



# **Vietnam**

# **DECLASSIFIED**

**Kennedy + Johnson + Nixon**

**by James DiEugenio**

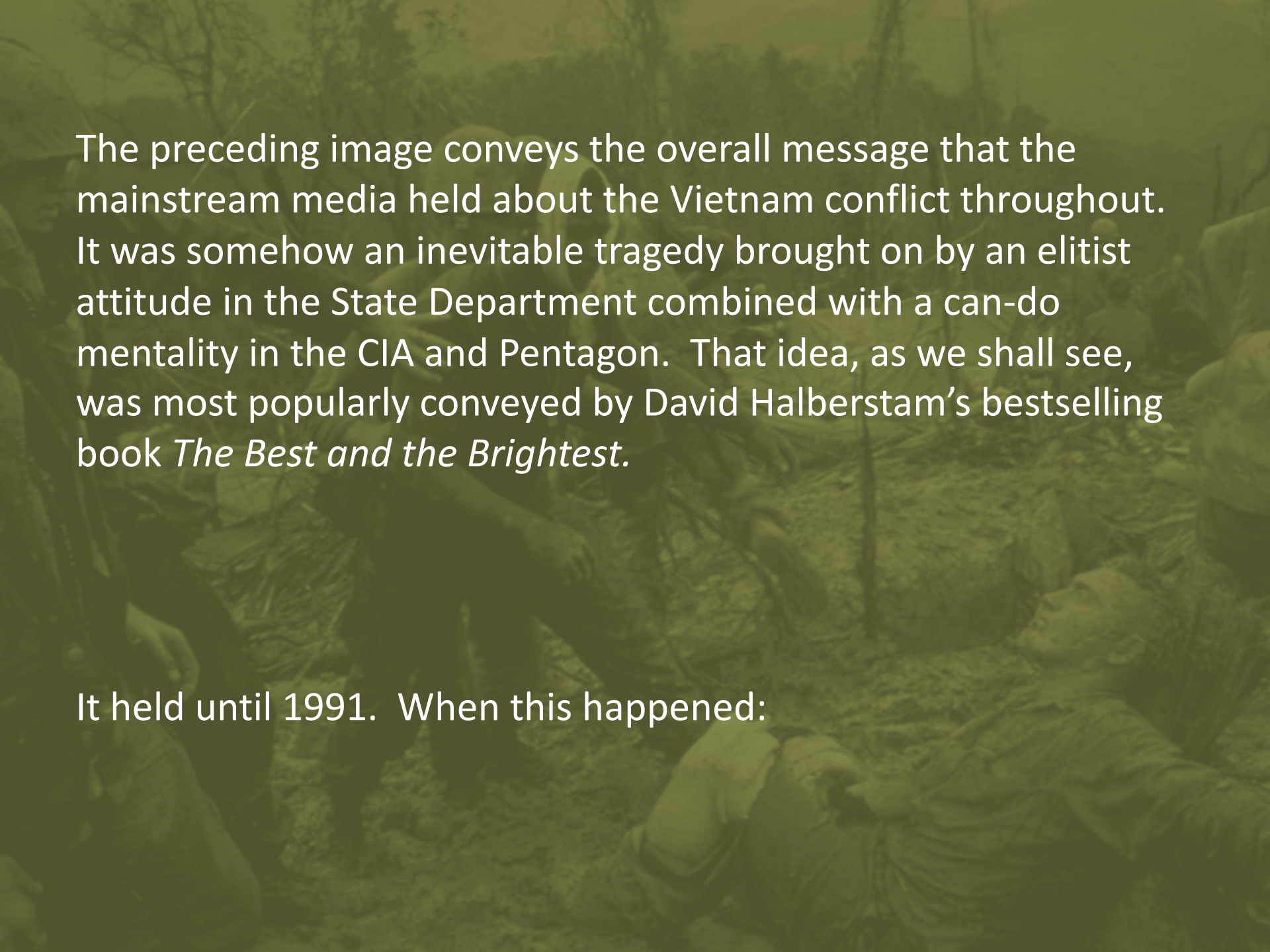


## **Casualties:**

**Total dead including  
U.S., North and South  
Vietnamese  
civilian and military:**

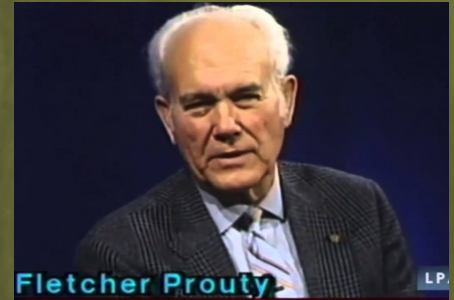
**1,291,425 – 4,211,451**



The background image is a dark, grainy, olive-green photograph. It depicts a soldier in a trench, looking through a rifle scope. The soldier's face is partially visible through the scope's viewfinder. The overall tone is somber and historical, likely from the Vietnam War era.

