the organs all over the place and then these guys are put on the plane the next day and sent to Vietnam.

### **Charles Leffler**

Pfc (E-3) 226, Golf Company 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade Sept '68-Sept 69

I went of this patrol and we went for about four hours in a northerly direction. I did not know where we went since I did not have a map. But after proceeding for about 3300 meters and crossing a river which I later found out was the Ben Hai River (which runs exactly through the middle of the DMZ) the lieutenant turned to me and said, "Well, Leffler, you have something to write home about now." And I said, "What do you mean, sir?" He said, "We just crossed over into North Vietnam."

### **Steve Noetzel**

Sp/4 5th Special Forces Group Augmentation May '63-May '64 [Congressional Record 4/6/71]

They were transporting some sixteen prisoners, South Vietnamese prisoners, who had been interrogated at several levels before being sent to Saigon. They were transporting these prisoners in two helicopters, double-rotor helicopters, H-121. There were eight prisoners brought onto each helicopter. They were tied, their hands were tied behind their backs, and they were tethered together with rope around their necks, and about a six-foot length of rope to the next prisoner. A string of eight of them like that were put on each helicopter. With them were about an equal number of South Vietnamese or ARVN troops as guards. Also on the flight of five helicopters were three gun ships, HU1B single-rotor helicopters. I flew in the first of these helicopters. The point helicopter. We were to fly support for this mission to bring these prisoners to Saigon. Incidentally, during those days, prisoners were brought to Saigon for a six-month rehabilitation program and then they were released after the six months to go back to wherever they wanted to go, that is, South Vietnamese or NLF prisoners. We took off from Can Tho. We heard, or I heard (I had a headset

on), the radio message to Saigon. We got in contact with NACV headquarters in Saigon, told them we were coming with sixteen prisoners, and they said they would have a greeting party for us at Tan Son Nhut Airport. We flew in one direct nonstop flight. All the ships stayed together the entire flight, about an hour and ten minutes or so. No helicopter left the group at any time. It could never have caught up with us if it did leave, and land anywhere. We landed in Saigon, I got out of the helicopter, and there was a greeting party there to meet us, a colonel from MACU and some other field grade officers. They had a paddy wagon to transport prisoners and so on. When we got off the helicopter, there were exactly three prisoners left on one helicopter, and one prisoner left on the other helicopter. These prisoners were now bound with their hands behind their backs. They were blindfolded, and of course no tether or no rope around their necks attaching to any other prisoners. I instantly realized what had happened and couldn't believe it, although I knew, rationally, what had to have happened. I went over to the American door gunner of one of the transport ships, and I

asked him what the hell happened, and he told me that they had pushed them out over the Mekong Delta. And I said, "Who?" and he said, "The ARVN guards did." And I just shook my head and said, "I can't believe it," and he said, "Go over there and look at the doorway." There are open doorways on these helicopters; they have no closable door, there's just a door frame.

And I went over to the doorway and stopped when I got about five feet away and didn't want to go any closer because there was flesh from the hands of the prisoners when they were pushed out on the door jambs and on the door frames. And there was blood on the floor where they had been beaten and pushed out of the helicopters. I went back to my own helicopter that I had just gotten out of and there I overheard the conversation between the American pilots and the MACV colonel who had come to meet the prisoners, and he asked them what the \*censored\* happened to the other prisoners and one of the American pilots simply said to him, "They tried to escape over the Mekong Delta." That was the first, or only, incident of helicopter murder that I have seen in Vietnam.

### **Thomas Heidtman**

PFC (E-3) 3rd Bn. 5th Marine Reg. 1st Marine Div. Oct. '66-Nov. '67 [Congressional Record 4/6/71]

My first day with 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, I was informed that the nickname of the company was the "Burning Fifth Marines." Once, just before my first operation, we had a company formation. Our company commander, a first lieutenant, said that we were going out in the morning and that we were going out on choppers. We were going out into an area west of Tam Ky. Then he said, "We're going to have a Zippo inspection right now." I would say approximately two thirds of the entire company had Zippo lighters. We held them up, lit them, demonstrated that they were filled and would burn, then put them away. He smiled and let it go at that. When we went out, I would say at least 50 per cent of the villages we passed through would be burned to the ground. There was no difference between the ones we burned and the ones we didn't burn. It was just that where we had time, we burned them. I've seen a gunnery sergeant take a .45 and kill six piglets that probably came from Americans because they had a big program to

give the Vietnamese people pigs, ducks, and things like that. They were shot because their area, their pen, or whatever, was right next to a hootch that was burning. The entire village, about a quarter of a mile, was on fire with illumination grenades or Zippo lighters. Everything was burned. Everything was torn down. All the animals were killed. Water buffalos were shot and allowed to just lay right where they were. They were just shot right in their pen; they couldn't move. It's hard to kill a water buffalo, but when he's standing right there it's not so hard.

#### **Sp/4**

"C" Co. 2/39 9th Infantry Div. May '69-July '69 [Congressional Record 4/6/71]

I'd say that the government, and a lot of the people who sort of run this nation, have been telling a lot of GIs that the biggest detriment to our morale has been the long-haired, protesting, pinko sympathizer type, but I think the biggest lift for my morale came when I was lying in Okinawa in the hospital there and a girl wrote me about a place called Woodstock, where 500,000 people had come together and it was so beautiful. It was the first

time I smiled in a long time.

#### **Michael Hunter**

Sgt. (E-5) "B" Co. 517 Air Cav. Reg. 1st Air Cav. Div. Feb. '68-Feb. '69 "H" Co. 75th Rangers (Att. to 1st Air Cav. Div.) "I" Co. 75th Rangers (Att. to 1st Infantry Div.) Sept. '69-Mar. '70 [Congressional Record 4/6/71]

We were in a free-fire zone just outside of Camp Evans and an old man, age sixty-eight (I must say we could not tell that he was sixty-eight at the time) was approximately 100 meters away from us cutting pineapple. It was very visible that he was cutting pineapple, and that he did not have a weapon. What he had was a machete. Machetes are carried in Vietnam by almost every civilian that works in the field and by the children. I was ordered by the senior NCO that was backing me up at the time, right behind me, to open fire. I opened fire and killed the man. We found identification on his body stating that he was not a VC, not a Viet Cong, not an NVA. He was civilian and he did live in the nearby village, which was no more (and this was a free-fire zone, I may add) than 1200 meters away. That was his farmland that he was cutting down -- the crops on the farmland. It

was reported to the battalion that this was a body count. He had a weapon -- the weapon being the machete. Suspected VC.

#### **Mike McCusker**

Sgt. (E-5) Public Information Office 1st Marine Div. '66-'67 [Congressional Record 4/7/71]

There was a tiny little form, that of a child, lying out in the field with straw over its face. It had been clubbed to death. As later was brought out, the Marine that clubbed the child to death didn't really want to look at the child's face so he put straw over it before he clubbed it.

#### **Kevin F. Byrne**

Sgt. (E-5) 42nd Scout Dog 1st Brigade 1 01st Airborne Div. Nov. '68-Nov. '69 [Congressional Record 4/7/71]

Nobody ever questioned a dog handler's judgment.

And I'd developed like a sixth sense. I knew when danger's gonna come. Usually my dog wouldn't alert me. So I'd just stop and say, "My dog's got something here. Just want to get the heavy machine gun up to ease my mind."

Other times my dog would alert me and I'd see a house or a complex up

ahead and I'd say, "Recon by fire, get the grenade launcher and the heavy machine gun up here." My lieutenant -- he was always behind me -- would just tell the commander -- who was behind him -- that the dog wanted a recon by fire.

I'd always call for support. . . cause I didn't want to put my life on the line. Going up there acting like John Wayne or anything.

### **Franklin Shepard**

S/Sgt. (E-6) 5/60 9th Infantry Div. Mar. '68-Aug. '69 [Congressional Record 4/7/71]

There were many ways to build up your body count. In our particular unit. . . we had this badge known as the Sat Cong Badge. This badge, translated into English, means "Kill Cong." This [badge] represents one Viet Cong or civilian, whatever it may be because there is really no way of telling. It represents one life. These badges were given when someone would prove that he had killed a Viet Cong, or Vietnamese. There are many ways of doing this. One is to have somebody verify that he did, in fact, see you kill a Vietnamese. Another way -- and this is a common way -- is to cut off the ear of the dead Vietnamese and bring it in.

You could exchange it for one of these badges.

The badges were created on a battalion level. I have the order here that created it. . . . It is an official Army [disposition] form dated 28 June '69. It reads as follows: "Any member of this battalion who personally kills a Viet Cong will be presented a Sat Cong Badge for his gallant accomplishment. The Sat Cong Badge will only be given to those individuals who have accomplished the above mentioned feat. There will be no honorary presentations.

Furthermore, only personnel who have killed a Viet Cong may wear the Sat Cong Badge. Company Commanders will draw Sat Cong Badges from the Executive Officer, and will maintain all control."

### **David Bishop**

L/Cpl. "H" Co. 2nd Bn. 5th Marine Reg. 1st Marine Div. [Congressional Record 4/6/71]

There was this operation called Meade River. ROK (Korean) Marines, ARVNs, U.S. Marines, and U.S. Army were involved. On part of the operation we had just gotten through making heavy contact and we went through a bunker system. It was a large bunker system and we

found hospitals. We came across four NVA nurses that were hiding out in one of the bunkers. They were nurses, we found medical supplies on them and they had black uniforms on. The ROK Marines came up to us and one of their officers asked us if they could have the NVA nurses. They would take care of them because we were sweeping through area, and we couldn't take care of any POWs. So, instead of killing them, we handed them over to the ROK Marines. While we were still in the area the ROK Marines started tying them down to the ground.

They tied their hands to the ground, they spread-eagled them; they raped all four. There was like maybe ten or twenty ROK Marines involved. They tortured them, they sliced off their breasts, they used machetes and cut off parts of their fingers and things like this. When that was over, they took pop-up flares (which are aluminum canisters you hit with your hand; it'll shoot maybe 100-200 feet in the air) -- they stuck them up their vaginas -- all four of them - - and they blew the top of their heads off.

### **Donald Duncan**

Master Sgt. 5th Special Forces '64-'65 [Congressional Record 4/7/71]

The terrible thing we did to so many men in this country -- and ultimately to the Vietnamese because of it -- we sent them to fight a war without a reason to fight it. I don't know how many of you have experienced standing up in front of bullets, exposing your flesh to shrapnel, hand grenades, and so on. It's a fuck of a thing to do, to send somebody out and tell them to make their body a target, and never give them a fucking reason to do it.

### **Terry Williams**

E-4 129th Assault Helicopter Co. 238th Aerial Weapons Co. Mar. '69-Dec.'69

Little children or women, it made no difference. Like once this vehicle operator was driving a two and-a-half-ton truck back from Quang Nam, and he thought it would be fun to knock a Vietnamese's cart off the road -- and in the process of doing this he killed the Vietnamese. But he didn't think of it as hurting a person. It was just a gook and they were not people, you know. His CO found about it and he wasn't even punished for it. Nothing. Nothing at all.

I was a door gunner in Vietnam and one day I was flying convoy cover between An Ke and

Pleiku. We were over a free-fire zone and there were three women on bicycles, and the pilot told the crew chief and myself just to blow them away. I refused. I told them my gun was jammed and I could not fire. They ordered me again to unjam it and do 'em in. And I refused. So the copilot did it with rockets. God, I thought I was going crazy! I cried. I'm not ashamed to say it. It made me sick. Then, after we got back they gave me an Article 15 [non-judicial punishment] for disobeying a direct order.

That was the incident that really made it a moral question because up until then the war was just a word. It was something that was far away and I had no way to really relate to it.

### **John Henry**

Sp/4 2/60 1/11 Artillery 9th Infantry Div. Mar. '68-Aug. '69 [Congressional Record 4/7/71]

You know about mad minutes. A mad minute -- everybody gets on line, everybody in the company, and you play Machine Gun Murphy. You're told to fire a magazine through your weapon and you just pepper the countryside. Usually you do this about six o'clock at night because you get colors off

the tracers. I don't know why.

### **Sam Schorr**

Sp/4 (E-4) 86th Combat Engineers Sept. '66-Sept. '67 [Congressional Record 4/6/71]

"Recon by fire" is when you go into an area and you're not exactly sure what is in the area. You want to find out, so you just fire into the jungle or into the surrounding vegetation in the hopes you hit the enemy or something. But they really didn't know who was out there or what was out there. And "mad minutes" is when everybody on perimeter, around the base camp (you have bunkers all the way around it), opens up and fires away with all their fire power for about a minute, two minutes.

I saw several incidents of recon by fire. This was on convoy duty. The convoy would stop. Tanks would pull out to the edge of the convoy. These are around inhabited areas; there were villages all up and down the highway. This was Highway 13, "Thunder Road." And they would point their muzzles down into the vegetation and fire a canister round. Now a canister round has something like 7000 oblong bearings in it. It's got a range of about 400



meters and it spreads as it goes. It goes in at an angle. Starts out at a small angle and just goes out like this. It's kind of like a Claymore mine. It just rips everything to pieces that's in the way. If there's anybody out there -- any animal, any person, any kid, any hootch -- it's going to be destroyed, flattened. Knocks trees to pieces.

One day I was assigned to bunker guard duty during the day and right outside the perimeter, this was Lai Khe, there was an armored personnel carrier (APC) and a Huey chopper, which was warmed up and ready to go. There were people standing around the APC. There were five Vietnamese people. I do not know if they were civilians, Viet Cong, or Viet Cong suspects. Three of them were wounded, had bandages on their bodies and their legs and their arms looked in bad shape. The other two were older men, somewhere around fifty years old. The lieutenant from the armored personnel carrier and the captain from the chopper helped place these people in the helicopter. He got a couple of hundred feet up and three bodies came out. The lieutenant who was on the ground radioed up to the 'copter and he asked, "What happened to the

prisoners?" Their reply was, "They tried to escape."

"Random fire" on civilians happened quite often, especially on bunker guard. You sit on bunker guard for a week, twenty-four hours a day, and you get pretty bored. So we'd play little games. The Vietnamese would be working in their rice paddies with South Vietnamese flags stuck in the paddies so you would know they were there. And we would try to knock the flags down. I had a machine gun, my friend had a grenade launcher, we would shoot all over the area and the Vietnamese would just take off for the hills. They thought we were friendly and they put the flag up to let us know they were there and we fired at it anyway. This was out of sheer boredom and also because we just didn't give a damn.

### **James Duffy**

Sp/5 (E-5) 228 Avn. Bn.  
1st Air Cav. Div. Feb. '67-  
Apr. '68 [Congressional  
Record 4/6/71]

Rotor wash from the helicopters was a very effective and sadistic weapon. The Chinook helicopter is basically a cargo ship; that's what it's designed for. I forget the weight you can pick up

with one, but when you've got a full load, you can put out a rotor wash at certain times that approaches 100 miles an hour. Sometimes, we'd be on early morning missions when the people from hamlets and village were going out to a designated field to defecate. We'd spot them, make a swoop in, and we could get up to a 120 knots, about 130 miles an hour. And as we'd swoop in with the ship, just as we'd approach, the pilot would flair the ship on its tail, and the rotor wash would spin around and hit the people, blowing them over through the sand and their defecation. This was one of the things that we did for kicks.

So once we were hovering over the sling load of, I think it was Howitzer rounds, and I was hanging out of the window observing what appeared to be a twelve-year-old Vietnamese boy standing there watching us. And as we lifted up with the load, the rotor increased because of the weight and it blew him into the path of a two-and-a-half-ton truck with trailer which killed him instantly. When that happened, my first reaction was, I guess, you would call normal. It was horror, pain, and when I realized that I caught myself immediately and said, "No, you can't do

that," because you develop a shell while you are in the military. They brainwash you. They take all of the humanness out of you and you develop this crutch which enables you to survive in Vietnam. And if you let that protective shell down, even for a second, it's the difference between you flipping out or managing to make it through. And I caught myself letting the shell down and I tightened up right away, and started laughing about it and joking about it with the flight engineer. He sort of moved on the same logic because I guess he thought it sort of knocked his shell down too.

### **Mike Misusage**

Sp/4 101st Airborne Div.  
1st Brigade, Support  
Element Dec. '68-Jan. '70  
[Congressional Record  
4/7/71]

Every once in a while at Camp Eagle, every two months or so, the order would just come down, "Okay guys, get to it." You got a mad minute. And everyone picks up a weapon with both hands, both feet, and they shoot. And they don't care what they shoot at, just as long as it's away from the base area. . .

I never saw any, but I've heard of some people who were shooting cows.

### **John Upton**

Hospital Corpsman USN,  
Attached to 1st Recon. Bn.  
1st Marine Div. June '69-  
June '70

Tom was really, really mild-mannered, you know. . . almost an overly nice dude. An all-state wrestler from Wisconsin. And since I was a bit older he used to come over and talk to me when he got a bad letter from his -- girl and say, "Oh, Doc, look at this. What can I do, man?" And I'd give him advice. And then when we were out on patrols, it was the same kind of thing, kind of getting our shit together. And whenever we came under fire, Tom, no matter where he was in the column, would come up to where I was and start shooting from close by -- so that it was like a protection type thing. He wanted to keep me safe.

Then along came another one of those patrols and we'd been out all morning and were resting and one of the guys said: "I've got to take a crap." And all of a sudden he came running back to us with his pants down, screaming "Gooks!" And we got hit by about 90 NVA. There were only six on my team. But we had guns and gun ships and all kinds of crap supporting us.

Tom was by a tree behind me and I was next to him and I was shooting the other way and you know, with all the gun power going around us, you couldn't tell if there's a gun firing even if it's right next to you. When my clip expended I started reaching in my little doggie pouch thing for more ammo. And I looked over and saw Tom slumping up against the tree and I said: "Shit, Tom, what's the problem? Why is he slumping?" And he just fell over and I said: "Oh, God."

And I did all kinds of crazy things. He was already dead. He was shot through the head and the neck...one and one. And I knew he was dead. There was nothing to do. But something hit me, like this corpsman thing. I had to do something. I drew a tracheotomy on him. I gave him external massage, I opened his chest and massaged his heart. And it seemed I tried for hours, but it was only a few minutes in the middle of a firefight.

The birds finally came in and I pulled his body on board and sat looking down at him the whole trip back. His head was really done in pretty well and his neck was about gone and there wasn't much left. It was a really strange trip. I kept seeing his face the way it was before and it

was like I was on, you know, some kind of a drug or something. I didn't understand what had happened until after some guys put me in the shower. I was crying with no big emotion, just tears coming that I couldn't stop. About a week later I started having dreams.

After Tom died I got stoned and went on every patrol I could. I wanted to kill the dirty gooks because they'd killed my friend. Once I got into the bush again, I'd realize that this was a stupid idea -- it wasn't just the gooks that had killed him. So I'd come back, settle down in my rack, and listen to the stereo. And I'd fall asleep and have one of these dreams. I'd always see Tom up against the tree. Some time later, I got wounded again and ended up on a hospital ship. I started dreaming on the ship. And I was so touchy about things, like one time I was asleep and a nurse came up to give me a shot and I belted her one. I didn't know who she was or what was going on. I was asleep. And they wanted to court-martial me for hitting her. And what could I do? I said: "My God! You wake me up without any warning. What am I supposed to do? You could have been a gook or something." I was so badly injured I don't think they

could have court-martialed me.

All the way back on the plane, in Guam, in Oakland Naval Hospital, the dreams persisted. Finally I got my discharge and I got on a plane to get home to Kansas City and I had one of these dreams on the plane. I freaked all the passengers out. And like when it happened, I was sitting next to an Army dude who was a lifer and had been kind of admiring my ribbon collection. After I had the dream, he moved away to another seat, leaving everyone looking at me as if I was this strange dumb-ass. Coming home from Vietnam. God damn! What a weird dude I was! After it happened I tried to look inconspicuous. You know how you do. But everyone kept turning around and looking at me. And when I went to the restroom, as I walked down the aisle, everyone stared. And I felt like just shouting out something, you know, like "You stupid-assed fuckers!"

I don't think I would have yelled, though. I would have talked first, tried to talk real calm and tell them that this is what happens to guys that go to Vietnam. That something like this happens; it's something you can't lose; it's a memory that you can't wash out of your head. It

leaves scars on your brain you can't get rid of.