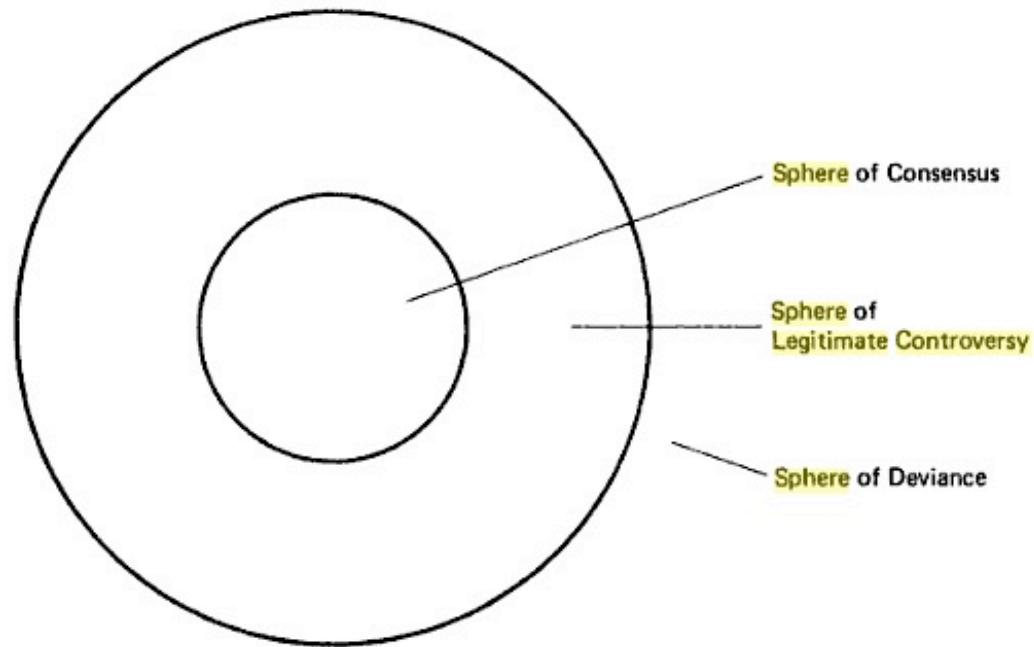
The preceding image conveys the overall message that the mainstream media held about the Vietnam conflict throughout. It was somehow an inevitable tragedy brought on by an elitist attitude in the State Department combined with a can-do mentality in the CIA and Pentagon. That idea, as we shall see, was most popularly conveyed by David Halberstam's bestselling book *The Best and the Brightest*.

It held until 1991. When this happened:



In December of 1991, Mr. X met Jim Garrison, and the general public was first alerted that X (Fletcher Prouty) had been working on President Kennedy's plan to withdraw from Vietnam.





**Figure 1** Spheres of consensus, controversy, and deviance.

Historian Daniel Hallin mapped out the above chart as to how the MSM works. The meeting between X and Garrison was in the sphere of deviance, where even if the story is true, it does not get printed. Therefore the film was attacked seven months in advance.



# ON THE SET DALLAS IN WONDERLAND

**By George Lardner Jr.** May 19, 1991

DALLAS -- The presidential motorcade is revving up on Main Street. The crowd outside the Texas School Book Depository gets ready for another round of cheering until the gunshots ring out. John F. Kennedy is about to be killed in Dealey Plaza again, and again, and again.

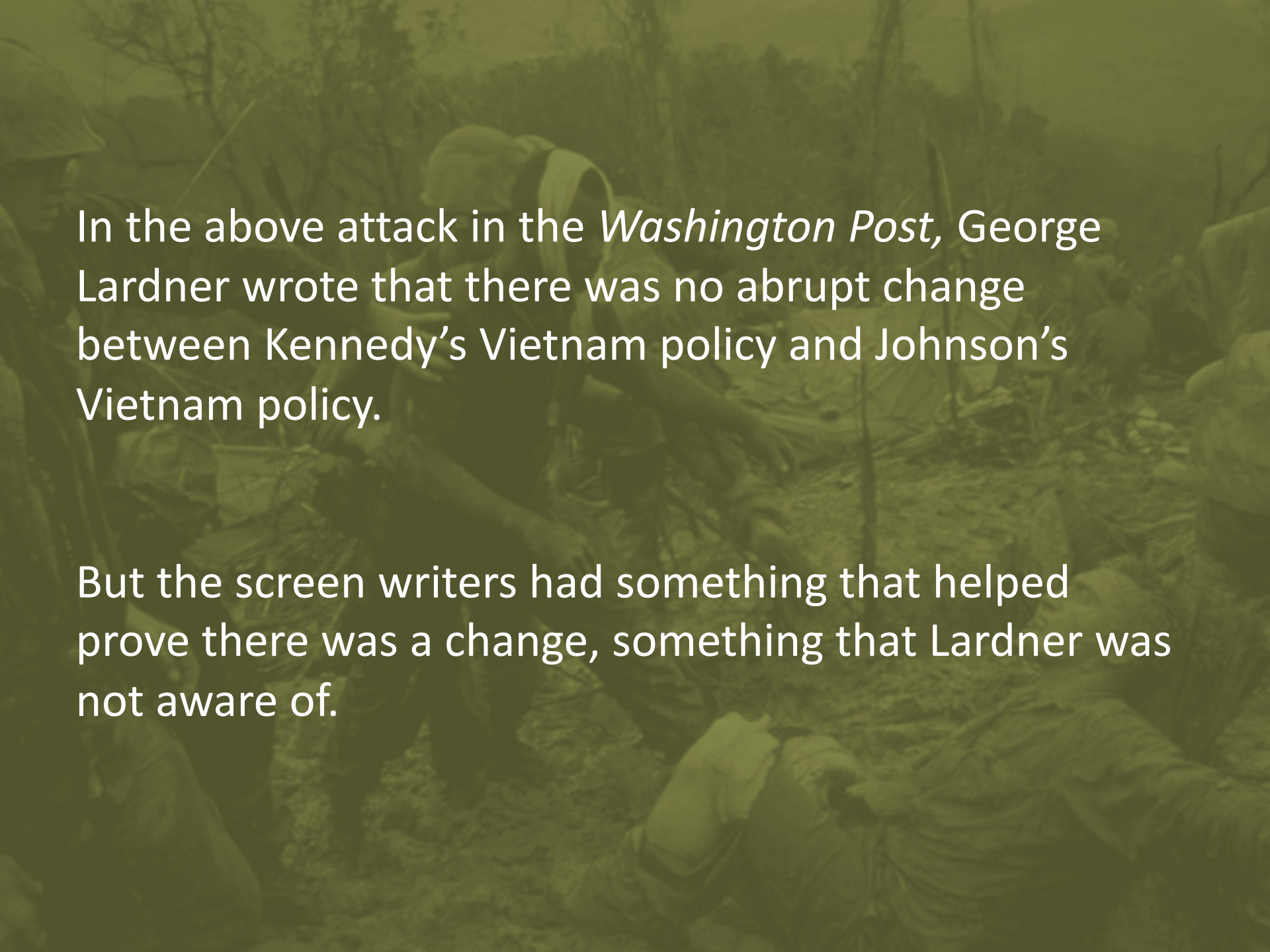
The director's instructions bark out over the walkie-talkies, making sure his sharpshooters get the message.

"I said, 'all five shots.' All right. Everybody in position now. Ready to fire."

Five shots? Is this the Kennedy assassination or the Charge of the Light Brigade?

Film maker Oliver Stone seems unperturbed. The controversial, Oscar-winning chronicler of the 1960s and the war in Vietnam ("Platoon," "Born on the Fourth of July") is in the midst of a \$35- to \$40-million production about the murder, tentatively titled "JFK." His hero: former New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison whose zany investigation of the assassination in the late 1960s has almost faded from memory.





In the above attack in the *Washington Post*, George Lardner wrote that there was no abrupt change between Kennedy's Vietnam policy and Johnson's Vietnam policy.

But the screen writers had something that helped prove there was a change, something that Lardner was not aware of.

# National Security Action Memorandum 263

2

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET~~ - EYES ONLY      October 11, 1963

NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. 263

TO:      Secretary of State  
         Secretary of Defense  
         Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

SUBJECT: South Vietnam

At a meeting on October 5, 1963, the President considered the recommendations contained in the report of Secretary McNamara and General Taylor on their mission to South Vietnam.

The President approved the military recommendations contained in Section I B (1-3) of the report, but directed that no formal announcement be made of the implementation of plans to withdraw 1,000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963.

After discussion of the remaining recommendations of the report, the President approved an instruction to Ambassador Lodge which is set forth in State Department telegram No. 534 to Saigon.

*McGeorge Bundy*  
McGeorge Bundy

Copy furnished:  
Director of Central Intelligence  
Administrator, Agency for International Development

cc:      Mr. Bundy ✓  
         Mr. Forrestal  
         Mr. Johnson

~~TOP SECRET~~ - EYES ONLY      NSC Files

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 11652, SEC. 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025

Committee Print of Pentagon Papers

BY H22      DATE 7/15/77

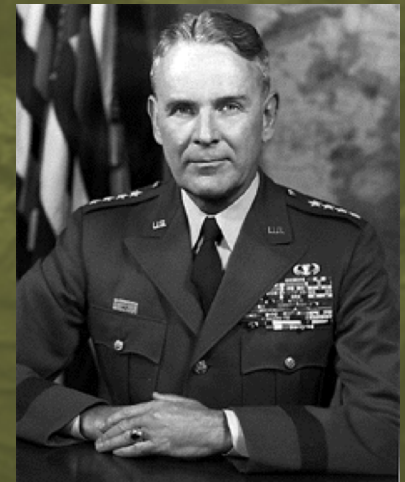
“The President approved the military recommendations contained in Section I B (1-3) of the report, but directed that no formal announcement be made of the implementation of plans to withdraw 1,000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963.”





**Lt. Gen. Victor Krulak**

Fletcher Prouty, a consultant on the film, actually wrote the McNamara/Taylor report along with his boss Victor Krulak. That report was the basis for NSAM 263. Their writing was supervised by Bobby Kennedy, at the request of President Kennedy. That report was then jetted out to Hawaii and handed to McNamara and Taylor on their return from Saigon. It was in bound form. They read it on the way to Washington.



**Gen. Maxwell Taylor**



In 1997, the ARRB declassified McNamara's Sec/Def Conference of May 1963.





“b.) The program currently in progress to train Vietnamese forces will be reviewed and accelerated as necessary to insure that all essential functions visualized to be required for the projected operational environment, included those now performed by US military units and personnel, can be assumed properly by the Vietnamese by the end of calendar year 1965.”

## The New York Times

### *Kennedy Had a Plan for Early Exit in Vietnam*

By TIM WEINER DEC. 23, 1997



Pentagon documents declassified today may rekindle the still-smoldering argument over whether President John F. Kennedy would have pulled American forces out of Vietnam.

The documents show that shortly before Kennedy was assassinated, the nation's top military leaders were going forward with his plan to withdraw American advisers from Vietnam.

"All planning will be directed towards preparing Republic of Vietnam forces for the withdrawal of all United States special assistance units and personnel by the end of calendar year 1965," reads an Oct. 4, 1963, memorandum drafted by Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and discussed that day by the Chiefs.

"Execute the plan to withdraw 1,000 United States military personnel by the end of 1963," the memorandum continues.