I got home and I kept dreaming at my mom's house. Like a lot of other people I still have the dreams.

### **Larry Rottmann**

1st Lt. Public Information  
Office 25th Infantry Div.  
June '67-Mar. '68  
[Congressional Record  
4/7/71]

While I was in Vietnam, I sent what I called a holiday message from First Lieutenant Larry Rottmann. On it there's a small picture of a black medic, a white medic, and a Vietnamese treating a wounded Vietnamese. And there's a little small thing beside it which is a quote from honorably discharged General William Tecumseh Sherman saying, "I am sick and tired of war. Its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have never fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation, and destruction. War is cruel and you cannot refine it. War is hell." That quote was taken from the Army Digest, a Department of Defense publication.

For sending that card, I was court-martialed. I'll read you the charges.

"This is to inform you that action is being taken by this headquarters to determine your fitness for retention as a reserve officer in the United States Army. Your record indicates that in December '67 you printed and distributed at government expense" (the 'at government expense' was -- I wrote 'free' on my envelope, which we are allowed to do, so I didn't put a stamp on it. That's the government expense: they paid the postage for the card and they're upset) "a Christmas card depicting a seriously wounded soldier receiving plasma, etc., etc."

This court martial was finally held last fall at Boston Army Base. I was represented by the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] resulting in the dropping of all charges and specifications. This is just to point out to you that they will do that. They pursued me for sending that Christmas card taken from the Army Digest; they pursued me, and spent, I guess, a million dollars, for three years across the country until they finally actually held the court martial and it was thrown out. That's just to show that they do mean business.

### **Mike Damron**

Pvt. (E 1) "B" Co. 3rd Tank Bn. 3rd Marine Reg. 3rd Marine Div. Sept. '66-Oct. '67 [Congressional Record 4/6/71]

Well, in January of 1967, we were on Operation Newcastle about thirty miles out of Da Nang. We had our tank and some infantry people on top of a hill while some more tanks and infantry were sweeping through the valley below. Our job was to more or less plaster the area before the infantry got there and if there was any stragglers left, enemy stragglers, after our people went through, we were to plaster them again. We were told we couldn't fire unless we saw people with packs and rifles. That was more or less the policy as written, but what we made it a practice to do, is our unit was to boost the body count. We'd paint a little hat, a triangle-shaped hat, on the side of our tanks for each confirmed kill we had, so any chance we got to add more hats to the side of the tank, we fired.

As far as prisoners of war go, on the back of a tank, there's a thing called a travel lock, so when the gun tube's to the rear it can be locked down where it won't be bounced around. They don't use these in Vietnam, but they use them in the States.

But what we used them for in Vietnam was we could put a VC's head or a VC suspect's head in that travel lock and lock it down. But it could be dangerous because if we did hit a bump it could break the person's neck.

### **Steve Rose**

E-5 (USN Corpsman) Hq. Bn. 4th Marine Reg. 3rd Marine Div. Dec. '66-Dec. '67 [Congressional Record 4/6/71]

Yeah. It's a thing maybe it's only with 3rd Marine Division, to cut off the left ear of NVA troops that are killed. I had some friends - - I was back down to Phu Bai and some friends came out of the field and as a corpsman they asked, "Can we get a bottle and something to put it in so we can ship it back to the States?" and I proceeded to do that -- pack 'em for shipment.

I call the time I spent in Vietnam "dead time." I call it a time when you just function and do things that, hopefully, you won't do when you come back home. As dead time, I think it's a sort of emotionless, you know, you do it, your buddy did it, so you can do it. So you just send it back. You don't make a big deal

## **Jack Mallory**

Capt. 11th Armored  
Cavalry Reg. 1st Air Cav.  
Div. May '69-May '70

You know, one of the things I remember about Vietnam, besides all the war stories, are the "Doughnut Dollies" [USO girls]. They'd come out to the field to play Bingo or something, and when they came out all of these guys were coming in cruddy and stinky and smelly and muddy and bloody. And this fresh, clean young thing would come up, "Hi. I'm Nancy. Your Doughnut Dolly. Would you like to play Bingo?" And people just looking at each other, you know. You'd see people start to bunch up, away from her, and maybe crack a few dirty jokes or something, but they wouldn't even come near her. They wouldn't know what to say to her. She was just scaring the shit out of people. Of course, I didn't want to play Bingo anyway. The guys would be saying, "Boy. I'd like to \*censored\* the shit out of her." But had the opportunity arisen then and there, I think that everyone of them would have been terrified to even say hello to her.

## **Christopher Soares**

L/Cpl. (E-3) "G"Co. 2nd  
Bn. 9th Marine Reg. 3rd  
Marine Div. Feb. '69-Apr.  
'69 [Congressional Record  
4/6/71]

This sergeant used to be the biggest pig in the world and he just used to take everything -- first man to be on the chow line; first man to grab the best C-rations and leave us with the ham and lima beans, which we used to call ham and shit and so for this reason and for driving us to the point of not knowing where your mind is -- not knowing where the hell to go or what to do -- we just hated that guy and we wanted to see him go. As far as the bounty is concerned, the first man with a witness in a fire fight, who blew his ass away with a round across his eyeballs would get a \$1000. And we had a pool going within the platoon. This was around Quang Tri Area and I personally offered approximately \$25 for his head.

## **Alex Prim**

E-4 Army Information  
Specialist HQ 1st Logistic  
Command Sept. '68-June  
'69

In Vietnam I was an information officer. One day we had a request from an executive of a manufacturing firm in Los

Angeles. This firm made a steam cleaner and they wanted some pictures of their apparatus on the job. I was assigned to take care of this. The other men in the office thought this idea from Los Angeles was pretty funny. . . since the steam cleaner was used mainly on damaged army personnel carriers and tanks. These vehicles often had bodies and the remains of bodies crushed into the armor and things like that. My associates were joking about this. I got upset. Violently upset. It made me sick of the whole thing. I just saw what this guy was trying to do, this manufacturer. He was making money off the war and he wanted publicity so he could get more government contracts. But I did my assignment as I was ordered. The next day I wrote a letter, a personal letter to the manufacturer, saying I thought his pictures were immoral. Three weeks later I had a visit from the Army's Criminal Investigation Division. They didn't take official action against me. I never received an answer from the guy in Los Angeles. I guess he just turned my letter over to the government.

## **Russell Kogut**

WO-1 155 Assault Helicopter Co. May '68-Mar. '69 [Congressional Record 4/6/71]

I saw an elephant and made mention of the fact. The captain who was in charge of the overall mission told me to go back and look and see what was going on.

I went back. There were four adults and a calf. I circled them several times. There was no village in the vicinity, so they were not friendly elephants, and there were no (this was by the captain's definition), there were no marks on the elephants or packs or any signs of any people around, so I assumed they were wild. The captain assumed they were enemy and told me to have 'em destroyed. So I had my gunners shoot 'em. And this is the price an animal pays for being wild in Vietnam.

## **Evan Haney**

E-4 NSA Danang June '68-July '69 [Congressional Record 4/6/71]

I'm a Seminole Indian. If you took the Vietnamese War as it is, and compared it to the Indian Wars a hundred years ago, it would be the same thing. All the massacres were the same. Nowadays they use chemical warfare;

back then they put smallpox in the blankets and gave them to the Indians. You could just go right on down the line and name all the similarities. One thing I would like to bring up about racism is that I have grown up with it all my life. When I was small I was exposed to it. When I watched TV or something and watched the Indians and the cavalry, I would cheer for the cavalry. That's how bad it was.

Right now a lot of Indian people are thinking about the old ways. Way back, they had something good. And then people started getting into a money bag, and that's when it all happened. When we made treaties long ago, it was for as long as the grass shall grow and as long as the rivers shall flow. The way things are going now, one of these days the grass isn't going to grow. . . and the rivers aren't going to flow...

## **Wade R. Sanders**

Lt. Coastal Division 13 "Black Cat Division" NAVFORV May '68-May '69

In July 1968 I was in a swift boat operation patrolling the mouth of the Bo-De River -- a known VC area. At the time we were operating under the standard naval rules of

engagement. There was a specific rule stating we were not to fire unless fired upon.

As we came out of the river, my gunners mate observed two individuals jumping a small stream near the river's mouth, about 200 yards away. They were unarmed. He didn't fire.

There was no reason to take action. No action was taken.

I sent a message in to my operational commander -- a routine report:

\*Personnel observed moving. For your information, this unit while patrolling passed out of river, and observed two personnel running. Attempted to notify sector, but unable to establish communication. Personnel visible for only 10-15 seconds. No action taken by this unit.\*

My immediate superior received the following reply:

\*Reference A indicates possibility that Black Cat Division acting like \*censored\* cat division. Get this guy squared away. Area noted by reference A is definite Indian Country. Regardless of communication problem of sector, good judgment indicates that personnel

should have been taken under fire.

Headquarters\*

### **John Beitzel**

Sgt. (E-5) 4/21 11th  
Brigade Americal Division  
Jan. '69-Jan. '70  
[Congressional Record  
4/6/71]

We were ordered to go out on a patrol, a regular patrol that we go out on all the time -- during a cease fire. We were very perturbed at this because we wanted to take the time off to write letters home. In one incident, we were working with another company and our battalion was nearby. Both companies were on the same radio frequency. Over the radio, the other company told us to pass on to the higher command that they had a body count of thirteen. So we passed it on up. . . . Then later, one of our platoons went into the village and they said, "We can confirm the body count of that company." They said, "There's nine women, three children and one baby."

### **Steve Pitkin**

Sp/4 "C" Co. 2/239 9th  
Infantry Div. May '69-July  
'69 [Congressional Record  
4/6/71]

I think it's an atrocity on the part of the United

States Army, to allow eight weeks of basic training, nine weeks of advanced infantry training, and then to send you against an enemy that's been fighting in his own backyard for twenty-five years. The training that they gave us, in the infantry, really amounted to nothing but familiarization with the small-arms weapons and the explosives you would use once you got over there. Once, we attacked a mock Vietnamese village in the snow at Fort Dix.

Then you go over to Nam with that limited amount of training and knowledge of the culture you're up against, and you're scared. You're so scared, that you'll shoot anything. You'll look at your enemy, and these people that you're sort of a visitor to -- you'll look at them as animals while you are turning yourself into an animal.

I'd say that's got my head spinning a little right now. . . the fact that I was once a sort of an animal and now I have to come back and be civil again and have a definite purpose: you know, going to school, going to work. But there's more and more veterans now that are just finding there is no purpose. The only purpose I had in Vietnam was surviving and getting the hell out. And then one of the saddest

experiences of my life occurred when I returned from Southeast Asia. . . and was waiting to catch a plane from Frisco Airport to Baltimore. It's like two o'clock in the morning or something and four long-haired people came in. And, you know, they laughed at me and I really had to fight back tears. I didn't say anything. I tried not to let it phase me that much, but we're not tin soldiers, we're people.

### **Arthur Egendorf**

SSG /E-5) 525 Military  
Intelligence Group Apr.  
'68-Apr. '69 Saigon  
[Congressional Record  
4/5/71]

I went to Harvard, majored in economics, worked on a project studying multi-national corporations, did research in Europe on them before being bothered by the draft board, and I enlisted in intelligence. I was told that I would be in area studies because people with my background should be in area studies and not with the infantry. And I found out in the first day of intelligence school that area studies is spying. I was later sent to Vietnam, and because I speak French, I was set up in Saigon in a position I really wanted. I didn't want to be out in the field. I didn't want to have to be under fire. I ran French spies

back and forth into Cambodia. And one of the first things that I had to do there was to arrange to get press cover for my spies.

This, some of the people in the press corps might have heard about, and they might also have heard last year the Army's denial of this fact -- that press cover was needed for espionage operatives. But it's been a standing policy, covert, of course, since the beginning of the war. Later I found out about an oil company being used to provide cover for people in Cambodia; that was a proposed operation. Later when I was sent back to Washington, I found out about X-hundred different companies working through the CIA with Army Intelligence and providing cover and accommodation addresses. About how Internal Revenue Service documents were falsified in order to hide income paid to spies, as well as Treasury Department and Immigration Department documents falsified to aid operatives overseas. And, in fact, a large number of the institutions that I had studied in college, believing that these were things that were going to help toward world peace, the multi-national corporation was going to weld the world together -- were in fact working for

Uncle Sam; not totally, not everybody committed to Uncle Sam, but the institutions provide a cover for things that are not published in this society. Not because it would be a threat to our national security, but because the people of this country, if they found out about it would probably feel what I feel now, which is quite a bit of desperation.

### **Scott Camil**

Sgt. 1st Bn. 4th Marine Reg. 1st Marine Div. Mar. '66-Nov. '67

I spoke to all fourteen of the representatives from the state of Florida. And when I said things like, "Senator Gurney, the Vietnamese government doesn't represent the Vietnamese people," he said, "So what? The American government doesn't represent the American people."

I explained to Congressman Hailey that we were killing five hundred Asians a week and were losing fifty men a week, not counting the injured bodies and minds on both sides. He said: "Son, you just have to face reality." Congressman Young said he just came back from a five-day tour of Vietnam and I was full of shit and I was a liar. He flew around in a helicopter for five days and he knows

Vietnamization is working, when I walked around for twenty months and I know it isn't.

Well, I saw State Senator Garden from Dade County. Supposedly the most liberal State Senator in Florida, and asked him to back the resolution stating "the Florida legislature recommends the immediate withdrawal of all troops from Vietnam." And he told me he didn't think the Vietnamese war had anything to do with the Vietnamese people. And then he thanked me for trying to awaken his unconsciousness.

### **Alex Prim**

Army Information Specialist HQ 1st Logistic Command Sept. '68-June '69

There was a vet named Johnny Upton in our delegation. He had seen a lot of killing and done a lot of killing. When we went over to the Senate I made specially sure he was there to talk to Senator Symington. The senator was certainly shocked by what John had to say. John had a story involving a policy in his unit. They were awarded a T-shirt which was stenciled "Charlie's Hunting Club" on the back and on the front was skull and crossbones for each



confirmed kill they got. They'd bring in a finger or an ear. John was wearing one of these T-shirts in the senator's office.

### **John Upton**

Hospital Corpsman, USN  
Attached to 1st Recon Bn.  
1st Marine Div. June '69-  
June '70

Senator Symington said he was shocked. Said he couldn't believe it. I was holding up a T-shirt, showing him. No. I had it on as a matter of fact, and I was modeling it for him. He couldn't believe it. And I said, "Well, it's a true fact." And he said, "Well, if you give me the names of people that were connected with your battalion, your battalion leaders and people who had these T-shirts," he would do something about it.

So I wrote a letter to Symington as soon as I got back to Kansas City. I've received no answer on it or anything. That was two months ago.

### **Ron Newton**

PFC (E-3) HHO Co. 704  
Maintenance Br. 3rd  
Brigade 4th Infantry Div.  
July '66-June '67  
[Congressional Record  
4/7/71]

I saw an officer complaining about a watered drink. He picked

up the Vietnamese girl that he thought had watered the drink, grabbed her by the neck, and lifted her up. He was about six foot or more. Lifted her up, raised back, and slapped her hard. And you know what? They carried her out of that room. I don't know what happened to her. But everybody sat back down and started drinking. You know, nothing was thought about it. This happened all the time, abuse of the people. It was like we were uncaged animals. We were bored. . . bored and we wanted to do something, you know. It's like the guy coming to the big city and he wants to do something. We were able to create inflation in Pleiku. As an analogy, it would be like you trying to purchase a regular \$100 apartment for \$300. Now that's beyond my means. I think it's beyond a lot of people's means. These people could not purchase apartments. They couldn't buy food anymore because we were paying whatever the people wanted. The prices just kept going, going, going. Finally the general put Pleiku off limits because of the inflation, because we were driving the women to prostitution so they could feed their kids. We were driving all the people to corrupt activities just to keep alive. We were driving these people. And

this is racism. We were the supreme race. These people were nothing.

### **Christopher Soares**

L/Cpl. (E-3) "G"Co. 2nd  
Bn. 3rd Marine Div. 9th  
Marine Reg. Feb. '69-Apr.  
'69 [Congressional Record  
4/6/71]

I remember an incident in which I was in Laos. These two squads got ambushed one right after another and wound up with three men killed and fourteen men wounded and not one enemy soldier killed. And that's the war we fought in Laos. I mean, like everybody was getting killed, left and right, and they called the operation a success. I don't know if you call a success catching some small arms ammo. . . .

### **Larry Rottmann**

1st Lt. Public Information  
Office 25th Infantry Div.  
June '67-Mar. '68  
[Congressional Record  
4/7/71]

At the 173rd Assault Helicopter Company, 25th Infantry Division, Cu Chi, there was a chaplain who prayed for the souls of the enemy on Sunday morning and earned flight pay as a door gunner on a helicopter during the rest of the week.

## **Al Hubbard**

Sgt. 22 Troop Carrier  
Squadron Aug. '65-June  
'66

\*Emotions\*

Walking down the flight  
line at Saigon  
past stacks of aluminum  
cases containing American  
bodies

and past stacks of  
aluminum luggage  
containing American  
currency.

Seeing the tight, sad face  
of an Airman  
loading the bodies aboard  
a dirty Air Force Transport  
and the wide smiling face  
of a stewardess greeting  
the passengers aboard a  
clean Pan American  
Clipper Jet.

Hearing a Vietnamese beg  
you to leave his country  
and an American colonel  
tells you to bomb his  
country.

Hearing a Vietnamese  
invite you to live in his  
home, after the war  
and an American explain  
why you can't live in his  
block, after the war.

Flying over barren, brown,  
safe  
American held terrain and  
over lush, green unsafe  
Enemy held terrain.

Feeling happy to be  
leaving a country in which  
you do not belong and  
sad to be returning to a

country  
in which you are not  
allowed to belong.

Sacrificing a portion of  
your consciousness so  
you won't have to deal with  
being there  
and building mental blocks  
so you won't have to deal  
with  
having been there.

## **Robert Muller**

1st Lt. 2nd Bn. 3rd Marine  
Reg. 3rd Marine Div. Sept.  
'68-Apr. '69

My name is Robert Olivier  
Muller. I am a first  
lieutenant in the United  
States Marine Corps,  
Retired. I was retired  
because of a permanent  
disability rating, 100 per  
cent, as a result of combat  
injuries sustained in  
Vietnam. My service  
number was 0105118. In  
Vietnam I served with 2nd  
Battalion, 3rd Marine  
Regiment, 3rd Marine  
Division. I served eight  
months in Vietnam, from  
early September '68 until I  
was shot on the 29th of  
April in 1969.

One day in the spring of  
my senior year at Hofstra  
University, I walked past a  
Marine officer standing  
behind a recruiting table. I  
knew enough to know that  
when I graduated the  
service was imminent. I  
was able-bodied and there  
was no reason for me to  
have a deferment. And

knowing that the if the  
United States was actually  
engaged in war, I felt that  
it was my duty as a citizen  
of this country, the country  
that I considered the  
greatest country in the  
world, to join the service  
and fight for my country.  
So I signed up for platoon  
leader's class at Quantico,  
Virginia. This was  
something instinctive in  
me. I had total faith and  
had always pledged total  
allegiance to my  
government. I never  
questioned the war; I  
never studied the history  
of Vietnam. It was  
sufficient for me to know  
that my government  
wanted me in Vietnam and  
that we were fighting to  
repulse a massive  
northern Communist  
invasion which was  
threatening the freedom-  
loving people of South  
Vietnam. It was our  
nation's responsibility to  
liberate these people from  
their oppressors and  
insure the self-  
determination of their  
future.