## The Philadelphia Inquirer

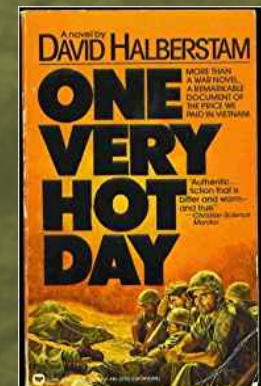
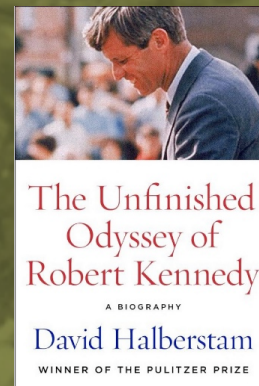
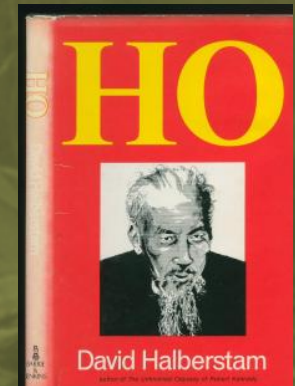
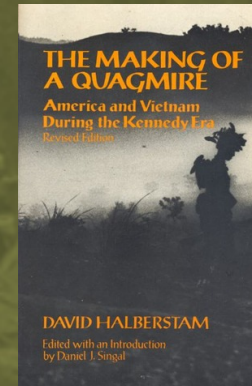
### *“Papers Support Theory that Kennedy Had Plans for a Vietnam Pullout”*



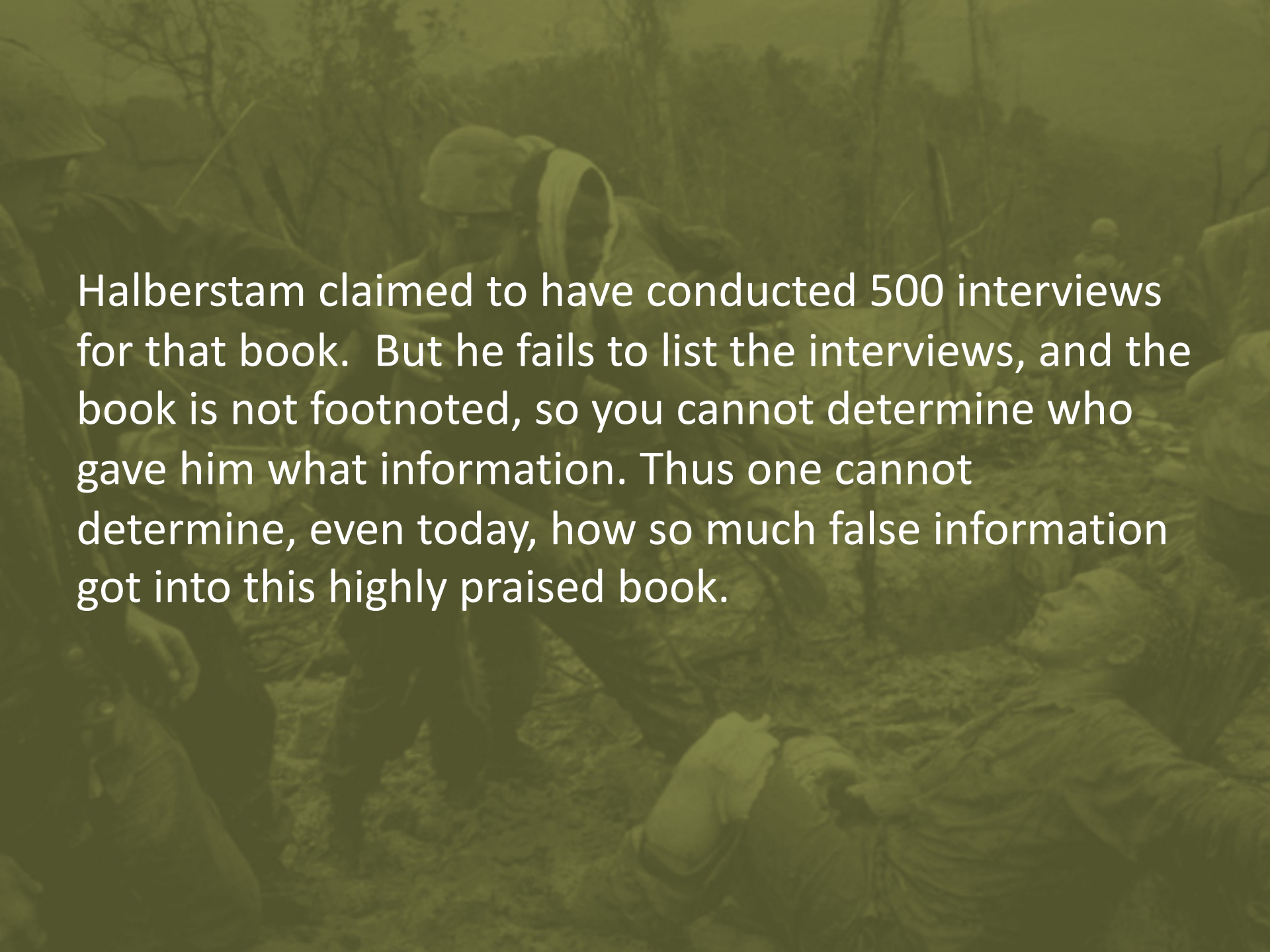
But in addition to that story being too deviant for the MSM, there was also another element at work. There was an effort to conceal the true facts of Kennedy's intent to withdraw from Vietnam. This worked on two levels: out of Washington, and out of the New York media center.