Right from the beginning I  
wanted to be a good  
soldier. And I thought  
about it a lot. As nearly as  
I could see, there was a  
correlation between good  
athletes and good soldiers.  
Good soldiers get  
wounded and the majority  
of my friends that were  
casualties in Vietnam were  
good athletes in high

school. I don't know what first made me think of soldiering this way, but it's true that one of my best friends was killed and he was the top cross-country runner I knew. And I sort of look at myself in retrospect -- I was a three-letter man in college, soccer, wrestling, and track -- and I see that traits which are necessary to be a good athlete are the ones that are also necessary to be a good soldier. The characteristics of a good athlete are dedication, loyalty, self-discipline. These are the same characteristics necessary to be a good soldier. I had those characteristics. I also had a very strong competitive drive. And when I decided to join the military, I said to myself, the only way I'd go off to war would be in a way I could contribute the most to my country's effort. And for me, I felt that I could contribute the most by being on the front line with the toughest fighting unit there was. This is why I selected the Marine Corps Infantry, and when it came time for filling out chits for desired duty I wrote in: "front line Infantry; Duty station -- Vietnam." And I made it quite clear to the commanding officer that I would accept no substitute -- Vietnam combat was what I wanted. By the time that I was sent overseas,

thirty-three weeks' training in the Marines had brought out in me a fanatical dedication to our military effort. I had come to view the enemy in Vietnam as a real monster, as a threat to my personal security. . . something which had to be stopped and squashed. Phrases like "gook" and "link the chink," "Luke the gook," stuff we used in training got solidly into my head.

I had gooks on my mind when we flew into Danang Airport. As I was getting off the plane I suddenly found myself surrounded by gooks. It was horrifying. Someone told me, "Don't worry, they're just Vietnamese civilians who work at the Air Base." But, you know, what was I supposed to think? I had been told repeatedly that I could not trust any Vietnamese. To see so many of them running around came as a shock, especially when they were in black pajamas which is what I thought the enemy wore.

My unit got into a combat situation the first day out in the field. We immediately lost three men and it was the first time that I'd seen deployment of military ordinance in a combat situation. Mad minutes in training are nothing like mad hours in combat. . . with dozens of jets coming over again and again

dropping bombs, and napalm, while heavy artillery barrages come in from the rear. When all this happens, you feel very confident that anybody out there is dead. And when you think the enemy's dead, something like a med evac chopper comes in to take out the wounded and it's met by a stream of green tracers from the "dead" enemy. So you say to yourself, "Those bastards got some nerve, after what we threw at them, coming out and shooting at a helicopter." So the helicopter takes off and after going out maybe four clicks it crashes, and the wounded and everybody on board dies.

Out in the field it was fairly easy to maintain the rationale with which I went to Vietnam -- that I was repelling a Communist invasion -- because out in the jungle the only people we come into contact with were the NVA and hardcore Viet Cong. They come on like aggressors. So for the initial time I stayed in the field my outlook stayed about the same. And then we pulled back and we started working around civilian areas, populated areas. This was an awakening -- to actually deal with the Vietnamese people. I was shocked to find open expressions of animosity and hatred, for myself and

my fellow Marines. This animosity was demonstrated in the looks the people gave us and in the way they would react when we walked through a village. If we were on an operation and we had to search through a village, these people would huddle themselves together and look at us. Some were afraid and others just openly hateful. These were the Vietnamese people that "wanted" us there! Hell, they wanted us there to get our MPC, our Will you be here tomorrow?" I said, us Cokes, to sell us bread, to sell us anything we wanted. And if you think they couldn't get us anything we wanted let me tell you something that happened in a little village just below the DMZ. While we were there I asked this little Vietnamese kid for a harmonica. He didn't know what I was talking about. So I mimicked the sounds of a harmonica and with my hands, I demonstrated what I was talking about. And he said, "Tomorrow. Will you be here tomorrow?" I said, "Yes," and the next day he came back with a Hammond harmonica. I was amazed.

I came into contact with Cam Lo Refugee Village several times. Every time I passed Cam Lo, I had trouble. When we passed it at night, on a truck

convoy the convoy would get hit with RPGs (rocket propelled grenades). I had one night twelve or fifteen guys wounded topside on my truck. Other times we took sniper fire. Other times it was land mines. Other times when we were on a cordon, it was grenades coming out at us. And I said, "What is going on? This is not Viet Cong that we're fighting; it's not North Vietnamese. These are refugees. These are the people of South Vietnam that we are here to help that are shooting at us, that are setting up the booby traps, placing the land mines, who know damn well where these things are located and yet won't help us and tell us where they are. And they allow us to get hurt and they allow me to lose my men, and I don't understand why." And then as this sort of experience continued I think I started to understand.

During a week I spent in a Fire Support Base, I killed about twelve rats and I threw them out in the garbage. The rats decomposed just as rapidly as any dead body would decompose in 120 heat. At the end of a week's time, I went to dump the garbage out with a friend of mine, and I had the entire population of this refugee village pour around my vehicle. I'd say

there were around one hundred and fifty people. My friend and I dumped maybe two GI cans full of garbage that had the twelve rats in there. The people saw the rats; they just kicked the rats aside and jumped in to salvage the remainder. And that was one of the most sickening sights of the war. I could tolerate dead bodies. I do not know why. Dead bodies did not bother me, but when I saw a human being that was still alive, pushing through this garbage to perhaps get a cigarette or a rancid piece of meat, that bothered me more than seeing dead people. Then I understood why we weren't winning in Vietnam -- because these people hated what we were doing, what I had to do as an officer, as a Marine, in relocating people, in pulling ordinary search operations, in going through their villages, sometimes destroying their property and their goods. The basic rule that they taught us down at Quantico, the number one rule in guerilla warfare, that you cannot win a guerilla war unless you have the popular support of the people; this most important rule was the very one that we were overlooking. By pushing these people to the starving point so that they'd push away dead

rats to get a rancid piece of meat makes it ludicrous to conclude that we are simultaneously winning the hearts and minds of people, as the pacification program says.

After this, I went with the ARVN and had another enlightening experience. I could see apathy on the part of the civilian population -- they didn't help us militarily, they didn't tell us where the booby traps were or the land mines or where the trails and the supply caches were. I could see so many civilians harboring the VC, giving them information. But I expected from the fighting forces, from the soldiers in South Vietnam, the Vietnamese soldiers that there would be some willingness to fight. I served four months with the ARVNs working with three battalions. And I was dumbfounded the first time we had contact with the enemy to see the ARVN soldiers literally run the other way. I mean, run the other way. There were times when we heard mortar tubes popping in the distance and before one round would land, the entire battalion had taken off running the other way. They were nicknamed "The Roadrunners." I remember every night I slept with the battalion commander, he had this

personal bodyguard walk around us all night long because he knew we had VC in the battalion. But to see such widespread -- I don't know what you call it -- lack of motivation, lack of identity, lack of ability to fight was startling. The fact that the South Vietnamese soldiers did not want to fight was the final straw for me. I said, "If they don't want to fight, what the hell am I doing here? What am I fighting for? If the people I'm supposed to be helping, the people who want to be liberated, are not willing themselves to fight, then I have to question what I'm doing here." I remember being out in Ashau Valley where we'd wake up in the morning to find out that some of the South Vietnamese soldiers had simply put down their M-16's, taken as much rice as they could carry, and went off into the field. And when you desert in Ashau Valley, you're not going back to harvest the rice crop, or to see your family, you're going out to join the enemy. This was amazing! The day that I got shot, I had a battalion reinforced, approximately six hundred South Vietnamese soldiers. I had a company of ten Marine tanks, and I had to take an objective that had perhaps fifteen North Vietnamese soldiers dug in as a suicide squad. Before we assaulted that

hill, I had four jets come in, four sorties, and they dropped their payload right on target. I had an hour and a half of prep fire with heavy artillery, 155 and eight-inch guns. I had each of the tanks expend half of their allowance in ammunition. And after all this, the ARVN repeatedly failed to take that hill. They would start up the hill, take sporadic fire, and fall back. Some of the tankers told me they could see the VC through their telescope sights when they popped up to shoot at us. They were bleeding from their noses and ears, from the concussion of the air strikes. But these guys, the North Vietnamese, were fanatics. There is no other word. They were so dedicated to what they were doing that they would hold out against us to the death. I mean it was sickening to contrast these VC with the South Vietnamese that I had under my advisory capacity -- these six hundred guys who could not take the hill. In a John Wayne type move, I got pissed off by the fact that fifteen North Vietnamese soldiers could deter me and my advances -- I was determined to get them -- not for political ideology but simply because they were there, and they were the enemy, and they were responsible for the loss of my friends. So I got three

tanks and told the South Vietnamese that we were going to walk them up the hill. So we went up the hill and everything went fine until we started to take fire. Once again the South Vietnamese fell back, this time leaving me and the other tankers out to dry. That's when I got shot.

I got shot through the chest. The bullet went through both lungs and severed the spinal cord. And I was immediately rendered a paraplegic, from the fifth thoracic vertebra down, I was conscious for maybe ten seconds after I was hit, and my first thought was, "I'm hit. I don't fucking believe it. I'm hit!" That was the first thing that went through my head. The second thing was, "My girl. And my family." Almost simultaneously, "My girl and my family. What are they going to say?" And then all of a sudden I said to myself, "It doesn't matter. I'm dying. I'm going to die in Vietnam. On this shitty piece of ground." This is literally what I said to myself: "On this shitty piece of ground I'm going to die. I don't fucking believe it." And I closed my eyes and I thought I was dead. And I woke up and I was on a hospital ship, the U.S.S. Repose. I had seven tubes in me and all I know is that I woke up and

I was alive. It was unbelievable. The doctors told me I was paralyzed and what have you. I couldn't have cared less. The only thing that mattered was that I was alive. We always talked among ourselves before we went over about what would happen if we lost a leg or if we were disabled. And almost unanimously the guys said, "I'd rather die than come back disabled." Let me tell you something. When I woke up on that hospital ship, the fact that I was disabled, permanently, the rest of my life, the sorrow of being told that I'd be a paraplegic -- a word that I'd never really heard or understood before (I didn't know what a paraplegic was until they told me) -- the sorrow in being told that I was in that condition was so lost in the overwhelming joy of seeing that doctor come down and tell me, "You're going to make it." And that's why, to this day, I cannot allow myself to feel sorry for what happened to me. Because I'm here. A lot of my friends aren't, and I know that. And that's why I can't complain. I am bitter. I am bitter, not because I was shot in Vietnam. I am bitter because, I put my faith, my allegiance in my government. I did so with the best, I most honest intentions in the world,

believing that I was doing right because my government told me we had to fight in Vietnam. And to believe that my government would lie to me or lead me astray was inconceivable. But having been there, and recognizing what we've done over there, and not being able to justify the death of any of my friends, that's why I'm bitter. I'm bitter because I gave to my country myself, 100 per cent, and they used me. They used me as a pawn in a game and for that reason I am bitter. And insofar as the tragedy -- many people I say, "Oh, what a tragedy. You're a paraplegic" the tragedy in my life is not that I'm a paraplegic, because I'm a lot better man today than I ever was before. The tragedy in my life is that I was, as so many Americans still are, so totally naive and so trusting, and I had this instinct of putting faith in my government, totally forgetting that good government doesn't just happen. A good government takes work, and it takes work from the people, from me. As a college graduate I was supposed to be an educated person. I was an idiot because I never asked the question "Why?" And that is my greatest tragedy -- one which, I might add again, was

shared by all too many Americans.

What do I want to do now? Well, one of the reasons that I make an effort to go out and speak about the war in Vietnam and why I take so many speaking engagements, is because I've heard people say too many times, "After the price the United States has paid, after having lost so many dead and so many wounded in Vietnam, we cannot just write these men off, write the dead off and write the disabled off and say it was for nothing. We must continue," they say, "and we must seek a just peace." They say, "to lend credence or some justification to the price we've paid." But I can tell you this, I spent over a year as an in-patient in a VA hospital, and I was with some of the most severely disabled casualties of this war, multiple amputees, quadriplegics, men who could only move their head (the only part of their body that they would ever feel or be able to move again for the rest of their life was their head). And these guys, despite their need to justify their loss, despite their need to say it was for something, to consider themselves heroes -- the overwhelming majority of these guys recognize that their loss is for nothing. And the only thing that

they want, and what I want, is not to lose any more friends in Vietnam. Not to have any more of my friends come back, either in boxes or in wheelchairs. These people who promote the war are playing on emotions of guys like me. They're using me again to carry on this war, so I want to go out and I want to tell people from my wheelchair, "Don't use me as a rallying cry to continue this war for a just peace. To throw more guys and more of my friends and brothers into the hopper of this war machine, to justify my loss. If I can recognize my loss is a waste, why can't you? Maybe it's harder for you because of the guilt that you feel."

My Vietnam experience has really changed me. I was the one who went to college and studied business administration. I was the management major. I was the one who had full expectations after three years in the Marine Corps as an officer with outstanding credentials to go on into a major corporation under a management training program and be routed right into the type of young executive working fourteen hours a day to get his home out in the suburbs or whatever that Great American Dream is. This

has changed. When I was shot I became a member of a minority group. I began fighting the system from a VA hospital. In my case the system was the Veterans Administration. I tried to fight the Veterans Administration to get what was my due right under law. I was entitled to care second to none. There was no reason why I should be denied access to a proper and thorough rehabilitation program. But the Veterans Administration was lacking funds and they couldn't help me. All of a sudden I found that I was politically impotent; that I could not effect a change. This really hit me. And this is why, this is what prompted me to choose law as my profession. Because I was a member of a group, disabled veterans, that literally lie hidden and forgotten behind hospital walls -- because they're an unpleasant reminder of what's going on in life today. To be a member of a beleaguered minority! Me! A white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. This was really a revelation. And now I know what it is to be an underdog in a literally hopeless situation. I want to be in a position where I can effect changes. The only way I might be able to do this is by becoming a lawyer. That's why I'm going to law school.

I tell you, I'm a better man now than I was before I went to Vietnam. I'm certainly more aware of the sanctity of life. They say that the veteran is a callous and dehumanized person. I disagree. Because I was forced to kill other human beings I have found what life means.

I think Vietnam may have served a purpose and this is where my personal hope for the future lies: that Vietnam was the catalyst that precipitated a social revolution, and I hope it's a revolution because it has to happen fast. It has to happen very fast.

### **Jack Mallory**

Capt. 11th Air Cav. Reg.  
1st Air Cav. Div. May '69-  
May '70

They get discharged from Vietnam and the Army and suddenly they're standing out there in the street, outside the gate, calling a cab. Because that's all there fucking is to do. Call a cab. Get on an airplane. Fly to your home. Take a cab from the airport home. And you're home again. And when you're home, some people say, "Well, how was it?" and other people say, "How many people did you kill?" And then there are those who say "Where have you been? We haven't seen you around for a while."

And I think that a lot of vets feel that there is something really lacking -- things aren't happening the way they're supposed to happen.

Back in the mid-sixties I was never really convinced that the government was as evil as all those filthy radicals were saying it was. But then I took the whole Vietnam trip. And then I had to think about it. Why did all those people die?

I guess if there is a revolution and someone asked me who I'd blame for causing the revolution, I'd have to say Walt Disney. He is the one who taught all of us to believe in the things that the country and the soldier is supposed to stand for, the whole Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, George Washington image.

### **Bill Perry**

PFC (E-3) 101st Airborne  
Div. Nov. '66-Aug. '68  
[Congressional Record  
4/7/71]

The whole American policy is nothing but what you might call cultural imperialism. It's like a very clever form of racism. They've always been in to trying to honkify white people as much as possible. Trying to make you whiter than white. Just taking their whole

decadent culture, their whole cold-weather culture, their whole fear culture, their whole money culture, and push their fear, push this hate, push this mistrust, among all of us. It's this kind of thing some of us have felt all of our lives.

### **Mrs. Virginia Warner**

Mother of James Warner  
American POW in N.  
Vietnam [Congressional  
Record 4/6/71]

First of all, I want to say, I am an American. I'm sure I'm going to be labeled Communist; I'm sure I'm going to be labeled revolutionary, but I am not. I am an American. I love my country. It's being torn apart by this war. I want to appeal to the middle-aged, middle-class American. We have to wake up and realize what's happening to us. My son's been a prisoner, and, of course, I'm interested in him coming back. I'd love to have him back, but this isn't the only consideration. We have to consider the people in Vietnam. What would we do, what would you and I do, if a Vietnamese plane flew over and bombed our town? How would we react to somebody that we've captured?

I think my son isn't being humanely treated. I don't think he's been brutally



treated, but he doesn't get steak; I'm sure he doesn't get chicken like George Smith got. But I think he has food enough to sustain him until he comes back, fine. We're allowed to send him a package every other month. We send, oh, aspirins, vitamin capsules, and such things as that. We hadn't heard from him for two and a half years. We knew he was a prisoner. We knew he had been captured by the North Vietnamese. We began to write letters to foreign newspapers and letters to foreign governments to try to get the Vietnamese to tell us about the prisoners, where they were and who they were. Now we've gotten two lists. I don't understand why we claim the lists aren't complete; I don't understand that. Of course, maybe it's because my son's name has appeared on it and you know, in the back of my mind, maybe I'm satisfied. But I've talked to other families and the circumstances of their son's disappearance or their husband's disappearance is quite different and it's perhaps that the North Vietnamese don't know where they are. These are the things we have to rationalize with. We have to stop and think what's happening to our country and to that country. Is it worth going

on, is it worth tearing everybody apart? I think, I don't know what else to say. I'd just like to say that since Hanoi has said that if we set a date, they'll talk about the release of the prisoners, is that asking so much, just to set a date? Let's put them on the spot. Let's put them on the spot. Let's set a date and see if they really will live up to their word. They've told the whole world that this is what they'll do, and if they're interested at all in world opinion, like we've been told they are, I think they will. I think they'll listen. And will America listen? Will middle-aged, middle-class America listen? Don't let our country be torn apart by this.

### **Christopher Soares**

L/Cpl. (E-3) "G"Co. 2nd Bn. 9th Marine Reg. 3rd Marine Div. Feb. '69-Apr. '69

In Vietnam, I was not defending my country, I was defending my own life. I wasn't fighting for the John Doe next to me, I wasn't fighting for my captain or the battalion commander, or the general, or Westmoreland either. But for my own ass. I wanted to come back to the United States alive.

There's not so much charm in war stories, you know. But at times you

have to tell war stories because what happened to you in Vietnam is always on your conscience. You don't tell war stories in John Wayne style. You tell it quietly. But you have to tell it. There is so much you have to get rid of in your mind. Sometimes I just stay up half the night and cannot go to sleep because my mind bleeds from hell when it goes back to Vietnam.

### **Mike McCusker**

Sgt. (E-5) Public Information Office 1st Marine Div. '66-'67  
[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

The Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians are dying right now, at this exact moment, and they will continue to die tomorrow, maybe even next year. So remember that and maybe you're going to find one of these days an F-100 flying a napalm strike on a ghetto; you're going to find an F-100 flying a napalm strike on where the long-hairs live. It's not too far off. They've used tear gas from helicopters already; they've used shotguns; they've blown away Black Panthers it's not too far off.

### **Larry Rottmann**

1st Lt. Public Information Office 25th Infantry Div.

June '67-Mar. '68  
[Congressional Record  
4/7/71]

Many people ask us, right, why we haven't spoken up before and I think we have given you the reason. We are ordered not to speak up and if you do speak up, action will be taken against you -- sometimes very serious and very harsh action. There is another question in many peoples' minds here. They say, "Well, why do you talk now? Why do you come here and tell us these things that happened two, three, maybe four, five years ago? What is your motivation behind it? You want to get on the boob tube? You're on some kind of an ego trip? You know, why are you here?"

I'm here, speaking personally, because I can't be here. I'm here because, like, I have nightmares about things that happened to me and my friends. I'm here because my conscience will not let me forget what I want to forget. I didn't want to talk about it when I first got back, you know. I didn't want to talk about it at all. I didn't watch Cronkite.

I went fishing a lot and changed socks two or three times a day and slept on beds and ate cheeseburgers. But after a while, it gets to the point where you have to talk to

somebody and when I tried to talk to somebody, even my parents, they didn't want to hear it. They didn't want to know. And that made me realize that no matter how painful it was for me I had to tell them. I mean, they had to know. The fact that they didn't want to know, told me they had to know.