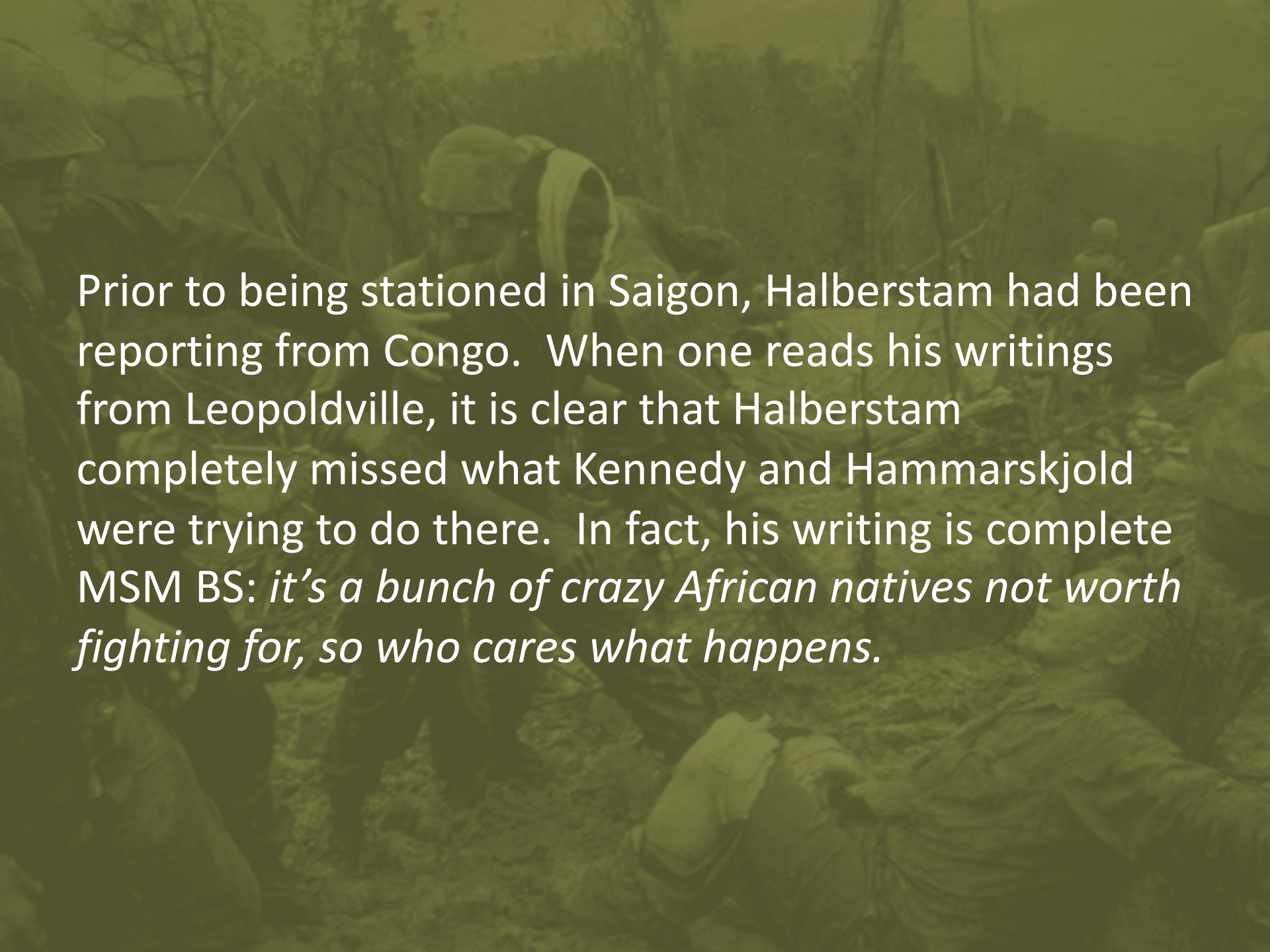
The mass media aspect was most effectively orchestrated by former *NY Times* author David Halberstam. Halberstam wrote 4 books, and scores of newspaper and magazine reports on the subject. That effort was capped by his bestseller *The Best and The Brightest*.