### **Bill Perry**

PFC (E-3)) 101st Airborne  
Div. Nov. '66-Aug '68  
[Congressional Record  
4/7/71]

People say we must stop the war. I feel it's so much more than this. The whole rich man's game has always been fear. They've always been very much into impressing us. Now here's the Empire State Building. Be impressed. Now here is the C-5A or some fantastic bomber. Be impressed. You know, be afraid of it. Here is a club. I'll bust your head if you don't stay in line. Be impressed. Be afraid. Competition is another thing that brings about fear. Like ever since we're little children. Come on, stupid, you're thirteen months. Why can't you walk yet? Then there's this fear that's always put into us by the movie people for instance. That all Africans are cannibals and all Indians are savages. Who are the real savages? Who is really creating this

climate of fear -- this climate of mistrust -- this climate which makes us scared to death of the person sitting next to us? Who prevents us from loving each other? The whole fear thing is what's creating atrocities in Selma, atrocities in Phuc Vinh, atrocities in Angola, atrocities in Mozambique, atrocities in Montevideo. It's happening everywhere. We're afraid of ourselves, We're not allowed to love each other. The whole life style of the Vietnamese people, their whole cultural and social way of life, is nothing but love. It's a kind of love we really lack in this country and a kind of love that we have to build. A kind of opening of ourselves, an honesty to ourselves and a love for each other where you know there will be no reason to hurt anyone except perhaps to protect our love. You know, the kind of love which is called primitive or savage.

### **Landon Thorne**

1st Lt. Golf Battery 3/12  
3rd Marine Div. Nov. '69-  
Dec. '70

Brothers

Send us,  
Send us far away,  
Make us believe what our  
fathers would  
like to have been  
Sons we tried to be  
but we became brothers

When we learned how far  
we had been sent and how  
far we had to come To be  
home.

We were told to be heroes  
because if we were

Our fathers would have us  
back,  
but we became brothers  
In a blood house,  
And we were called  
heroes  
because of what  
Our fathers thought we  
were  
But we had learned to  
save a brother  
Not a father's fear-dream.

Who has the right  
To tell us what we are  
Or what a brother is not?  
Who can tell us  
What to destroy  
Or what to protect  
To be heroes?

Is a hero a father's  
sandwich  
stuffed with politician's  
baloney and bombast  
cheese  
Delivered cold to a  
mother's doorstep  
wrapped in bunting  
tied with glory ribbon  
To ease the eating --  
Our brother?

Is a hero one who showed  
himself  
urging others to be brave  
Or is he one who lay still  
Searching for his soul,  
not finding strength in  
danger  
His passion, his life  
To bring home-

Our brother?  
Here we are father,  
We are home!

We may have lost your  
face --  
a presumptive  
countenance  
squinting shyly  
into a mirror of another  
day --

But other things are still in  
reach  
at fair exchange for limbs  
and life  
If they have a heart.  
It may be we cannot  
change you  
but we hope to make you  
see  
How we have changed,  
While you have chosen to  
be father  
We have fought --  
and are fighting --  
To be brothers to our  
sons.

### **Rusty Sachs**

Capt. Medium Helicopter  
Squadron 362 Marine Air  
Group 36 1st Marine Div.  
Aug. '66-Sept. '67

And then things started  
going right. And the  
government started  
making these stupid  
decisions, like: "You can  
stay there on the Mall all  
night as long as you stand  
up." Things like that. So  
we just decided, "Well,  
\*censored\* 'em. We're not  
going to pay attention to  
their silly rules. We're  
going to do what we came  
here to do." And we did.

By Friday morning when  
we returned our medals, it  
was becoming an  
emotional thing. We  
discussed for a long time  
how we were going to  
return our medals. . .  
whether we'd drop them  
into shitcans filled with  
blood. . . or carry them up  
to Congress in body bags.  
Finally we decided the  
best way to show our  
contempt was by throwing  
them over the fence they'd  
put up in front of the  
Capitol steps.

This was really an  
emotional thing. After I  
threw in my medals I  
moved beyond the mike  
and was standing next to  
the fence helping herd the  
newsmen away from the  
fence so that the vets  
could get through. Then I  
saw some newsmen  
beginning to pick up  
medals. I grabbed the  
mike and said: "Listen, you  
newsmen, we're not giving  
you the medals. We're  
turning them in to the  
country. . . don't touch  
them!"

And then another  
newsman picked up a  
Purple Heart and put it in  
his pocket. And I snapped.  
It was just. . . like. . . the  
most sacrilegious thing I'd  
ever seen. And I reached  
through the fence and  
grabbed the nearest  
reporter and started saying  
to him and the others:  
"You tell every mother  
fucker back there that if

somebody touches a medal, I'm going to be over there breaking the fingers off his fucking hands." And then a vet grabbed me and said, "Hey, calm down a little, brother." And I realized that if I'd gone around the other side of the fence I would of done that and I'd better cool down.

And I just turned to go when Ron Ferrizzi from Philadelphia got up and said, "My wife is divorcing me for returning these medals. She wants me to keep them so my little sons can be proud of me," And went on to say how three of his best friends had died so he could get that medal. And that finally snapped everything, and a whole bunch of us, you know, just started crying. That was the emotional peak, We couldn't take it any more. And we walked away and were crying really hard for two hours. We felt that we'd really, right at that instant, we thought, we wouldn't have been surprised if somebody said, "Hey, Nixon just announced that all the troops will be out of Nam and back home by suppertime," We would have believed it at that instant, We really would have. We thought we'd finally done it and we'd reached everyone.

### **Howard Baker**

Yoeman & Courier (E-3)  
Naval Intelligence, USS  
Forrestal

Talking to policemen first. . . gave me hope. And then seeing that there was this beautiful community amongst us. Tribe's a good word because it had its structure but it didn't have an old hierarchy or anything like that. Everyone had a vote; everyone had a say. And like many of our meetings there, we didn't really cut each other down or beat each other up or pick on each other's insecurities. Instead we gave to each other, we listened to ideas. I think it was on Thursday all of a sudden it hit me that there's no reason to be violent anymore, that we've done something without bombing the city or something like that. It was at that point that I began to see that all of our ideas were right and that we had our hearts and our minds in the right place.

### **Dr. David Galicia**

Maj. Psychiatrist, 3rd Field  
Hospital July '69-June '70  
[Congressional Record  
4/6/71]

And when I returned home (I consider myself to be quite a stable individual. I've never really had a suicidal thought in my life), I was staying in Detroit by

myself. I was staying in a hotel on the ninth floor. And because I was alone, a lot of this stuff kept coming back to me. I was standing by the open window one day with this stuff running through my head and I had to leave that window, because I felt that, at any moment, I would jump. I've had the same feeling a number of occasions crossing freeway bridges when I am thinking about the subject again. And this has remained an upsetting thing to me until just the other day. I read an account in the Detroit Free Press which probably many of you have. It was a very long, long article last Sunday about veterans returning. Somewhere buried in the middle of that was a paragraph that said, roughly, about 7000 people are coming into VA Hospitals, and this doesn't include only psychiatric patients, this includes the whole spectrum, everybody. Out of these 7000 people, 54 per cent of these people have at least suicidal feelings. And that 27 per cent of these people have actively tried suicide, one or more times. I suspect that perhaps this is a low estimate because up until today I don't think I would have been prone to express what's happened.

### **Scott Camil**

Sgt. 1st Bn. 1st Marines  
Mar. '66-Nov. '67

My stepfather is a policeman. I'm what people call a patriotic son. I volunteered for Vietnam and spent twenty months there. I did a lot of things that I wouldn't be allowed to do in the United States and I justified them. I justified killing unarmed women and children because we were told in training that we can't have a guerilla warfare without the support of the people, the people supporting the enemy are the enemy also. And you kill them. You kill the women so they can't have children to grow up to be Communists. And you kill the children so they don't grow up to be Communists. I rationalized it, thinking, "Well, we killed unarmed women and children in Hiroshima and Nagasaki for the best interests of the nation and this too is supposed to be for the best interests of the nation," and I didn't see any difference.

Who can say what's the right way to kill another human being? If someone was trying to kill me, I would kill him. And that's one thing I learned in Vietnam -- how easy killing was -- it was just me pulling a little lever on a piece of metal I was holding in my arms. I couldn't feel, when I shot someone, the piece of

metal whipping through his body, causing him pain, taking away his life. It was just me going "click, click." And everyone of the enemy that fell was like a feather in my cap. And it just made me happy to do it, and I did it for what I believed in.

And I believe in what I'm doing now and, like, if I was at Kent State when it happened, and if I would have gotten my hands on a rifle, I would have shot back. I would have tried to kill and I'm sure I would have killed. Even though I realize that the National Guard people at Kent State were being used just like I was being used in Vietnam. Yet, even though I recognize that, I still know I would have tried to kill them. And this is something that I hassle with myself that upsets me, that I can't resolve.

### **John Spencer**

PFC L Company 3rd Bn.  
7th Marine Reg. 1st  
Marine Div. Feb. '66-  
May'67

I got wounded and that's when my drug addiction started. I was getting morphine for the pain and the morphine began doing something else -- relieving my tension about going back into combat when the hospital trip was over. Then I got to using heroin and that was it.

When I got back to my unit, there was no problem continuing with drugs. I just bought it from whatever village we were near. The medics in our unit gave us hypodermics and everything we needed to shoot up intravenously.

I got back to California and kicked the habit for four months because I didn't know the neighborhoods. Then I came back to New York where drugs were easy to get and I got hooked again. After a while I went to the VA looking for help. There was none. So I went to robbery and stealing to support my habit. Then I got busted.

### **Alex Prim**

E-4 Army Information  
Specialist HQ 1st Logistic  
Command Sept. '68-June  
'69

A lot of people who are in VVAW don't like to be in it. They would rather forget about Vietnam. Forget the war and spend more time with girls -- rather than other veterans. But they feel they have to do this VVAW thing. They have to be involved.

You see, when they get home, they have this problem getting to be real people again. A lot of my friends wanted to get married and settle down when they got back. A lot

of the marriages haven't worked out. Some were too fast, others had their engagements broken off. The main thing all of us wish is to be able to come back and pretend the whole thing never happened, that we never really went to Vietnam. And that we're just average guys, going back to college, finding jobs. But we can't forget being there in Vietnam. And that's the problem. There's a war going on where our friends died. We understand what that means. The rest of America doesn't.

### **Bestor Cramm**

Lt. 7th Eng. Bn. USMC  
Mar. '68-Apr. '69

The new American soldier, as I see it, is a person who has come to a point in his life where he's rejected violence -- he's seen too much of it. He's been so much a part of it. He's learned about how and to what extent human beings can really torture one another. So now, he's thinking about the future, about his own kids, about the other people who haven't been born yet, and how the last thing in the

world he could wish for would be for them to go through what he's been through. He's got eyes that are set really deep, because I think he's cried a lot. I think he's cried a lot in shame, for the year, maybe two years of his life in which he killed, in which he raped the countryside, and I think that's a shame he's going to live with for his whole life. And that's a really incredibly hard road, I think, for the new American soldier because he has to accept the fact that he spent a portion of his life doing these things.

## Epilogue

And so a New Soldier has returned to America, to a nation torn apart by the killing we were asked to do. But, unlike veterans of other wars and some of this one, the New Soldier does not accept the old myths.

We will not quickly join those who march on Veterans' Day waving small flags, calling to memory those thousands who died for the "greater glory of the United States." We will not accept the rhetoric. We will not readily join the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars—in fact, we will find it hard to join anything at all and when we do, we will demand relevancy such as other organizations have recently been unable to provide. We will not take solace from the creation of monuments or the naming of parks after a select few of the thousands of dead Americans and Vietnamese. We will not uphold traditions which decorously memorialize that which was base and grim.

It is from these things the New Soldier is asking America to turn. We are asking America to turn from false glory, hollow victory, fabricated foreign threats, fear which threatens us as a nation, shallow pride which feeds off fear, and mostly from the promises which have proven so deceiving these past ten years.

For many of us there is little to remember but the promises and, most poignantly, the loss of the symbols of those promises -- of John and Robert Kennedy, of Martin Luther King, Jr., of Medgar Evers, of Fred Hampton and Malcolm X, of Allison Krause, Sandy Scheuer, Jeffrey Miller, and William Schroeder from Kent State and Philip Gibbs and James Green from Jackson State; the loss, too, of friends, of Richard Pershing, Peter Johnson, Johnny White, Don Droz, and the other 53,000 Americans who have lost their lives in this degrading and immoral war. The promises of peace candidates who were not peacemakers; of civil rights laws which were not enforced; of educational and medical aid which was

downgraded in priority below bombs and guns; of equal opportunity while Mexican-Americans and blacks were drafted in numbers disproportionate to their representation in this country and then made up casualties in even greater disproportion.

I think that, more than anything, the New Soldier is trying to point out how there are two Americas -- the one the speeches are about and the one we really are. Rhetoric has blinded us so much that we are unable to see the realities which exist in this country.

We were sent to Vietnam to kill Communism. But we found instead that we were killing women and children. We knew the saying "War is hell" and we knew also that wars take their toll in civilian casualties. In Vietnam, though, the "greatest soldiers in the world," better armed and better equipped than the opposition, unleashed the power of the greatest technology in the world against thatch huts and mud paths. In the process we created a nation of refugees, bomb craters, amputees, orphans, widows, and prostitutes, and we gave new meaning to the words of the Roman historian Tacitus: "Where they made a desert they called it peace."

The New Soldier has come back determined to make changes without making the world more unjust in the effort to make it just. We have come back determined that human will can control technology and that there is greater dignity and power in human spirit than we have yet been willing to grant ourselves. In Vietnam we made it particularly easy to deny that spirit. We extended an indifference which has too often been part of this country's history and made it easy for men to deal in abstractions. "Oriental human beings" -- "gooks" -- "body count" -- "Nape" -- "Waste 'em" -- "free-fire zone" -- "If they're dead, they're VC" -- the abstractions took command from the commanders themselves and we realized too late that we were the prisoners of our own neglect and callowness.



By discussing crimes committed in war, the New Soldier is trying to break through the callousness and end the neglect. Regardless of whether crimes have been committed in other wars or even by the other side in this one, America must understand how our participation in Vietnam and the methods and motives used by American fighting men are part of a continuing national moral standard. As New Soldiers we are seeking to elevate that standard as well as to demonstrate where it has been part of a significant illusion. Individuals are trying, by denying themselves the luxury of forgetting about their acts, to spare others the agony of having to commit them at some time in the future.

This is not to say that all soldiers have departed Vietnam with the same feelings about their military service. Certainly not all veterans of this war are New Soldiers. Not all want to be or even understand what many of their veteran contemporaries are trying to say.

Even among the New Soldiers, in our hatred for the war and our drive for change, there is a wide divergence on approaches to change, or, for that matter, on what causes the need for change. I know that my own views do not necessarily represent the feelings of some Vietnam Veterans Against The War. But among all there is an intense and deep-rooted agreement that America has lost sight, hopefully only temporarily, of much that we knew as our greatness.

The New Soldier does not have all the answers. We do not even pretend to. Unquestionably we lack some of the depth of experience from which to provide guidelines for many policy questions. We are aware also of all the traditional arguments -- that those in power have access to information, that America can do no wrong, that America has particular interests which it must safeguard, and so on. In reality, however, there is a big difference between these arguments and what happens to the people involved. In the end, the abstractions never convey the reality of human life.

To be sure, those who make the decisions experience special interest pressures which others, not directly involved in the decision making process, will not feel. Consequently, those on the outside of the power spectrum find it easier to prescribe solutions for the myriad problems we confront today. In their simplicity these solutions sometimes ignore reality. But more often they cut to the quick of the problem and those on the outside of the power structure show in the absoluteness of their criticisms and demands more wisdom, more moral strength, more compassion, and far more willingness to consider what effect the prescribed solution will have on people -- not the people whose security and social welfare is already guaranteed, but those thousands who are literally and figuratively "in the street."

I myself went into the service with very little awareness of the people in the streets. I accepted then and still accept the idea of service to one's country. But because of all that I saw in Vietnam, the treatment of civilians, the ravaging of their countryside, the needless, useless deaths, the deception and duplicity of our policy, I changed. Traditional assumptions and expectations simply were not enough. I still want to serve my country. I am still willing to pick up arms and defend it -- die for it, if necessary. Now, however, I will not go blindly because my government says that I must go. I will not go unless we can make real our promises of self-determination and justice at home. I will not go unless the threat is a real one and we all know it to be so. I will not go unless the people of this country decide for themselves that we must all of us go.

J.K.

## Appendix

### **Vietnam Veterans Against The War: A Profile Study of the Dissenters**

by Hamid Mowlana and Paul H.  
Geffert/June, 1971

Dr. Mowlana is Professor and Director of the International Communication Program at The American University in Washington, D.C. He is on the faculty of both the School of International Service and the Department of Communication. Mr. Geffert plans to start his doctoral studies at the University of Minnesota. He received his M.A. in 1970 from The American University.

This survey was conducted by the authors independently of any organization or institution and had no sponsors or support financially or otherwise from any source.

The arrival of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War in Washington prompted many comments from politicians, political observers, and the American people in general. The men who had experienced the war focused the attention of the nation on themselves and their cause through a week of demonstrations, lobbying, and guerilla theatre. Much was said, and will be said, about their impact on politics and society at large. Their actions and their speeches were carefully recorded. What was missing from these observations, however, was an examination of the nature of the anti-war Vietnam veteran himself, his background, and his opinions and attitudes.

We intended to throw light upon the anti-war veteran as a person, and as a group, examining his socioeconomic background, his sources of information about the world in general and specifically the Asian war.

This survey was undertaken on April 23, 1971, among the veterans encamped on the Mall in Washington. The encampment had about 1,000 veterans. The total number

of veterans who came to Washington was estimated at about 2,300. The other veterans stayed in homes, congressional offices, and in truck and trailer campers. Some 200 survey questionnaires were distributed randomly, but only 172 forms were returned and tallied. All of the survey forms were filled in by veterans who had served in Vietnam.

If we could create a composite demonstrator, one characterized by those qualities which the majority of Vietnam veterans at the demonstration possessed, our survey shows that he was a Northeastern United States urban dweller, between the ages of 21 and 25. He had finished high school and had some college education, and was at present either unemployed or a college student. The average anti-war veteran, according to our survey, was a many-sided individual who did not easily fit into preconceived categories which many find associated with the peace movement. His world outlook and political opinion changed drastically from a moderately conservative to a liberal one during his tenure in the service. He cited his personal contact with the Vietnamese people and with his fellow GIs as the two major sources of information which led to his change of opinion and attitude about the war.

While a majority of the demonstrators made their homes in the Northeast before their entrance into the service, a substantial minority were from the Midwest. Together, these two groups accounted for nearly 80 percent of the anti-war veterans in Washington. Few came from the Western states and fewer from the South.

The religious affiliation of the demonstrators provides an interesting dichotomy. The two largest groups responding were Catholics and agnostics. Here, on the one hand, we find a large percentage of demonstrators with rather strictly traditional church-

oriented beliefs. On the other hand, a great many veterans were doubters and challengers of faith. Few, however, fully rejected religious beliefs through atheism. Especially notable for their lack of representation were the Jewish veterans. Only 2.9 percent of our sample were Jewish, a group often associated with liberal movements in the United States in recent years.

Approximately one half of the demonstrators came from families with occupations in industrial labor. Professional fields accounted for about one third of the demonstrators' family backgrounds. Only 2.2 percent of the men came from agricultural families.

When we examined what the veteran himself was doing prior to entering the service we discovered over 43 percent of them had just completed high school or college. Some 22 percent of the respondents were drafted while in school. The remainder were working -- the overwhelming majority in industrial labor positions.

About one in five veterans (21.8 percent) said that they were actively employed at the present time in such professions as sales, teaching, labor, and agricultural. Over 41 percent identified themselves as students enrolled in colleges, while 36.8 percent said they were unemployed.

The survey showed that two out of three men had enlisted for the military service, rather than being drafted. The political views of the veterans prior to entrance into the service may in part account for this. We found that only slightly less than one fourth of the men had, at the time of their entry in the service, already determined that there was no justification for the United States' presence in Vietnam. It is also interesting to note that almost one half of our respondents stated that they had no strong feeling about the United States' intervention

or non-intervention in Vietnam when they entered the service. And over one fourth felt that the United States was justified in being in Vietnam. It is thus recognizable that enlistments would be high among this group.