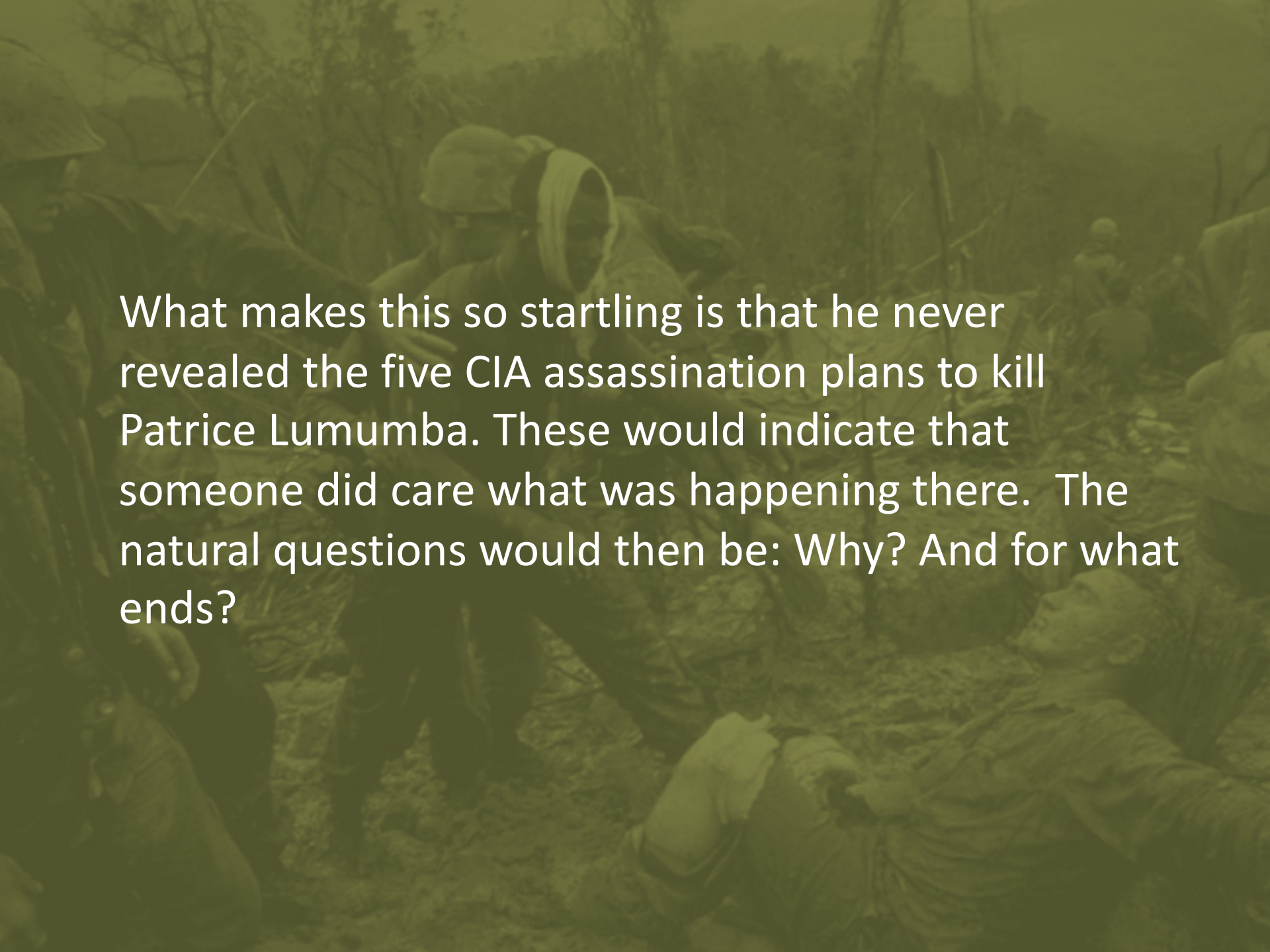


Halberstam claimed to have conducted 500 interviews for that book. But he fails to list the interviews, and the book is not footnoted, so you cannot determine who gave him what information. Thus one cannot determine, even today, how so much false information got into this highly praised book.



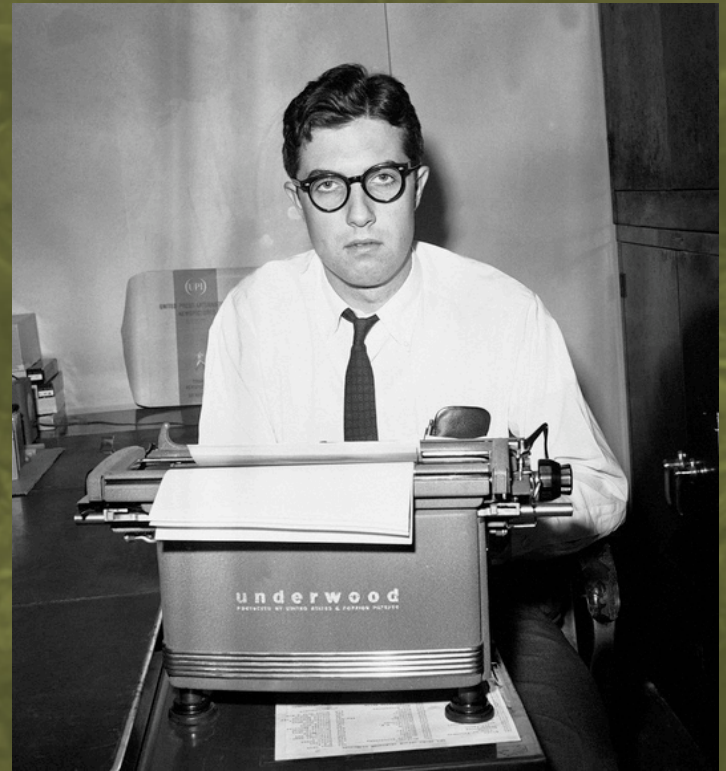
Prior to being stationed in Saigon, Halberstam had been reporting from Congo. When one reads his writings from Leopoldville, it is clear that Halberstam completely missed what Kennedy and Hammarskjold were trying to do there. In fact, his writing is complete MSM BS: *it's a bunch of crazy African natives not worth fighting for, so who cares what happens.*





What makes this so startling is that he never revealed the five CIA assassination plans to kill Patrice Lumumba. These would indicate that someone did care what was happening there. The natural questions would then be: Why? And for what ends?

Once he got to Saigon in 1962, he immediately reported to the CIA station, and was glad to see so many of his former friends come over from Leopoldville. He teamed up with his friend and colleague Neil Sheehan and they became quite influential.







Unlike Congo, and again in tune with the MSM, Halberstam *did* think something was at stake in Indochina. He and Sheehan fell under the spell of Colonel John Paul Vann. Vann explained to them that the corrupt Diem regime could not win the war, and that direct American intervention was needed. And that was the message they conveyed.



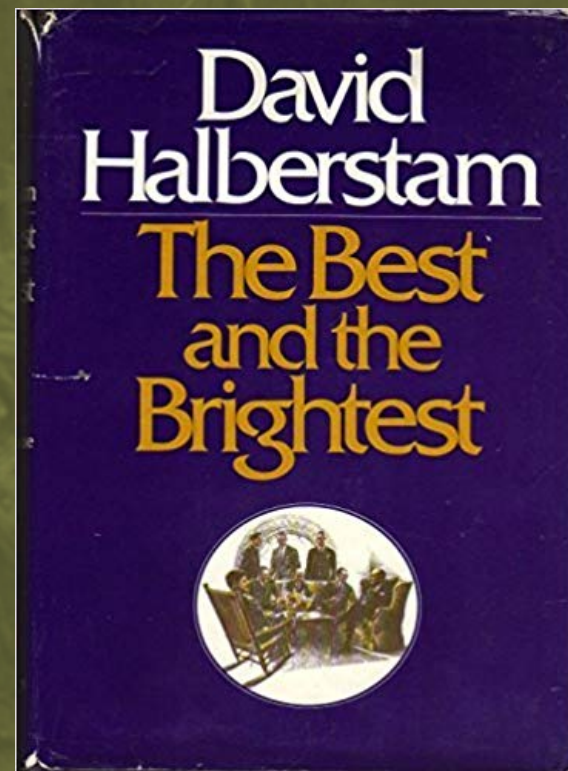
That message was in opposition to the withdrawal plan President Kennedy was implementing. So Kennedy asked the *NY Times* to rotate Halberstam out of Saigon. Management declined to do so. Halberstam mentioned this dispute in his book on Bobby Kennedy, but he was never explicit about what the causes were.