We asked the veterans to identify the direction of their political persuasion prior to entering the service. More than 90 percent of them were evenly divided among "conservative," "moderate," and "liberal," with less than ten percent identifying themselves as "radical." But when we asked them how they would identify themselves with social, economic, and political thinking in the United States at the present, we found a drastic shift in their political outlook. Forty-eight percent identified themselves as "radical," 18.5 percent as "extremely radical," with 27 percent classifying themselves as either "liberal" or "moderately liberal," and only five percent being either "moderate" or "conservative." Thus, while 64 percent of the veterans saw themselves as moderates and liberals at the time of their entry into the service, now only about 30 percent put themselves in these categories, while almost all the rest of the respondents (close to 70 percent) place themselves in the "radical" or "extreme radical" categories.

Recognizing that these terms connote different things to different people, we make no attempt to examine these claims or the possible actions which might result from these self-categorized radicals. The important thing for this study is the shift of opinion and attitude. In the men, previously characterized as moderates, has developed an attitude by which nearly half of the veterans now accept their position vis-à-vis the political, economic, and social status of the United States as radical. In fact, nearly one fifth classified themselves as extremely radical.

There is no doubt that among the veterans there was a decided shift in opinion and

attitude. Examining this change, we find that 80 percent of the veterans experienced a change in view of our involvement in Vietnam after they left the United States. A small number of men (16.5 percent) experienced their attitude change following their return to the United States. But a great majority, 41.1 percent of the veterans interviewed, said that they changed their view drastically during their first three months of service in Vietnam.

We asked our respondents to rank the sources of information which in their opinion determined their new attitude about the war in Vietnam. We found personal contact with Vietnam and Vietnamese peoples as the primary source of information for the change.

The second source of information was, again, personal contact, this time with other Americans and GIs serving in Vietnam. We found ranking immediately below personal involvement was the print media: magazines, newspapers, books. At the bottom of the list of information sources were: contact with non-Americans other than Vietnamese, and films and movies. Thus, physical contact with the war, according to our survey, was the primary source of information in determining the veterans' attitude about the war.

We also asked the veterans to rank the media they used most while they were stationed in Vietnam. The two primary sources of information were the Army's newspapers and broadcasts, followed closely by U.S. magazines and the veterans' hometown newspapers. Other information sources in order of importance as listed by the veterans included: foreign newspapers and magazines, films and movies, North Vietnamese broadcasts, South Vietnamese newspapers and broadcasts, and other international broadcasts.

It is interesting to note that the respondents listed the North Vietnamese and other international broadcasts as one of their least used sources of information. This may indicate that the respondents were not as exposed to enemy mass propaganda as one would have expected.

<b>Age of the veterans</b>	
20 and under	4.4%
21 to 25	74.7
25 to 29	19.7
30 and above	1.2
	100.0%
<b>Education</b>	
Did not finish high school	6.6%
High school graduate	19.9
Some college	55.8
College student	17.7
	100.0%
<b>Spent most of his time before the service</b>	
Northeast	54.1 %
Midwest	23.2
Southwest	3.9
West	5.5
Deep South	5.0
Border states	2.8
Outside US	5.5
	100.0%
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Single	83.0%
Married	9.5
Divorced	7.5
	100.0%
<b>Veteran's family occupation</b>	
Professional	29.4%
Managerial & Sales	15.6
Agricultural	2.2
Education	3.9
Labor	48.9
	100.0%
<b>Type of work before entering service</b>	

Just completed school or college	43.1%
Drafted while in education	22.1
Professional work	4.4
Agricultural work	.6
Managerial and sales	5.5
Teaching	1.1
Labor	23.2
	100.0%
<b>Entered the service</b>	
Drafted	34.3%
Enlisted	65.7
	100.0%
<b>Present occupation</b>	
Student	41.1%
Managerial and sales	2.3
Labor	5.7%
Teaching	4.0
Professional	8.0%
Not working	36.8
Agricultural	1.8
	100.0%
<b>Religion</b>	
Catholic	24.7%
Protestant	11.4
Jewish	2.9%
Agnostic	23.0
Atheist	11.0%
Other	27.0
	100.0%
<b>Opinion about US involvement in Vietnam when entering the service</b>	
US was justified in being there	28.5%
No strong feeling about our intervention or non-intervention	47.5
US was not justified in being there	24.0
	100.0%
<b>Political identity before the service</b>	
Conservative	29.5%
Moderate	29.5
Liberal	34.0%
Radical	7.0
	100.0%

<b>When did you begin to see a drastic change in your views about US involvement in Vietnam?</b>	
First entered service, still in US	21.7%
During first three months in Vietnam	41.1
Toward end of service in Vietnam	20.6%
Upon returning to the US	16.6
	100.0%
<b>Ranking by importance the sources of information used in determining attitudes about the War in Vietnam</b>	
1-Personal contact with Vietnam and the Vietnamese	
2-Personal contact with GIs and Americans in Vietnam	
3-Magazines	
4-Newspapers	
5-Books	
6-Television	
7-Radio	
8-Contact with their political and religious leaders	
9-Contact with non-American people (other than Vietnamese)	
10-Films and movies	
<b>Ranking by importance the sources of information used while in Vietnam</b>	
1-Army newspaper	
2-Armed Forces broadcasting	
3-US magazines	
4-Hometown newspapers	
5-Other than hometown and Army newspapers	
6-Foreign newspapers and magazines	
7-Films and movies	
8-North Vietnam broadcasts	
9-South Vietnam broadcasts	
10-Other international broadcasts	
<b>Political Identity in relation to the current social, economic, and political thinking in the US</b>	
Strongly conservative	.6%
Moderately conservative	1.8
Just moderate	3.0%
Liberal	18.7
Moderately liberal	8.6%

Radical	48.8
Extremely radical	18.5

	100.0%
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**COMPLETE TESTIMONY OF LT. JOHN KERRY  
TO  
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

**On Behalf of Vietnam Veterans Against the War**

**From the Congressional Record (92nd Congress, 1st Session)  
for Thursday, April 22, 1971,  
pages 179-210.**



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## LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS RELATING TO THE WAR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA<sup>1</sup>

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THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 1971

UNITED STATES SENATE;  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, D.C.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 11:05 a.m., in Room 4221, New Senate Office Building, Senator J. W. Fulbright (Chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Fulbright, Symington, Pell, Aiken, Case, and Javits.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order.

### OPENING STATEMENT

The committee is continuing this morning its hearings on proposals relating to the ending of the war in Southeast Asia. This morning the committee will hear testimony from Mr. John Kerry and, if he has any associates, we will be glad to hear from them. These are men who have fought in this unfortunate war in Vietnam. I believe they deserve to be heard and listened to by the Congress and by the officials in the executive branch and by the public generally. You have a perspective that those in the Government who make our Nation's policy do not always have and I am sure that your testimony today will be helpful to the committee in its consideration of the proposals before us.

I would like to add simply on my own account that I regret very much the action of the Supreme Court in denying the veterans the right to use the Mall. [Applause.]

I regret that. It seems to me to be but another instance of an insensitivity of our Government to the tragic effects of this war upon our people.

I want also to congratulate Mr. Kerry, you, and your associates upon the restraint that you have shown, certainly in the hearing the other day when there were a great many of your people here. I think you conducted yourselves in a most commendable manner throughout this week. Whenever people gather there is always a tendency for some of the more emotional ones to do things which are even against their own interests. I think you deserve much of the credit because I understand you are one of the leaders of this group.

I have joined with some of my colleagues, specifically Senator Hart, in an effort to try to change the attitude of our Government toward your efforts in bringing to this committee

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<sup>1</sup> The copy text has no footnotes: all footnotes here are editorial additions. All elements in [brackets] or (parentheses) here are thus in the copy text.

and to the country your views about the war.<sup>2</sup> I personally don't know of any group which would have both a greater justification for doing it and also a more accurate view of the effect of the war. As you know, there has grown up in this town a feeling that it is extremely difficult to get accurate information about the war and I don't know a better source than you and your associates. So we are very pleased to have you and your associates, Mr. Kerry.

At the beginning if you would give to the reporter your full name and a brief biography so that the record will show who you are.

Senator JAVITS. Mr. Chairman, I was down there to the veterans' camp yesterday and saw the New York group and I would like to say I am very proud of the deportment and general attitude of the group. I hope it continues. I have joined in the Hart resolution, too. As a lawyer I hope you will find it possible to comply with the order even though like the chairman, I am unhappy about it. I think it is our job to see that you are suitably set up as an alternative so that you can do what you came here to do. I welcome the fact that you came and what you're doing.

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. You may proceed, Mr. Kerry.

#### STATEMENT OF JOHN KERRY, VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

Mr. KERRY. Thank you very much, Senator Fulbright, Senator Javits, Senator Symington, Senator Pell. I would like to say for the record, and also for the men behind me who are also wearing the uniforms and their medals, that my sitting here is really symbolic. I am not here as John Kerry. I am here as one member of the group of 1,000, which is a small representation of a very much larger group of veterans in this country, and were it possible for all of them to sit at this table they would be here and have the same kind of testimony.

I would simply like to speak in very general terms. I apologize if my statement is general because I received notification yesterday you would hear me and I am afraid because of the injunction I was up most of the night and haven't had a great deal of chance to prepare.

#### WINTER SOLDIER INVESTIGATION

I would like to talk, representing all those veterans, and say that several months ago in Detroit, we had an investigation at which over 150 honorably discharged and many very highly decorated veterans testified to war crimes committed in Southeast Asia, not isolated incidents but crimes committed on a day-to-day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command.

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<sup>2</sup> Page 179 ends here.

It is impossible to describe to you exactly what did happen in Detroit, the emotions in the room, the feelings of the men who were reliving their experiences in Vietnam, but they did. They relived the absolute horror of what this country, in a sense, made them do.

They told the stories at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires from portable telephones to human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan, shot cattle and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the countryside of South Vietnam in addition to<sup>3</sup> the normal ravage of war, and the normal and very particular ravaging which is done by the applied bombing power of this country.

We call this investigation the "Winter Soldier Investigation." The term "Winter Soldier" is a play on words of Thomas Paine in 1776 when he spoke of the Sunshine Patriot and summertime soldiers who deserted at Valley Forge because the going was rough.

We who have come here to Washington have come here because we feel we have to be winter soldiers now. We could come back to this country; we could be quiet; we could hold our silence; we could not tell what went on in Vietnam, but we feel because of what threatens this country, the fact that the crimes threaten it, not reds, and not redcoats but the crimes which we are committing that threaten it, that we have to speak out.

#### FEELINGS OF MEN COMING BACK FROM VIETNAM

I would like to talk to you a little bit about what the result is of the feelings these men carry with them after coming back from Vietnam. The country doesn't know it yet, but it has created a monster, a monster in the form of millions of men who have been taught to deal and to trade in violence, and who are given the chance to die for the biggest nothing in history; men who have returned with a sense of anger and a sense of betrayal which no one has yet grasped.

As a veteran and one who feels this anger, I would like to talk about it. We are angry because we feel we have been used in the worst fashion by the administration of this country.

In 1970 at West Point, Vice President Agnew said "some glamorize the criminal misfits of society while our best men die in Asian rice paddies to preserve the freedom which most of those misfits abuse," and this was used as a rallying point for our effort in Vietnam.

But for us, as boys in Asia whom the country was supposed to support, his statement is a terrible distortion from which we can only draw a very deep sense of revulsion. Hence the anger of some of the men who are here in Washington today. It is a distortion because we in no way consider ourselves the best men of this country, because those he calls

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<sup>3</sup> Page 180 ends here.

misfits were standing up for us in a way that nobody else in this country dared to, because so many who have died would have returned to this country to join the misfits in their efforts to ask for an immediate withdrawal from South Vietnam, because so many of those best men have returned as quadriplegics and amputees, and they lie forgotten in Veterans' Administration hospitals in this country which fly the flag which so many have chosen as their own personal symbol. And we cannot consider ourselves America's best men when we are ashamed of and hated what we were called on to do in Southeast Asia.

In our opinion, and from our experience, there is nothing in South Vietnam, nothing which could happen that realistically threatens the United States of America. And to attempt to justify the loss of one American life in Vietnam, Cambodia, or Laos by linking such loss to the preservation of freedom, which those misfits supposedly abuse, is to us the height of criminal hypocrisy, and it is that kind of hypocrisy which we feel has torn this country apart.

We are probably much more angry than that and I don't want to go into the foreign policy aspects because I am outclassed here. I know that all of you talk about every possible alternative of getting out of<sup>4</sup> Vietnam. We understand that. We know you have considered the seriousness of the aspects to the utmost level and I am not going to try to dwell on that, but I want to relate to you the feeling that many of the men who have returned to this country express because we are probably angriest about all that we were told about Vietnam and about the mystical war against communism.

#### WHAT WAS FOUND AND LEARNED IN VIETNAM

We found that not only was it a civil war, an effort by a people who had for years been seeking their liberation from any colonial influence whatsoever, but also we found that the Vietnamese whom we had enthusiastically molded after our own image were hard put to take up the fight against the threat we were supposedly saving them from.

We found most people didn't even know the difference between communism and democracy. They only wanted to work in rice paddies without helicopters strafing them and bombs with napalm burning their villages and tearing their country apart. They wanted everything to do with the war, particularly with this foreign presence of the United States of America, to leave them alone in peace, and they practiced the art of survival by siding with whichever military force was present at a particular time, be it Vietcong, North Vietnamese, or American.

We found also that all too often American men were dying in those rice paddies for want of support from their allies. We saw first hand how money from American taxes was used for a corrupt dictatorial regime. We saw that many people in this country had a one-sided idea of who was kept free by our flag, as blacks provided the highest percentage of casualties. We saw Vietnam ravaged equally by American bombs as well as by search

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<sup>4</sup> Page 181 ends here.

and destroy missions, as well as by Vietcong terrorism, and yet we listened while this country tried to blame all of the havoc on the Vietcong.

We rationalized destroying villages in order to save them. We saw America lose her sense of morality as she accepted very coolly a My Lai and refused to give up the image of American soldiers who hand out chocolate bars and chewing gum.

We learned the meaning of free fire zones, shooting anything that moves, and we watched while America placed a cheapness on the lives of orientals.

We watched the U.S. falsification of body counts, in fact the glorification of body counts. We listened while month after month we were told the back of the enemy was about to break. We fought using weapons against "oriental human beings," with quotation marks around that. We fought using weapons against those people which I do not believe this country would dream of using were we fighting in the European theater or let us say a non-third-world people theater, and so we watched while men charged up hills because a general said that hill has to be taken, and after losing one platoon or two platoons they marched away to leave the high for the reoccupation by the North Vietnamese because we watched pride allow the most unimportant of battles to be blown into extravaganzas, because we couldn't lose, and we couldn't retreat, and because it didn't matter how many American bodies were lost to prove that point. And so there were Hamburger Hills and Khe Sanhs and Hill 88's and Fire Base 6's and so many others.<sup>5</sup>

#### VIETNAMIZATION

Now we are told that the men who fought there must watch quietly while American lives are lost so that we can exercise the incredible arrogance of Vietnamizing the Vietnamese.

Each day——

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. I hope you won't interrupt. He is making a very significant statement. Let him proceed.

Mr. KERRY. Each day to facilitate the process by which the United States washes her hands of Vietnam someone has to give up his life so that the United States doesn't have to admit something that the entire world already knows, so that we can't say that we have made a mistake. Someone has to die so that President Nixon won't be, and these are his words, "the first President to lose a war."

We are asking Americans to think about that because how do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam? How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake? But we are trying to do that, and we are doing it with thousands of rationalizations, and if

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<sup>5</sup> Page 182 ends here.

you read carefully the President's last speech to the people of this country, you can see that he says, and says clearly:

But the issue, gentlemen, the issue is communism, and the question is whether or not we will leave that country to the Communists or whether or not we will try to give it hope to be a free people.

But the point is they are not a free people now under us. They are not a free people, and we cannot fight communism all over the world, and I think we should have learned that lesson by now.

#### RETURNING VETERANS ARE NOT REALLY WANTED

But the problem of veterans goes beyond this personal problem, because you think about a poster in this country with a picture of Uncle Sam and the picture says "I want you." And a young man comes out of high school and says, "That is fine. I am going to serve my country." And he goes to Vietnam and he shoots and he kills and he does his job or maybe he doesn't kill, maybe he just goes and he comes back, and when he gets back to this country he finds that he isn't really wanted, because the largest unemployment figure in the country — it varies depending on who you get it from, the VA Administration 15 percent, various other sources 22 percent. But the largest corps of unemployed in this country are veterans of this war, and of those veterans 33 percent of the unemployed are black. That means 1 out of every 10 of the Nation's unemployed is a veteran of Vietnam.

The hospitals across the country won't, or can't meet their demands. It is not a question of not trying. They don't have the appropriations. A man recently died after he had a tracheotomy in California, not because of the operation but because there weren't enough personnel to clean the mucous out of his tube and he suffocated to death.

Another young man just died in a New York VA hospital the other day. A friend of mine was lying in a bed two beds away and tried to help him, but he couldn't. He rang a bell and there was nobody there to service that man and so he died of convulsions.

I understand 57 percent of all those entering the VA hospitals talk about suicide. Some 27 percent have tried, and they try because they<sup>6</sup> come back to this country and they have to face what they did in Vietnam, and then they come back and find the indifference of a country that doesn't really care, that doesn't really care.

#### LACK OF MORAL INDIGNATION IN UNITED STATES

Suddenly we are faced with a very sickening situation in this country, because there is no moral indignation and, if there is, it comes from people who are almost exhausted by their past indignations, and I know that many of them are sitting in front of me. The country seems to have lain down and shrugged off something as serious as Laos, just as

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<sup>6</sup> Page 183 ends here.

we calmly shrugged off the loss of 700,000 lives in Pakistan, the so-called greatest disaster of all times.

But we are here as veterans to say we think we are in the midst of the greatest disaster of all times now because they are still dying over there, and not just Americans, Vietnamese, and we are rationalizing leaving that country so that those people can go on killing each other for years to come.

Americans seem to have accepted the idea that the war is winding down, at least for Americans, and they have also allowed the bodies which were once used by a President for statistics to prove that we were winning that war, to be used as evidence against a man who followed orders and who interpreted those orders no differently than hundreds of other men in Vietnam.

We veterans can only look with amazement on the fact that this country has been unable to see there is absolutely no difference between ground troops and a helicopter, and yet people have accepted a differentiation fed them by the administration.

No ground troops are in Laos, so it is all right to kill Laotians by remote control. But believe me the helicopter crews fill the same body bags and they wreak the same kind of damage on the Vietnamese and Laotian countryside as anybody else, and the President is talking about allowing that to go on for many years to come. One can only ask if we will really be satisfied only when the troops march into Hanoi.

#### REQUEST FOR ACTION BY CONGRESS

We are asking here in Washington for some action, action from the Congress of the United States of America which has the power to raise and maintain armies and which by the Constitution also has the power to declare war.

We have come here, not to the President, because we believe that this body can be responsive to the will of the people, and we believe that the will of the people says that we should be out of Vietnam now.

#### EXTENT OF PROBLEM OF VIETNAM WAR

We are here in Washington also to say that the problem of this war is not just a question of war and diplomacy. It is part and parcel of everything that we are trying as human beings to communicate to people in this country, the question of racism, which is rampant in the military, and so many other questions also, the use of weapons, the hypocrisy in our taking umbrage in the Geneva Conventions and using that as justification for a continuation of this war, when we<sup>7</sup> are more guilty than any other body of violations of those Geneva Conventions, in the use of free fire zones, harassment interdiction fire, search and destroy missions, the bombings, the torture of prisoners, the killing of

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<sup>7</sup> Page 184 ends here.



prisoners, accepted policy by many units in South Vietnam. That is what we are trying to say. It is part and parcel of everything.

An American Indian friend of mine who lives in the Indian Nation of Alcatraz put it to me very succinctly. He told me how as a boy on an Indian reservation he had watched television and he used to cheer the cowboys when they came in and shot the Indians, and then suddenly one day he stopped in Vietnam and he said "My God, I am doing to these people the very same thing that was done to my people." And he stopped. And that is what we are trying to say, that we think this thing has to end.

#### WHERE IS THE LEADERSHIP?

We are also here to ask, and we are here to ask vehemently, where are the leaders of our country? Where is the leadership? We are here to ask where are McNamara, Rostow, Bundy, Gilpatric and so many others. Where are they now that we, the men whom they sent off to war, have returned? These are commanders who have deserted their troops, and there is no more serious crime in the law of war. The Army says they never leave their wounded.

The Marines say they never leave even their dead. These men have left all the casualties and retreated behind a pious shield of public rectitude. They have left the real stuff of their reputations bleaching behind them in the sun in this country.

#### ADMINISTRATION'S ATTEMPT TO DISOWN VETERANS

Finally, this administration has done us the ultimate dishonor. They have attempted to disown us and the sacrifice we made for this country. In their blindness and fear they have tried to deny that we are veterans or that we served in Nam. We do not need their testimony. Our own scars and stumps of limbs are witnesses enough for others and for ourselves.

We wish that a merciful God could wipe away our own memories of that service as easily as this administration has wiped their memories of us. But all that they have done and all that they can do by this denial is to make more clear than ever our own determination to undertake one last mission, to search out and destroy the last vestige of this barbaric war, to pacify our own hearts, to conquer the hate and the fear that have driven this country these last 10 years and more, and so when, in 30 years from now, our brothers go down the street without a leg, without an arm, or a face, and small boys ask why, we will be able to say "Vietnam" and not mean a desert, not a filthy obscene memory but mean instead the place where America finally turned and where soldiers like us helped it in the turning.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Kerry's authorship of his statement is disputed: it is claimed that anti-war activist Adam Walinsky, a former legislative aide to Sen. Robert Kennedy, either wrote the statement or helped Kerry to write it. Moreover, the "Winter Soldier Investigation" has been discredited.

Thank you. [Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Kerry, it is quite evident from that demonstration that you are speaking not only for yourself but for all your associates, as you properly said in the beginning.<sup>9</sup>

#### COMMENDATION OF WITNESS

You said you wished to communicate. I can't imagine anyone communicating more eloquently than you did. I think it is extremely helpful and beneficial to the committee and the country to have you make such a statement.

You said you had been awake all night. I can see that you spent that time very well indeed. [Laughter.]

Perhaps that was the better part, better that you should be awake than otherwise.

#### PROPOSALS BEFORE COMMITTEE

You have said that the question before this committee and the Congress is really how to end the war. The resolutions about which we have been hearing testimony during the past several days, the sponsors of which are some members of this committee, are seeking the most practical way that we can find and, I believe, to do it at the earliest opportunity that we can. That is the purpose of these hearings and that is why you were brought here.

You have been very eloquent about the reasons why we should proceed as quickly as possible. Are you familiar with some of the proposals before this committee?

Mr. KERRY. Yes, I am, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you support or do you have any particular views about any one of them you wish to give the committee?

Mr. KERRY. My feeling, Senator, is undoubtedly this Congress, and I don't mean to sound pessimistic, but I do not believe that this Congress will, in fact, end the war as we would like to, which is immediately and unilaterally and, therefore, if I were to speak I would say we would set a date and the date obviously would be the earliest possible date. But I would like to say, in answering that, that I do not believe it is necessary to stall any longer. I have been to Paris. I have talked with both delegations at the peace talks, that is to say the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government and of all eight of Madam Binh's points it has been stated time and time again, and was stated by Senator Vance Hartke when he returned from Paris, and it has been stated by many other officials of this Government, if the United States were to set a date for withdrawal the prisoners of war would be returned.

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<sup>9</sup> Page 185 ends here.

I think this negates very clearly the argument of the President that we have to maintain a presence in Vietnam, to use as a negotiating block for the return of those prisoners. The setting of a date will accomplish that.

As to the argument concerning the danger to our troops were we to withdraw or state that we would, they have also said many times in conjunction with that statement that all of our troops the moment we set a date, will be given safe conduct out of Vietnam. The only other important point is that we allow the South Vietnamese people to determine their own future and that ostensibly is what we have been fighting for anyway.

I would, therefore, submit that the most expedient means of getting out of South Vietnam would be for the President of the United States to declare a cease-fire,<sup>10</sup> to stop this blind commitment to a dictatorial regime, the Thieu-Ky-Khiem regime, accept a coalition regime which<sup>11</sup> would represent all the political forces of the country which is in fact what a representative government is supposed to do and which is in fact what this Government here in this country purports to do, and pull the troops out without losing one more American, and still further without losing the South Vietnamese.

#### DESIRE TO DISENGAGE FROM VIETNAM

The CHAIRMAN. You seem to feel that there is still some doubt about the desire to disengage. I don't believe that is true. I believe there has been a tremendous change in the attitude of the people. As reflected in the Congress, they do wish to disengage and to bring the war to an end as soon as we can.

#### QUESTION IS HOW TO DISENGAGE

The question before us is how to do it. What is the best means that is most effective, taking into consideration the circumstances with which all governments are burdened? We have a precedent in this same country. The French had an experience, perhaps not traumatic as ours has been, but nevertheless they did make up their minds in the spring of 1954 and within a few weeks did bring it to a close. Some of us have thought that this is a precedent, from which we could learn, for ending such a war. I have personally advocated that this is the best procedure. It is a traditional rather classic procedure of how to end a war that could be called a stalemate, that neither side apparently has the capacity to end by military victory, and which apparently is going to go on for a long time. Speaking only for myself, this seems the more reasonable procedure.

I realize you want it immediately, but I think that procedure was about as immediate as any by which a country has ever succeeded in ending such a conflict or a similar conflict. Would that not appeal to you?

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<sup>10</sup> Spelled with a dash in the copy text.

<sup>11</sup> Page 186 ends here.

Mr. KERRY. Well, Senator, frankly it does not appeal to me if American men have to continue to die when they don't have to, particularly when it seems the Government of this country is more concerned with the legality of where men sleep than it is with the legality of where they drop bombs. [Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. In the case of the French when they made up their mind to take the matter up at the conference in Geneva, they did. The first thing they did was to arrange a ceasefire<sup>12</sup> and the killing did cease. Then it took only, I think, two or three weeks to tidy up all the details regarding the withdrawal. Actually when they made up their mind to stop the war they did have a ceasefire<sup>13</sup> which is what you are recommending as the first step.

Mr. KERRY. Yes, sir; that is correct.

The CHAIRMAN. It did not drag on. They didn't continue to fight. They stopped the fighting by agreement when they went to Geneva and all the countries then directly involved participated in that agreement.

I don't wish to press you on the details. It is for the committee to determine the best means but you have given most eloquently the reasons why we should proceed as early as we can. That is, of course, the purpose of the hearing.<sup>14</sup>

Mr. KERRY. Senator, if I may interject, I think that what we are trying to say is we do have a method. We believe we do have a plan and that plan is that if this body were by some means either to permit a special referendum in this country so that the country itself might decide and therefore avoid this recrimination which people constantly refer to or if they couldn't do that, at least do it through immediate legislation which would state there would be an immediate ceasefire<sup>15</sup> and we would be willing to undertake negotiations for a coalition government. But at the present moment that is not going to happen, so we are talking about men continuing to die for nothing and I think there is a tremendous moral question here which the Congress of the United States is ignoring.

The CHAIRMAN. The Congress cannot directly under our system negotiate a cease-fire<sup>16</sup> or anything of this kind. Under our constitutional system we can advise the President. We have to persuade the President of the urgency of taking this action. Now we have certain ways in which to proceed. We can, of course, express ourselves in a resolution or we can pass an act which directly affects appropriations which is the most concrete positive way the Congress can express itself.

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<sup>14</sup> Page 187 ends here.

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But Congress has no capacity under our system to go out and negotiate a cease-fire.<sup>17</sup> We have to persuade the Executive to do this for the country.

EXTRAORDINARY RESPONSE DEMANDED BY EXTRAORDINARY QUESTION

Mr. KERRY. Mr. Chairman, I realize that full well as a study<sup>18</sup> of political science. I realize that we cannot negotiate treaties and I realize that even my visits in Paris, precedents had been set by Senator McCarthy and others, in a sense are on the borderline of private individuals negotiating, et cetera, I understand these things. But what I am saying is that I believe that there is a mood in this country which I know you are aware of and you have been one of the strongest critics of this war for the longest time. But I think if we can talk in this legislative body about filibustering for porkbarrel<sup>19</sup> programs, then we should start now to talk about filibustering for the saving of lives and of our country. [Applause.]

And this, Mr. Chairman, is what we are trying to convey.

I understand. I really am aware that there are a tremendous number of difficulties in trying to persuade the Executive to move at this time. I believe they are committed. I don't believe we can. But I hope that we are not going to have to wait until 1972 to have this decision made. And what I am suggesting is that I think this is an extraordinary enough question so that it demands an extraordinary response, and if we can't respond extraordinarily to this problem then I doubt very seriously as men on each that we will be able to respond to the other serious questions which face us. I think we have to start to consider that. This is what I am trying to say.

If this body could perhaps call for a referendum in the country or if we could perhaps move now for a vote in 3 weeks, I think the people of this country would rise up and back that. I am not saying a vote nationwide. I am talking about a vote here in Congress to cut off the funds, and a vote to perhaps pass a resolution calling on the Supreme Court to rule on the constitutionality of the war, and to do<sup>20</sup> the things that uphold those things which we pretend to be. That is what we are asking. I don't think we can turn our backs on that any longer, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Symington?

WITNESS SERVICE DECORATIONS

Senator SYMINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Kerry, please move your microphone. You have a Silver Star; have you not?

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<sup>17</sup> Spelled with a dash in the copy text.

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<sup>20</sup> Page 188 ends here.

Mr. KERRY. Yes, I do.

Senator SYMINGTON. And a Purple Heart?

Mr. KERRY. Yes, I do.

Senator SYMINGTON. How many clusters?

Mr. KERRY. Two clusters.

Senator SYMINGTON. So you have been wounded three times.

Mr. KERRY. Yes, sir.

Senator SYMINGTON. I have no further questions, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Aiken. [Applause.]

NORTH VIETNAMESE AND VC ATTITUDE TOWARD DEFINITE WITHDRAWAL DATE

Senator AIKEN. Mr. Kerry, the Defense Department seems to feel that if we set a definite date for withdrawal when our forces get down to a certain level they would be seriously in danger by the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong. Do you believe that the North Vietnamese would undertake to prevent our withdrawal from the country and attack the troops that remain there?

Mr. KERRY. Well, Senator, if I may answer you directly, I believe we are running that danger with the present course of withdrawal because the President has neglected to state to this country exactly what his response will be when we have reached the point that we do have, let us say, 50,000 support troops in Vietnam.

Senator AIKEN. I am not telling you what I think. I am telling you what the Department says.

Mr. KERRY. Yes, sir; I understand that.

Senator AIKEN. Do you believe the North Vietnamese would seriously undertake to impede our complete withdrawal?

Mr. KERRY. No, I do not believe that the North Vietnamese would and it has been clearly indicated at the Paris peace talks they would not.

Senator AIKEN. Do you think they might help carry the bags for us? [Laughter.]

Mr. KERRY. I would say they would be more prone to do that than the Army of the South Vietnamese. [Laughter.] [Applause.]

Senator AIKEN. I think your answer is ahead of my question. [Laughter.]

SAIGON GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL DATE

I was going to ask you next what the attitude of the Saigon government would be if we announced that we were going to withdraw our troops, say, by October 1st, and be completely out of there — air, sea, land — leaving them on their own. What do you think would be the attitude of the Saigon government under those circumstances?<sup>21</sup>

Mr. KERRY. Well, I think if we were to replace the Thieu-Ky-Khiem regime and offer these men sanctuary somewhere, which I think this Government has an obligation to do since we created that government and supported it all along. I think there would not be any problems. The number two man at the Saigon talks to Ambassador Lam was asked by the Concerned Laymen, who visited with them in Paris last month, how long they felt they could survive if the United States would pull out and his answer was 1 week. So I think clearly we do have to face this question. But I think, having done what we have done to that country, we have an obligation to offer sanctuary to the perhaps 2,000, 3,000 people who might face, and obviously they would, we understand that, might face political assassination or something else. But my feeling is that those 3,000 who may have to leave that country——

ATTITUDE OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY AND PEOPLE TOWARD WITHDRAWAL

Senator AIKEN. I think your 3,000 estimate might be a little low because we had to help 800,000 find sanctuary from North Vietnam after the French lost at Dienbienphu. But assuming that we resettle the members of the Saigon government, who would undoubtedly be in danger in some other area, what do you think would be the attitude, of the large, well-armed South Vietnamese army and the South Vietnamese people? Would they be happy to have us withdraw or what?

Mr. KERRY. Well, Senator, this obviously is the most difficult question of all, but I think that at this point the United States is not really in a position to consider the happiness of those people as pertains to the army in our withdrawal. We have to consider the happiness of the people as pertains to the life which they will be able to lead in the next few years.

If we don't withdraw, if we maintain a Korean-type presence in South Vietnam, say 50,000 troops or something, with strategic bombing raids from Guam and from Japan and from Thailand dropping these 15,000 pound fragmentation bombs on them, et cetera, in the next few years, then what you will have is a people who are continually oppressed, who are continually at warfare, and whose problems will not at all be solved because they will not have any kind of representation. The war will continue. So what I'm saying is that yes, there will be some recrimination but far, far less than the 200,000 a year who are murdered by the United States of America, and we can't go around — President Kennedy

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<sup>21</sup> Page 189 ends here.

said this, many times. He said that the United States simply can't right every wrong, that we can't solve the problems of the other 94 percent of mankind. We didn't go into East Pakistan; we didn't go into Czechoslovakia. Why then should we feel that we now have the power to solve the internal political struggles of this country?

We have to let them solve their problems while we solve ours and help other people in an altruistic fashion commensurate with our capacity. But we have extended that capacity; we have exhausted that capacity, Senator. So I think the question is really moot.

Senator AIKEN. I might say I asked those questions several years ago, rather ineffectively. But what I would like to know now is if we, as we complete our withdrawal and, say, get down to 10,000, 20,000,<sup>22</sup> 30,000 or even 50,000 troops there, would there be any effort on the part of the South Vietnamese government or the South Vietnamese army, in your opinion, to impede their withdrawal?

Mr. KERRY. No; I don't think so, Senator.

Senator AIKEN. I don't see why North Vietnam should object.

Mr. KERRY. I don't for the simple reason, I used to talk with officers about their — we asked them, and one officer took great pleasure in playing with me in the sense that he would say, "Well, you know you Americans, you come over here for 1 year and you can afford, you know, you go to Hong Kong for R. & R. and if you are a good boy you get another R. & R. or something you know. You can afford to charge bunkers but I have to try and be here for 30 years and stay alive." And I think that that really is the governing principle by which those people are now living and have been allowed to live because of our mistake. So that when we in fact state, let us say, that we will have a ceasefire<sup>23</sup> or have a coalition government, most of the 2 million men you often hear quoted under arms, most of whom are regional popular reconnaissance forces, which is to say militia, and a very poor militia at that, will simply lay down their arms, if they haven't done so already, and not fight. And I think you will find they will respond to whatever government evolves which answers their needs, and those needs quite simply are to be fed, to bury their dead in plots where their ancestors lived, to be allowed to extend their culture, to try and exist as human beings. And I think that is what will happen.

I can cite many, many instances, sir, as in combat when these men refused to fight with us, when they shot with their guns over tin<sup>24</sup> this area like this and their heads turned facing the other way. When we were taken under fire we Americans, supposedly fighting with them, and pinned down in a ditch, and I was in the Navy and this was pretty unconventional, but when we were pinned down in a ditch recovering bodies or something and they refused to come in and help us, point blank refused. I don't believe they want to fight, sir.

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<sup>22</sup> Page 190 ends here.

<sup>23</sup> Spelled without a dash in the copy text.

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OBLIGATION TO FURNISH ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

Senator AIKEN. Do you think we are under obligation to furnish them with extensive economic assistance?

Mr. KERRY. Yes, sir. I think we have a very definite obligation to make extensive reparations to the people of Indochina.

Senator AIKEN. I think that is all.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Pell.

Senator PELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As the witness knows, I have a very high personal regard for him and hope before his life ends he will be a colleague of ours in this body.

GROWTH OF OPPOSITION TO WAR

This war was really just as wrong, immoral, and unrelated to our national interests 5 years ago as it is today, and I must say I agree with you. I think it is rather poor taste for the architects of this war to now be sitting as they are in quite sacrosanct intellectual glass houses.<sup>25</sup> I think that this committee, and particularly Chairman Fulbright, deserve a huge debt of gratitude from you and everyone of your men who are here because when he conducted hearings some years ago when we were fighting in Vietnam. At that time the word "peace" was a dirty word. It was tied in with "appeasement" and Nervous Nellies and that sort of thing. Chairman Fulbright and this committee really took public opinion at that time and turned it around and made "peace" a respectable word and produced the climate that produced President Johnson's abdication.

The problem is that the majority of the people in the Congress still don't agree with the view that you and we have. As the chairman pointed out, and as you know as a student of political science, whenever we wanted to end this war, we could have ended this war if the majority of us had used the power of the purse strings. That was just as true 5 years ago as it is today.

I don't think it is a question of guts. We didn't have the desire to do that and I am not sure the majority has the desire to do that yet. Whenever we want to as a Congress, we could do it. We can't start an action, but we can force an action with the purse strings. I think it is wonderful you veterans have come down here as a cutting edge of public opinion because you again make this have more respect and I hope you succeed and prevail on the majority of the Congress.

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<sup>25</sup> Page 191 ends here.

#### VOTING OF VETERANS AND NONVETERANS CONCERNING VIETNAM WAR

It is interesting, speaking of veterans and speaking of statistics, that the press has never picked up and concentrated on quite interesting votes in the past. In those votes you find the majority of hawks were usually nonveterans and the majority of doves were usually veterans. Specifically, of those who voted in favor of the Hatfield-McGovern end-the-war amendment in the last session of the Congress 79 percent were veterans with actual military service. Of those voting against the amendment, only 36 percent were veterans.

Now on the sponsors of the Cooper-Church amendment you will find very much the same statistics. Eighty-two percent were veterans as compared to 71 percent of the Senate as a whole being veterans. So I would hope what you are doing will have an effect on the Congress.

#### OBLIGATION TO SOUTH VIETNAMESE ALLIES

I have two questions I would like to ask you. First, I was very much struck by your concern with asylum because now I see public opinion starting to swing and Congress passing legislation. Before they wouldn't get out at all; now they are talking about getting out yesterday. When it comes to looking after the people who would be killed if we left or badly ruined, I would hope you would develop your thinking at<sup>26</sup> little bit to make sure that American public opinion, which now wants to get out, also bears in mind that when we depart we have an obligation to these people. I hope you will keep to that point.<sup>27</sup>

#### ACTIONS OF LIEUTENANT CALLEY

Finally in connection with Lieutenant Calley, which is a very emotional issue in this country, I was struck by your passing reference to that incident.

Wouldn't you agree with me though that what he did in herding old men, women and children into a trench and then shooting them was a little bit beyond the perimeter of even what has been going on in this war and that that action should be discouraged. There are other actions not that extreme that have gone on and have been permitted. If we had not taken action or cognizance of it, it would have been even worse. It would have indicated we encouraged this kind of action.

Mr. KERRY. My feeling, Senator, on Lieutenant Calley is what he did quite obviously was a horrible, horrible, horrible thing and I have no bone to pick with the fact that he was prosecuted. But I think that in this question you have to separate guilt from responsibility, and I think clearly the responsibility for what has happened there lies elsewhere.

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<sup>26</sup> Thus in the copy text.

<sup>27</sup> Page 192 ends here.

I think it lies with the men who designed free fire zones. I think it lies with the men who encouraged body counts. I think it lies in large part with this country, which allows a young child before he reaches the age of 14 to see 12,500 deaths on television, which glorifies the John Wayne syndrome, which puts out fighting man comic books on the stands, which allows us in training to do calisthenics to four counts, on the fourth count of which we stand up and shout "kill" in unison, which has posters in barracks in this country with a crucified Vietnamese, blood on him, and underneath it says "kill the gook," and I think that clearly the responsibility for all of this is what has produced this horrible aberration.<sup>28</sup>

Now, I think if you are going to try Lieutenant Calley then you must at the same time, if this country is going to demand respect for the law, you must at the same time try all those other people who have responsibility, and any aversion that we may have to the verdict as veterans is not to say that Calley should be freed, not to say that he is innocent, but to say that you can't just take him alone, and that would be my response to that.