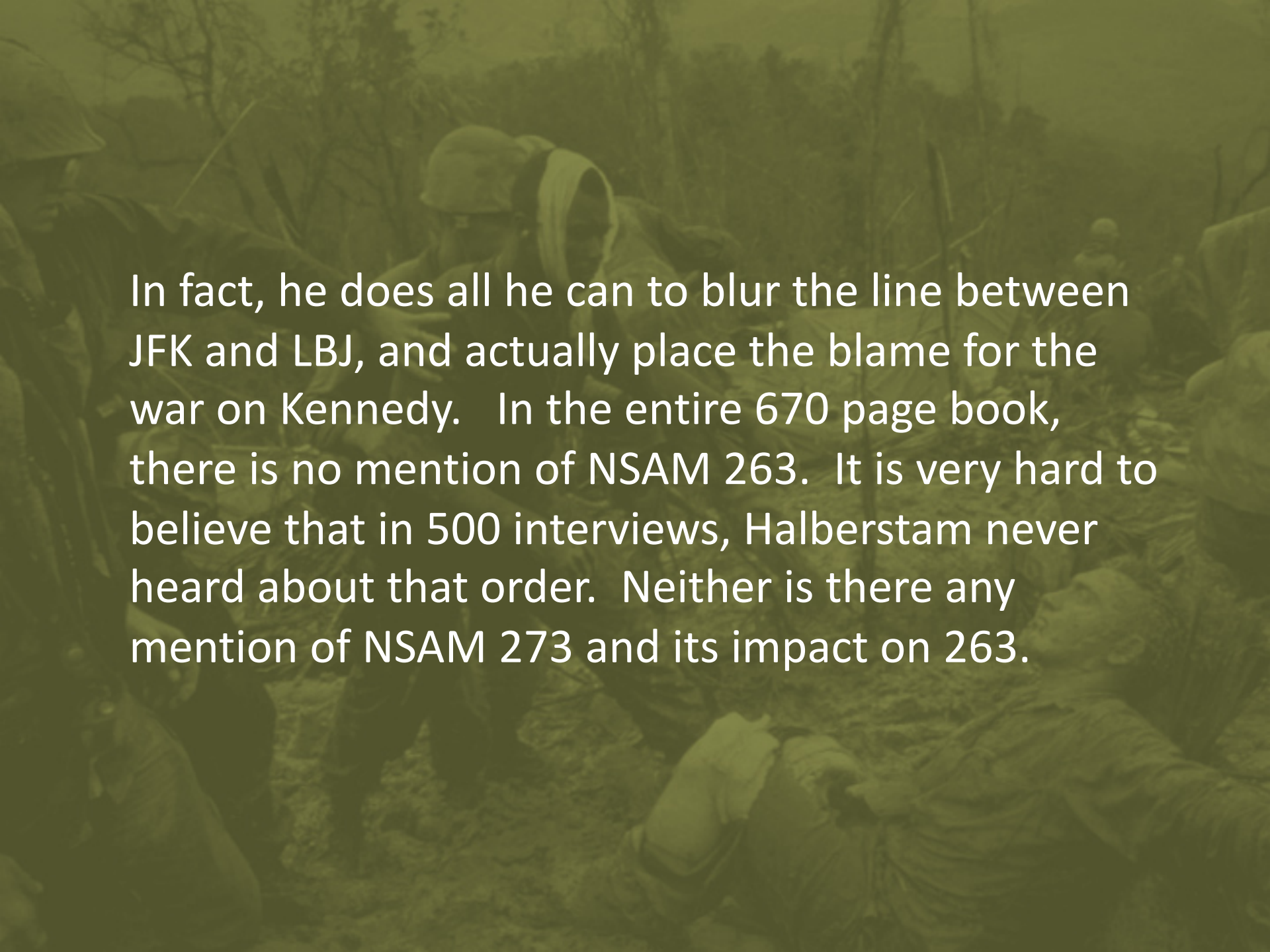


How much of a Hawk was Halberstam at this time? In his 1965 book *The Making of a Quagmire*, he spared no criticism of the Diem regime, said the USA had gotten in with too little and too late, and implied that Vann should be given leadership over the conduct of the war. He also opposed negotiations.