Senator PELL. I agree with you. The guilt is shared by many, many, many of us, including the leaders of the get-out-now school. But in this regard if we had not tried him, I think we would be much more criticized and should be criticized. I would think the same fate would probably befall him as befell either Sergeant or Lieutenant Schwarz of West Virginia who was tried for life for the same offense and is out on a 9 months commuted sentence. By the same token I would hope the quality of mercy would be exercised in this regard for a young man who was not equipped for the job and ran amuck. But I think public opinion should think this through. We who have taken this position find ourselves very much in the minority.

Mr. KERRY. I understand that, Senator, but I think it is a very difficult thing for the public to think through faced with the facts. The fact that 18 other people indicted for the very same crime were freed<sup>29</sup> and the fact among those were generals and colonels. I mean this simply is not justice. That is all. It is just not justice.

Senator PELL. I guess it is the old revolutionary adage. When you see the whites of their eyes you are more guilty. This seems to be our morality as has been pointed out. If you drop a bomb from a plane, you don't see the whites of their eyes.

I agree with you with the body count. It is like a Scottish nobleman saying, "How many grouse were caught on the moor." Four or five years ago those of us who criticized were more criticized.

Thank you for being here and I wish you all success. [Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator from New Jersey.

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<sup>28</sup> Thus in the copy text.

<sup>29</sup> Page 193 ends here.

Senator CASE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF VIETNAM WAR

Mr. Kerry, thank you too for coming. You have made more than clear something that I think always has been true: that the war never had any justification in terms of Indochina itself. I wish you would take this question a little further and touch on the larger strategic implications. It is in these larger strategic implications, if anywhere, that may be found justification for our involvement. As you know, the President said the other day that it is easy to get out and to end the war immediately.

The question is to get out and leave a reasonable chance for lasting peace. We have to look at this because the American people are going to see the issue in the terms he has defined it. I would be glad to have your comment on this matter, although I won't press you to discuss it because in a sense you have already said this is not your area.

Mr. KERRY. I do want to. I want to very much.

Senator CASE. And I would be very glad to have you do it.

Mr. KERRY. Thank you, sir. I would like to very much.

In my opinion, what we are trying to do, as the President talks about getting out with a semblance of honor is simply whitewashing ourselves. On the question of getting out with some semblance for peace, as a man who has fought there, I am trying to say that this policy has no chance for peace. You don't have a chance for peace when you arm the people of another country and tell them they can fight a war. That is not peace; that is fighting a war; that is continuing a war. That is even criminal in the sense that this country, if we are really worried about recrimination, is going to have to some day face up to the fact that we convinced a certain number of people, perhaps hundreds of thousands, perhaps there will be several million, that they could stand up to something which they couldn't and ultimately will face the recrimination of the fact that their lives in addition to all the lives at this point, will be on our conscience. I don't think it is a question of peace at all. What we are doing is very, very hypocritical in our withdrawal, and we really should face up to that.

Senator CASE. May I press you just a little further or at least raise the question on which I would ask you to comment.

Mr. KERRY. I wish you would, please.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Page 194 ends here.

INDOCHINA AND QUESTION OF WORLD PEACE

Senator CASE. I think your answer was related still to the question of Indochina but I think the President has tried to tie in Indochina with the question of world peace.

Mr. KERRY. I would like to discuss that.

It is my opinion that the United States is still reacting in very much the 1945 mood and postwar cold-war period when we reacted to the forces which were at work in World War II and came out of it with this paranoia about the Russians and how the world was going to be divided up between the super powers, and the foreign policy of John Foster Dulles which was responsible for the creation of the SEATO treaty, which was in fact, a direct reaction to this so-called Communist monolith. And I think we are reacting under cold-war precepts which are no longer applicable.

I say that because so long as we have the kind of strike force we have, and I am not party to the secret statistics which you gentlemen have here, but as long as we have the ones which we of the public know we have, I think we have a strike force of such capability and I think we have a strike force simply in our Polaris submarines, in the 62 or some Polaris submarines, which are constantly roaming around under the sea. And I know as a Navy man that underwater detection is the hardest kind in the world, and they have not perfected it, that we have the ability to destroy the human race. Why do we have to, therefore, consider and keep considering threats?

At any time that an actual threat is posed to this country or to the security and freedom I will be one of the first people to pick up a gun and defend it, but right now we are reacting with paranoia to this question of peace and the people taking over the world. I think if we are ever going to get down to the question of dropping those bombs most of us in my generation simply don't want to be alive afterwards because of the kind of world that it would be with mutations and the genetic probabilities of freaks and everything else.

Therefore, I think it is ridiculous to assume we have to play this power game based on total warfare. I think there will be guerrilla wars and I think we must have a capability to fight those. And we may have to fight them somewhere based on legitimate threats, but we must learn, in this country, how to define those threats and that is what I would say to this question of world peace. I think it is bogus, totally artificial. There is no threat. The Communists are not about to take over our McDonald hamburger stands. [Laughter.]

Senator, I will say this, I think that politically, historically, the one thing that people try to do, that society is structured on as a whole, is an attempt to satisfy their felt needs, and you can satisfy those needs with almost any kind of political structure, giving it one name or the other. In this name it is democratic; in others it is communism; in others it is benevolent dictatorship. As long as those needs are satisfied, that structure will exist.

But when you start to neglect those needs, people will start to demand a new structure, and that, to me, is the only threat that this country faces now, because we are not responding to the needs and we<sup>31</sup> are not responding to them because we work on these old cold-war precepts and because we have not woken up to realizing what is happening in the United States of America.

Senator CASE. I thank you very much. I wanted you to have a chance to respond to the question of Indochina in a large context.

Mr. Chairman, I have just one further thing to do. Senator Javits had to go to the floor on important business, and he asked me to express his regret that he couldn't stay and also that if he had stayed he would have limited his participation to agreement with everything Senator Symington said. [Applause.]

#### BACKGROUND OF VIETNAM WAR

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Kerry, I have one other aspect of this I would like to explore for a moment. I recognize you and your associates, putting it on a personal point of view, feeling the seriousness and the tragedy of the experience in Vietnam. But I am disturbed very much by the possibility that your generation may become or is perhaps already in the process of becoming disillusioned with our whole country, with our system of government. There was much said about it. You didn't say it, but others have said this. I wonder if we could explore for a moment the background of this war.

It has seemed to me that its origin was essentially a mistake in judgment, beginning with our support of the French as a colonial power, which, I believe, is the only time our country has ever done that. Always our sympathies has<sup>32</sup> been with the colony. If you will recall, we urged the British to get out of Egypt and India, and we urged, many thought too vigorously, the Dutch prematurely to get out of Indonesia. I think there was much criticism that we acted prematurely in urging the Belgians to get out of the Congo. In any case, the support of the French to maintain their power was a departure from our traditional attitude toward colonial powers because of our own history.

It started in a relatively small way by our support of the French. Then one thing led to another. But these were not decisions, I believe, that involved evil motives. They were political judgments which at that time were justified by the conditions in the world. You have already referred to the fact that after World War II there was great apprehension, and I think properly. The apprehension was justified by the events, especially from Stalin's regime. There was apprehension that he would be able, and if he could he would, impose his regime by force on all of Western Europe, which could have created an extremely difficult situation which would amount to what you said a moment ago. You said if our country was really threatened, you would have no hesitancy in taking up a gun. So I think, in trying to evaluate the course of our involvement in this war, we have to take

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<sup>31</sup> Page 195 ends here.

<sup>32</sup> Thus in the copy text.

all of this into consideration. It was not a sign of any moral degradation or of bad motives. They were simply political judgments as to where our interest really was.

In retrospect I think we can say that our interest was not in supporting the French, that it was not in intervening, and it was not in undoing the Geneva Accords by the creation of SEATO, but that is all history. I am not saying this in order to try to lay the blame on anyone, but to get a perspective of our present situation, and hopefully to help, if I<sup>33</sup> can, you and others not to be too disillusioned and not to lose faith in the capacity of our institutions to respond to the public welfare. I believe what you and your associates are doing today certainly contributes to that, by the fact that you have taken the trouble to think these things through, and to come here. I know it is not very pleasant to do the things you have done.

While I wouldn't presume to compare my own experience, I have taken a great deal of criticism since I myself in 1965 took issue with the then President Johnson over his policies. I did what I could within my particular role in the Government to persuade both President Johnson and subsequent political leaders that this was not in the interests of our country. I did this, not because I thought they were evil men inherently or they were morally misguided, but their political judgment was wrong. All of us, of course, know that as fallible human beings we all make errors of judgment.

#### POSSIBILITY OF MAKING U.S. INSTITUTIONS WORK EFFECTIVELY

I think it is helpful to try to put it in perspective and not lose confidence in the basically good motives and purposes of this country. I believe in the possibility of making our institutions work effectively. I think they can be made responsive to the welfare of the people and to proper judgments. I only throw this out because I have a feeling that because of the unusual horror that has developed from this war too many people may lose confidence in our system as a whole. I know of no better system for a country as large as this, with 200-plus millions of people. No other country comparable to it in history has ever made a democratic system work.

They have all become dictatorships when they have achieved the size and complexity of this country. Only smaller countries really have made a democratic system work at all.

So I only wish to throw it out hopefully that, in spite of the tragic experiences of you and so many other people and the deaths of so many people, this system is not beyond recall and with the assistance of people like yourself and the younger generation we can get back on the track, and can make this system operate effectively.

I know that the idea of working within the system has been used so much, and many people have lost confidence that it can be done. They wish to destroy the system, to start all over, but I don't think in the history of human experience that those destructions of

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<sup>33</sup> Page 196 ends here.

systems work. They usually destroy everything good as well as bad, and you have an awful lot of doing to recreate the good part and to get started again.

So I am very hopeful that the younger generation — and I am certainly getting at the end of my generation because I have been here an awfully long time — but that you younger people can find it possible to accept the system and try to make it work because I can't at the moment think of a better one given the conditions that we have in this country and the great complexity and diversity.

I really believe if we can stop this war — I certainly expect to do everything I can. I have done all I can with all my limitations. I am sure many people have thought I could do better, but I did all that I was capable of doing and what wisdom I may have has been applied<sup>34</sup> to it. I hope that you and your colleagues will feel the same way or at least you will accept the structure of the system and try to make it work. I can see no better alternative to offer in its place.

If I thought there was one, I would certainly propose it or try.

#### CAN BASIC SYSTEM BE MADE TO WORK?

Have you yourself arrived at the point where you believe that basic structural changes must be brought about in our system or do you believe it can be made to work?

Mr. KERRY. I don't think I would be here if I didn't believe that it can be made to work, but I would have to say, and one of the traits of my generation now is that people don't pretend to speak for other people in it, and I can only speak as an individual about it, but I would say that I have certainly been frustrated in the past months, very, very seriously frustrated. I have gone to businessmen all over this country asking for money for fees, and met with a varying range of comments, ranging from "You can't sell war crimes" to, "War crimes are a glut on the market" or to "well you know we are tired now, we have tried, we can't do anything." So I have seen unresponsiveness on the racial question in this country. I see an unwillingness on the part of too many of the members of this body to respond, to take gutsy stands, to face questions other than their own reelection, to make a profile of courage, and I am — although still with faith — very, very, very full of doubt, and I am not going to quit. But I think that unless we can respond on as a great a question as the war, I seriously question how we are going to find the kind of response needed to meet questions such as poverty and hunger and questions such as birth control and so many of the things that face our society today from low income housing to schooling, to recent reaction to the Supreme Court's decision on busing.

But I will say that I think we are going to keep trying. I also agree with you, Senator. I don't see another system other than democracy, but democracy has to remain responsive. When it does not, you create the possibilities for all kinds of other systems to supplant it, and that very possibility, I think, is beginning to exist in this country.

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<sup>34</sup> Page 197 ends here.



The CHAIRMAN. That is why I ask you that. The feeling that it cannot be made responsive comes not so much from what you have said but from many different sources. I can assure you I have been frustrated too. We have lost most of our major efforts. That is we have not succeeded in getting enough votes, but there has been a very marked increase, I think, in the realization of the seriousness of the war. I think you have to keep in perspective, as I say, the size and complexity of the country itself and the difficulties of communication. This war is so far removed. The very fact, as you have said, you do not believe what happens there to be in the vital interests of this country, has from the beginning caused many people to think it wasn't so important.

#### GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CONCERN ABOUT VIETNAM WAR

In the beginning, back in the times that I mentioned when we first supported the French and throughout the 1950's up until the 1960's, this whole matter was not very much on the minds of anybody in the Congress. We were more preoccupied with what was going on in Western<sup>35</sup> Europe, the fear, particularly during Stalin's time, that he might be able to subjugate all of Western Europe, which would have been a very serious challenge to us. This grew up almost as a peripheral matter without anyone taking too much notice until the 1960's. The major time when the Congress, I think, really became concerned about the significance of the war was really not before 1965, the big escalation. It was a very minor sideshow in all the things in which this country was involved until February of 1965. That was when it became a matter that, you might say, warranted and compelled the attention of the country. It has been a gradual development of our realization of just what we were into.

As I said before, I think this came about not because of bad motives but by very serious errors in political judgment as to where our interest lies and what should be done about it.

I am only saying this hopefully to at least try to enlist your consideration, of the view that in a country of this kind I can't believe there is a better alternative from a structural point of view. I think the structure of our Government is sound.

To go back to my own State certainly, leaving out now the war, its affairs are being well managed. The people are, as you may say, maybe too indifferent to this.

Mr. KERRY. As it does in Massachusetts, too.

The CHAIRMAN. I have often thought they were too indifferent to it, but they have responded to the arguments as to where our interest lies quite well, at least from my personal experience. Otherwise I would not be here. But I think there is a gradual recognition of this.

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<sup>35</sup> Page 198 ends here.

WAR'S INTERFERENCE WITH DEALING WITH OTHER PROBLEMS

I also feel that if we could finish the war completely within the reasonably near future, as some of the proposals before this committee are designed to do if we can pass them, I think the country can right itself and get back on the track, in a reasonably quick time, dealing with the problems you mentioned. We are aware and conscious of all of them.

The thing that has inhibited us in doing things about what you mention has been the war. It has been the principal obstacle to dealing with these other problems with which you are very concerned, as, I think, the Congress is. Always we are faced with the demands of the war itself. Do you realize that this country has put well over \$1,000 billion into military affairs since World War II?

I think it now approaches \$1,500 billion. It is a sum so large no one can comprehend it, but I don't think outside of this war issue there is anything fundamentally wrong with the system that cannot be righted.

If we can give our resources to those developments, I don't have any doubt myself that it can be done. Whether it will be done or not is a matter of will. It is a matter of conviction of the various people who are involved, including the younger generation.

In that connection, I may say, the recent enactment of the right of all people from 18 years up to vote is at least a step in the direction where you and your generation can have an effect.

I hope that you won't lose faith in it. I hope you will use your talent after the war is over, and it surely will be over, to then attack these other problems and to make the system work.<sup>36</sup>

I believe it can be made to work.

Do you have anything else you would like to say?

Mr. KERRY. Would you like me to respond at all, sir?

The CHAIRMAN. If you care to.

Mr. KERRY. Well, my feeling is that if you are talking about the ideal structure of this country as it is written down in the Constitution, then you or I would not differ at all. Yes, that is an ideal structure.

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<sup>36</sup> Page 199 ends here.

DEVELOPMENTS IN UNITED STATES REQUIRING FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES

What has developed in this country, however, at this point is something quite different and that does require some fundamental changes.

I do agree with you that what happened in Vietnam was not the product of evil men seeking evil goals. It was misguided principles and judgments and other things.

However, at some point you have to stop playing the game. At some point you have to say, "All right we did make a mistake." At some point the basic human values have to come back into this system and at this moment we are so built up within it by these outside structures, other interests, for instance, government by vested power which, in fact, you and I really know it is. When a minority body comes down here to Washington with a bill, those bodies which have the funds and the ability to lobby are those which generally get it passed. If you wanted to pass a health care medical bill, which we have finally perhaps gotten to this year, we may, but in past years the AMA has been able to come down here and squash them. The American Legion has successfully prevented people like Vietnam Veterans against the War from getting their programs through the Veterans' Administration. Those bodies in existence have tremendous power.

There is one other body that has tremendous power in this country, which is a favorite topic of Vice President Agnew and I would take some agreement with him. That would be the fourth estate. The press. I think the very reason that we veterans are here today is the result partially of our inability to get our story out through the legitimate channels.

That is to say, for instance, I held a press conference here in Washington, D.C., some weeks ago with General Shoup, with General Hester, with the mother of a prisoner of war, the wife of a man who was killed, the mother of a soldier who was killed, and with a bilateral amputee, all representing the so-called silent majority, the silent so-called majority which the President used to perpetuate the war, and because it was a press conference and an antiwar conference and people simply exposing ideas we had no electronic media there. I called the media afterward and asked them why and the answer was, from one of the networks, it doesn't have to be identified, "because, sir, news business is really partly entertainment business visually, you see, and a press conference like that is not visual."

Of course, we don't have the position of power to get our ideas out. I said, "If I take some crippled veterans down to the White House and we chain ourselves to the gates, will we get courage?" "Oh, yes, we will cover that."

So you are reduced to a position where the only way you can get your ideas out is to stage events, because had we not staged the events, with all due respect, Senator, and I really appreciate the fact that I<sup>37</sup> am here obviously, and I know you are committed to

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<sup>37</sup> Page 200 ends here.

this, but with all due respect I probably wouldn't be sitting at this table. You see this is the problem.

It goes beyond that. We really have a constitutional crisis in this country right now. The Constitution under test, and we are failing. We are failing clearly because the power of the Executive has become exorbitant because Congress has not wanted to exercise its own power, and so that is going to require some very fundamental changes.

So the system itself on paper, no, it is a question of making it work, and in that I would agree with you, and I think that things are changing in a sense. I think the victory of the ABM was a tremendous boost.

The CHAIRMAN. SST.

Mr. KERRY. SST, excuse me.

The CHAIRMAN. I hope the ABM.

[Applause.]

Mr. KERRY. Wrong system.

I think the fact that certain individuals are in Congress today, particularly in the House, who several years ago could never have been. I would cite Representative Dellums and Congresswoman Abzug and Congressman Drinan and people like this. I think this is a terribly encouraging sign and I think if nothing more, and this is really sad poetic justice, if nothing more, this war when it is over, will ultimately probably have done more to awaken the conscience of this country than any other similar thing. It may in fact be the thing that will set us on the right road.

I earnestly hope so and I join you in that.

But meanwhile, I think we still need that extraordinary response to the problem that exists and I hope that we will get it.

#### IMPACT OF VIETNAM WAR AND OTHERS ON CONSTITUTIONAL BALANCE

The CHAIRMAN. I am glad to hear you say that. I have the same feeling. But you must remember we have been through nearly 30 years of warfare or cold war or crises which I think have upset the balance, as you say, in our constitutional system. Senator Javits has introduced a bill with regard to the war powers in an effort to reestablish what we believe to be the constitutional system in which you say you have confidence. I introduced and we passed a commitments resolution. There are a number of others. I won't relate them all, but they are all designed to try to bring back into proper relationship the various elements in our Government. This effort is being made.

I think the culprit is the war itself. The fact we had been at war, not just the Vietnam war but others too, diverted the attention of our people from our domestic concerns and certainly eroded the role of the Congress. Under the impact of this and other wars we have allowed this distortion to develop. If we can end the war, there is no good reason why it cannot be corrected.

#### REPRESENTATION OF CONSTITUENCIES

You mentioned some new faces in the Congress. After all, all these people get here because of the support back home, as you know. They are simply representative of their constituents. You do accept that, I believe.

Mr. KERRY. Partially, not totally.<sup>38</sup>

The CHAIRMAN. Why not?

Mr. KERRY. As someone who ran for office for 3½ weeks, I am aware of many of the problems involved, and in many places, you can take certain districts in New York City, the structure is such that people can't really run and represent necessarily the people. People often don't care. The apathy is so great that they believe they are being represented when in fact they are not. I think that you and I could run through a list of people in this body itself and find many who are there through the powers of the office itself as opposed to the fact they are truly representing the people. It is very easy to give the illusion of representing the people through the frank privileges which allow you to send back what you are doing here in Congress. Congressman insert so often.

You know, they gave a speech for the Polish and they gave a speech for the Irish and they gave a speech for this, and actually handed the paper in to the clerk and the clerk submits it for the record and a copy of the record goes home and people say, "Hey, he really is doing something for me." But he isn't.

The CHAIRMAN. Well——

Mr. KERRY. Senator, we also know prior to this past year the House used to meet in the Committee of the Whole and the Committee of the Whole would make the votes, and votes not of record and people would file through, and important legislation was decided then, and after the vote came out and after people made their hacks and cuts, and the porkbarrel came out, the vote was reported and gave them an easy out and they could say "Well, I voted against this." And actually they voted for it all the time in the committee.

Some of us know that this is going on. So I would say there are problems with it. Again I come back and say they are not insoluble. They can be solved, but they can only be solved by demanding leadership, the same kind of leadership that we have seen in some countries during war time. That seems to be the few times we get it. If we could get that

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<sup>38</sup> Page 201 ends here.

kind because I think we are in a constant war against ourselves and I would like to see that come — they should demand it of each other if we can demand it of people.

The CHAIRMAN. Take the two cases of what goes on in the House about the secret votes. That is not a structural aspect of our Government. That is a regulation or whatever you call it of the procedures in the House itself.

#### NECESSITY OF INFORMED ELECTORATE

Fundamentally you said that the people can bamboozle their constituents; they can fool them. Of course, that is quite true of any system of a representative nature. The solution to that is to inform the electorate itself to the extent that they recognize a fraud or a phony when they have one. This is not easy to do, but it is fundamental in a democracy. If you believe in a democratic system, the electorate who elect the representatives have to have sufficient capacity for discrimination. They have to be able to tell the difference between a phony, someone who simply puts pieces in the record, and someone who actually does something, so that they can recognize it in an election, if they are interested.<sup>39</sup>

Now if they are apathetic, as you say they are apathetic, and don't care, then democracy cannot work if they continue to be apathetic and don't care who represents them. This comes back to a fundamental question of education through all different resources, not only the formal education but the use of the media and other means to educate them. Our Founding Fathers recognized that you couldn't have a democracy without an informed electorate. It comes back to the informing of the electorate; doesn't it? That is not a structural deficiency in our system. You are dealing now with the deficiencies of human nature, the failure of their education and their capacity for discrimination in the selection of their representatives.

I recognize this is difficult. All countries have had this same problem and so long as they have a representative system this has to be met. But there is no reason why it cannot be met.

A structural change does not affect the capacity of the electorate to choose good representatives; does it?

#### COST OF ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

Mr. KERRY. Well, no, sir; except for the fact that to run for representative in any populated area costs about \$50,000. Many people simply don't have that available, and in order to get it inevitably wind up with their hands tied.

The CHAIRMAN. That is a common statement, but we had an example during this last year of a man being elected because he walked through Florida with a minimum of

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money. As he became attractive to the people he may have received more, but he started without money. You are familiar with Mr. Chiles.

Mr. KERRY. Yes, I am familiar. I understand it.

The CHAIRMAN. I know in my own state, our Governor started without any money or with just himself and came from nowhere and defeated a Rockefeller. So it is not true that you have to have a lot of money to get elected. If you have the other things that it takes, personality, the determination and the intelligence, it is still possible. There were other examples, but those are well known. I don't think it is correct to say you have to have a lot of money. It helps, of course. It makes it easier and all that, but it isn't essential. I think you can cite many examples where that is true.

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION WILL BE RESPONSE TO VIETNAM ISSUE

Mr. KERRY. Senator, I would basically agree with what you are saying and obviously we could find exceptions to parts of everything everywhere and I understand really the essential question is going to be the response to the issue of Vietnam.

The CHAIRMAN. I agree with that. I can assure you that this committee and, certainly, I are going to do everything we can. That is what these hearings are about. It is just by coincidence you came to Washington in the very midst of them. We only opened these hearings on Tuesday of this week. I personally believe that the great majority of all the people of this country are in accord with your desire, and certainly mine, to get the war over at the earliest possible moment. All we are concerned with at the moment is the best procedure to bring that<sup>40</sup> about, the procedure to persuade the President to take the steps that will bring that about. I for one have more hope now than I had at anytime in the last 6 years because of several things you have mentioned. I think there is a very good chance that it will be brought about in the reasonably near future.

#### COMMENDATION OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

I think you and your associates have contributed a great deal in the actions you have taken. As I said in the beginning, the fact that you have shown both great conviction and patience about this matter and at the same time conducted yourself in the most commendable manner has been the most effective demonstration, if I may use that word. Although you have demonstrated in the sense that has become disapproved of in some circles, I think you have demonstrated in the most proper way and the most effective way to bring about the results that you wish and I believe you have made a great contribution.

I apologize. I am not trying to lecture you about our Government. I have just been disturbed, not so much by you as by other things that have happened, that the younger generation has lost faith in our system. I don't think it is correct. I think the paranoia to which you referred has been true. It arose at a time when there was reason for it perhaps,

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<sup>40</sup> Page 203 ends here.

but we have long since gone out of that time, and I think your idea of timing is correct. But I congratulate you and thank you very much for coming. [Applause.]

Senator Symington would like to ask a question.

Senator SYMINGTON. Yes. Mr. Kerry, I had to leave because we are marking up the selective service bill in the Armed Services Committee. But I will read the record.

ATTITUDE OF SERVICEMEN TOWARD CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION TO WAR

The staff has a group of questions here, four of which I would ask. Over the years members of this committee who spoke out in opposition to the war were often accused of stabbing our boys in the back. What, in your opinion, is the attitude of servicemen in Vietnam about congressional opposition to the war?

Mr. KERRY. If I could answer that, it is very difficult, Senator, because I just know, I don't want to get into the game of saying I represent everybody over there, but let me try to say as straightforwardly as I can, we had an advertisement, ran full page, to show you what the troops read. It ran in Playboy and the response to it within two and a half weeks from Vietnam was 1,209 members. We received initially about 50 to 80 letters a day from troops there. We now receive about 20 letters a day from troops arriving at our New York office. Some of these letters — and I wanted to bring some down, I didn't know we were going to be testifying here and I can make them available to you — are very, very moving, some of them written by hospital corpsmen on things, on casualty report sheets which say, you know, "Get us out of here." "You are the only hope we have got." "You have got to get us back; it is crazy." We received recently 80 members of the 101st Airborne signed up in one letter. Forty members from a helicopter assault squadron, crash and rescue mission signed up in another one. I think they are expressing, some of these troops, solidarity with us,<sup>41</sup> right now by wearing black arm bands and Vietnam Veterans Against the War buttons. They want to come out and I think they are looking at the people who want to try to get them out as a help.

However, I do recognize there are some men who are in the military for life. The job in the military is to fight wars. When they have a war to fight, they are just as happy in a sense and I am sure that these men feel they are being stabbed in the back. But, at the same time, I think to most of them the realization of the emptiness, the hollowness, the absurdity of Vietnam has finally hit home, and I feel if they did come home the recrimination would certainly not come from the right, from the military. I don't think there would be that problem.

Senator SYMINGTON. Thank you.

Has the fact Congress has never passed a declaration of war undermined the morale of U.S. servicemen in Vietnam, to the best of your knowledge?

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<sup>41</sup> Page 204 ends here.



Mr. KERRY. Yes; it has clearly and to a great, great extent.

USE OF DRUGS BY U.S. SERVICEMEN IN VIETNAM

Senator SYMINGTON. There have been many reports of widespread use of drugs by U.S. servicemen in Vietnam. I might add I was in Europe last week and the growth of that problem was confirmed on direct questioning of people in the military. How serious is the problem and to what do you attribute it?

Mr. KERRY. The problem is extremely serious. It is serious in very many different ways. I believe two Congressmen today broke a story. I can't remember their names. There were 35,000 or some men, heroin addicts that were back.

The problem exists for a number of reasons not the least of which is the emptiness. It is the only way to get through it. A lot of guys, 60, 80 percent stay stoned 24 hours a day just to get through the Vietnam——

Senator SYMINGTON. You say 60 to 80 percent.

Mr. KERRY. Sixty to 80 percent is the figure used that try something, let's say, at one point. Of that, I couldn't give you a figure of habitual smokers, let's say, of pot, and I certainly couldn't begin to say how many are hard drug addicts, but I do know that the problem for the returning veteran is acute because we have, let's say, a veteran picks up a \$12 habit in Saigon. He comes back to this country and the moment he steps off an airplane that same habit costs him some \$90 to support. With the state of the economy, he can't get a job. He doesn't earn money. He turns criminal or just finds his normal sources and in a sense drops out.

The alienation of the war, the emptiness of back and forth, all combined adds to this. There is no real drug rehabilitation program. I know the VA hospital in New York City has 20 beds allocated for drug addicts; 168 men are on the waiting list, and I really don't know what a drug addict does on the waiting list.

And just recently the same hospital gave three wards to New York University for research purposes.

It is very, very widespread. It is a very serious problem. I think that this Congress should undertake to investigate the sources, because I heard many implications of Madam Ky and others being involved in the traffic and I think there are some very serious things here at stake.<sup>42</sup>

Senator SYMINGTON. In the press there was a woman reporter. I think her name was Emerson. In any case she stated she bought drugs six or nine times openly, heroin, in a 15-mile walk from Saigon. The article had a picture of a child with a parasol and a parrot.

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<sup>42</sup> Page 205 ends here.

She said this child was one of the people from whom she had bought, herself, these drugs; and that the cost of the heroin was from \$3 to \$6.

If we are over there, in effect, protecting the Thieu-Ky government, why is it that this type and character of sale of drugs to anybody, including our own servicemen, can't be controlled?

Mr. KERRY. It is not controllable in this country. Why should it be controllable in that country?

Senator SYMINGTON. It isn't quite that open in this country; do you think?

Mr. KERRY. It depends on where you are. [Applause.]

Senator SYMINGTON. We are talking about heroin, not pot or LSD.

Mr. KERRY. I understand that, but if you walk up 116th Street in Harlem I am sure somebody can help you out pretty fast. [Laughter.]

#### ACCURACY OF INFORMATION THROUGH OFFICIAL MILITARY CHANNELS

Senator SYMINGTON. Mr. Kerry, from your experience in Vietnam do you think it is possible for the President or Congress to get accurate and undistorted information through official military channels.

(Shouts of "No" from the audience.)

Mr. KERRY. I don't know——

Senator SYMINGTON. I am beginning to think you have some supporters here.

Mr. KERRY. I don't know where they came from, sir, maybe Vietnam.

I had direct experience with that. Senator, I had direct experience with that and I can recall often sending in the spot reports which we made after each mission, and including the GDA, gunfire damage assessments, in which we would say, maybe 15 sampans sunk or whatever it was. And I often read about my own missions in the Stars and Stripes and the very mission we had been on had been doubled in figures and tripled in figures.

The intelligence missions themselves are based on very, very flimsy information. Several friends of mine were intelligence officers and I think you should have them in sometime to testify. Once in Saigon I was visiting this friend of mine and he gave me a complete rundown on how the entire intelligence system should be re-set up on all of its problems, namely, that you give a young guy a certain amount of money, he goes out, sets up his own contacts under the table, gets intelligence, comes in. It is not reliable; everybody is feeding each other double intelligence, and I think that is what comes back to this

country. I also think men in the military, sir, as do men in many other things, have a tendency to report what they want to report and see what they want to see. And this is a very serious thing because I know on several visits — Secretary Laird came to Vietnam once and they staged an entire invasion for him. When the initial force at Dang Tam, it was the 9th Infantry when it was still there — when the initial recon platoon went out and met with resistance, they changed the entire operation the night before and sent them down into the South China Seas so they would not run into resistance and the Secretary would have a chance to see how smoothly the war was going.<sup>43</sup>

I know General Wheeler came over at one point and a major in Saigon escorted him around. General Wheeler went out to the field and saw 12 pacification leaders and asked about 10 of them how things were going and they all said, “It is really going pretty badly.” The 11th one said, “It couldn’t be better, General. We are really doing the thing here to win the war.” And the General said, “I am finally glad to find somebody who knows what he is talking about.” (Laughter.)

This is the kind of problem that you have. I think that the intelligence which finally reaches the White House does have serious problems with it in that I think you know full well, I know certainly from my experience, I served as aide to an admiral in my last days in the Navy before I was discharged, and I have seen exactly what the response is up the echelon, the chain of command, and how things get distorted and people say to the man above him what is needed to be said, to keep everybody happy, and so I don’t — I think the entire thing is distorted.

It is just a rambling answer.

Senator SYMINGTON. How do you think this could be changed?

Mr. KERRY. I have never really given that spect of it all that much thought. I wish I had this intelligence officer with me. He is a very intelligent young man.

#### REPORTING OF VIETNAM WAR IN THE PRESS

Senator SYMINGTON. There has been considerable criticism of the war’s reporting by the press and news media. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. KERRY. On that I could definitely comment. I think the press has been extremely negligent in reporting. At one point and at the same time they have not been able to report because the Government of this country has not allowed them to. I went to Saigon to try to report. We were running missions in the Mekong Delta. We were running raids through these rivers on an operation called Sealord and we thought it was absurd.

We didn’t have helicopter cover often. We seldom had jet aircraft cover. We were out of artillery range. We would go in with two quarter-inch aluminum hull boats and get shot at

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<sup>43</sup> Page 206 ends here.

and never secure territory or anything except to quote Admiral Zumwalt to show the American flag and prove to the Vietcong they don't own the rivers. We found they did own them with 60 percent casualties and we thought this was absurd.

I went to Saigon and told this to a member of the news bureau there and I said, "Look, you have got to tell the American people this story." The response was "Well, I can't write that kind of thing. I can't criticize that much because if I do I would lose my accreditation, and we have to be very careful about just how much we say and when."

We are holding a press conference today, as a matter of fact, at the National Press Building — it might be going on at this minute — in which public information officers who are members of our group, and former Army reporters, are going to testify to direct orders of censorship in which they had to take out certain pictures, phrases they couldn't use and so on down the line and, in fact, the information they gave newsmen and directions they gave newsmen when an operation was going on when the military didn't want the press informed<sup>44</sup> on what was going on they would offer them transportation to go someplace else, there is something else happened and they would fly a guy 55 miles from where the operation was. So the war has not been reported correctly.

I know from a reporter of Time — showed the massacre of 150 Cambodians, these were South Vietnamese troops that did it, but there were American advisers present and he couldn't even get other newsmen to get it out let alone his own magazine, which doesn't need to be named here. So it is a terrible problem, and I think that really it is a question of the Government allowing free ideas to be exchanged and if it is going to fight a war then fight it correctly. The only people who can prevent My Lais are the press and if there is something to hide perhaps we shouldn't be there in the first place.

Senator SYMINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Applause.]

#### REQUEST FOR LETTERS SENT TO VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST WAR

The CHAIRMAN. With regard to the letters you have mentioned, I wondered about them. I have received a great many letters, but usually particularly in those from Vietnam, the men would say that they would not like me to use them or use their names for fear of retaliation. Of course, I respected their request. If you have those letters, it might be interesting, if you would like to, and if the writer has no objection, to submit them for the record which would be for the information of the committee.

#### CHANGING MOOD OF TROOPS IN VIETNAM

Mr. KERRY. Senator, I would like to add a comment on that. You see the mood is changing over there and a search and destroy mission is a search and avoid mission, and

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<sup>44</sup> Page 207 ends here.

troops don't — you know, like that revolt that took place that was mentioned in the New York Times when they refused to go in after a piece of dead machinery, because it didn't have any value. They are making their own judgments.

There is a GI movement in this country now as well as over there, and soon these people, these men, who are prescribing wars for these young men to fight are going to find out they are going to have to find some other men to fight them because we are going to change prescriptions. They are going to have to change doctors, because we are not going to fight for them. That is what they are going to realize. There is now a more militant attitude even within the military itself, among these soldiers evidenced by the advertisements recently in the New York Times in which members of the First Air Cavalry publicly signed up and said, "We would march on the 24th if we could be there, but we can't because we are in Vietnam." Those men are subject obviously to some kind of discipline, but people are beginning to be willing to submit to that. And I would just say, yes; I would like to enter the letters in testimony when I can get hold of them and I think you are going to see this will be a continuing thing.

(As of the date of publication the information referred to had not been received.)

The CHAIRMAN. If you would like to we can incorporate some of them in the record.<sup>45</sup>

DOCUMENTARY ENTITLED "THE SELLING OF THE PENTAGON"

This is inspired by your reply to the Senator from Missouri's question. Did you happen to see a documentary called, "The Selling of the Pentagon"?

Mr. KERRY. Yes, I did. I thought it was the most powerful and persuasive and helpful documentary in recent years.

The CHAIRMAN. But you know what happened to CBS? They have been pilloried by the——

Mr. KERRY. They are doing all right.

The CHAIRMAN. You think they can defend themselves?

Mr. KERRY. I think they have; yes, sir. I think the public opinion in this country believes that, "The Selling of the Pentagon." I was a public information officer before I went to Vietnam, and I know that those things were just the way they said because I conducted several of those tours on a ship, and I have seen my own men wait hours until people got away, and I have seen cooks put on special uniforms for them.

I have seen good food come out for the visitors and everything else. It really happens.

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<sup>45</sup> Page 208 ends here.

The CHAIRMAN. The Senator from New York has returned. Would he care to ask a question?

RESOLUTION CONCERNING VIETNAM VETERANS' ENCAMPMENT

Senator JAVITS. I don't want to delay either the witness or the committee. Senator Case was tied up on the floor on your resolution on the encampment and the expected occurred, of course. It has gone to the calendar.

Senator SYMINGTON. If you will yield, Senator. I have to preside at 1 o'clock. I thank you for your testimony.

Mr. KERRY. Thank you, Senator. [Applause.]

Senator JAVITS. It has gone to the calendar but I think the point has been very well made by, I think, the total number of sponsors. There were some 27 Senators.

WITNESS' CREDENTIALS

Senator Case was kind enough to express my view. I wish to associate myself with the statement Senator Symington made when I was here as to your credentials. That is what we always think about with a witness and your credentials couldn't be higher.

The moral and morale issues you have raised will have to be finally acted upon by the committee. I think it always fires us to a deeper sense of emergency and dedication when we hear from a young man like yourself in what we know to be the reflection of the attitude of so many others who have served in a way which the American people so clearly understand. It is not as effective unless you have those credentials. The kind you have.

The only other thing I would like to add is this:<sup>46</sup>

EVALUATION OF TESTIMONY

I hope you will understand me and I think you will agree with me. Your testimony about what you know and what you see, how you feel and how your colleagues feel, is entitled to the highest standing and priority. When it comes to the bits and pieces of information, you know, like you heard that Madam Ky is associated with the sale of narcotics or some other guy got a good meal, I hope you will understand as Senators and evaluators of testimony we have to take that in the context of many other things, but I couldn't<sup>47</sup> think of anybody whose testimony I would rather have and act on from the point of view of what this is doing to our young men we are sending over there, how they feel about it, what the impact is on the conscience of a country, what the impact is on even the future

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<sup>46</sup> Page 209 ends here.

<sup>47</sup> Thus in the copy text.

of the military services from the point of view of the men who served, than your own. Thank you very much.

Mr. KERRY. Thank you, Senator. [Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Kerry, I am sure you can sense the committee members appreciate very much your coming. Do you have anything further to say before we recess?

EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION

Mr. KERRY. No, sir; I would just like to say on behalf of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War that we do appreciate the efforts made by the Senators to put that resolution on the floor, to help us, help us in their offices in the event we were arrested and particularly for the chance to express the thoughts that I have put forward today. I appreciate it.

The CHAIRMAN. You have certainly done a remarkable job of it. I can't imagine their having selected a better representative or spokesman. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

(Whereupon, at 1 p.m. the committee was adjourned subject to the call of the Chair.)<sup>48</sup>

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