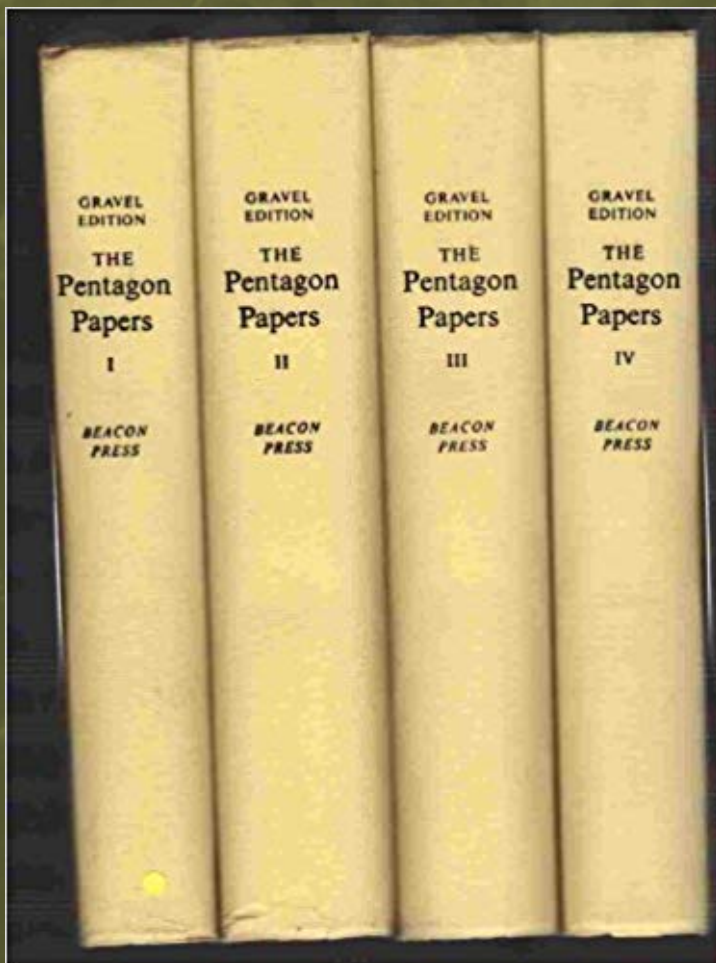
But in 1972, with *The Best and the Brightest*, there is almost no mention of his hawkish past. Halberstam now saw Vietnam as the greatest American tragedy since the Civil War. Yet he does not admit or explain how he and Sheehan helped create that dilemma. Nor does he recognize that Kennedy was trying to avoid it, and how he and the *Times* obstructed him.







In fact, he does all he can to blur the line between JFK and LBJ, and actually place the blame for the war on Kennedy. In the entire 670 page book, there is no mention of NSAM 263. It is very hard to believe that in 500 interviews, Halberstam never heard about that order. Neither is there any mention of NSAM 273 and its impact on 263.

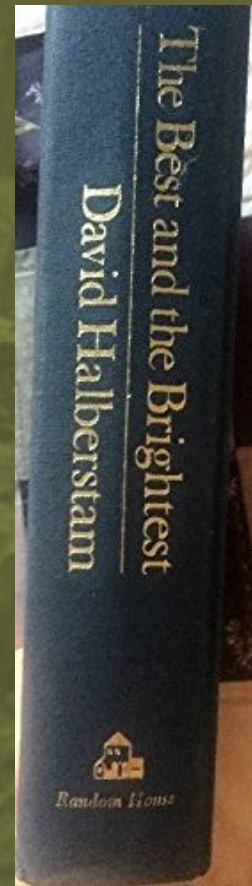


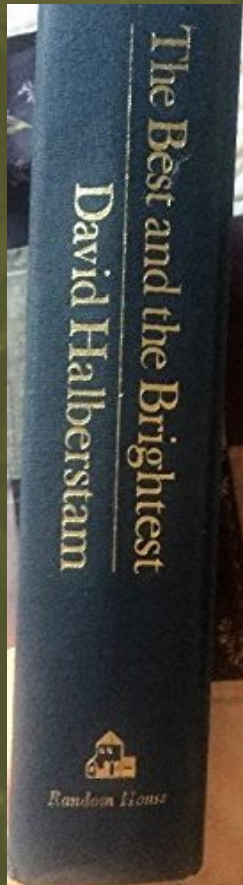
This is inexplicable, since Halberstam says his book tracked with the information in the *Pentagon Papers*. In the 1971 Gravel edition of the *Papers*, there is a 30 page section entitled “Phased Withdrawal, 1962-64”. It explains how this plan was to culminate in a complete withdrawal in 1965. And that is not all that Halberstam misrepresented.



Let us see just how badly  
misinformed David Halberstam  
was in this book which sold 1.8  
million copies.

Let us focus on the key role of  
Robert McNamara, who got  
blamed for the war, to the point  
that it was called “McNamara’s  
War”.

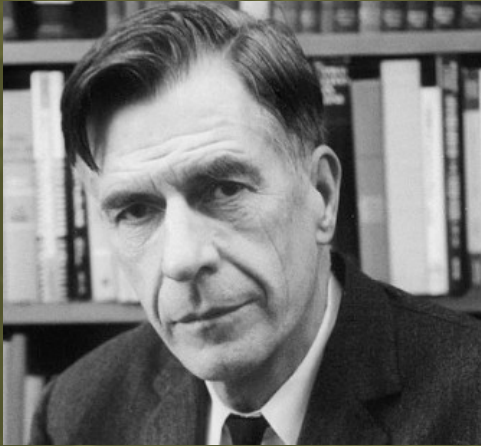




“He became the principal desk officer on Vietnam in 1962 because he felt the President needed his help.” (Halberstam p. 214)

Next page, he writes that McNamara had no different assumptions than the Pentagon did.





**John K. Galbraith**

It was not McNamara who went to Kennedy on Vietnam. As we know today, Kennedy sent John K. Galbraith's report recommending withdrawal to McNamara in the spring of 1962. From that point, until Kennedy's death, McNamara was fulfilling JFK's intent to leave Vietnam beginning in late 1963, with complete withdrawal accomplished by 1965.

For more evidence of this, consider the following tape made in the fall of 1963 when Kennedy was forcing NSAM 263 through his reluctant advisors.

# October 2, 1963:



[McNamara] ... we believe we can complete the military campaign in the first three corps in '64 and the fourth corps in '65 ... we believe we can train the Vietnamese to take over the essential functions and withdraw the bulk of our forces. And this thousand is in conjunction with that ....



[Bundy] What's the point of doing it?



[McNamara] We need a way to get out of Vietnam. This is a way of doing it.

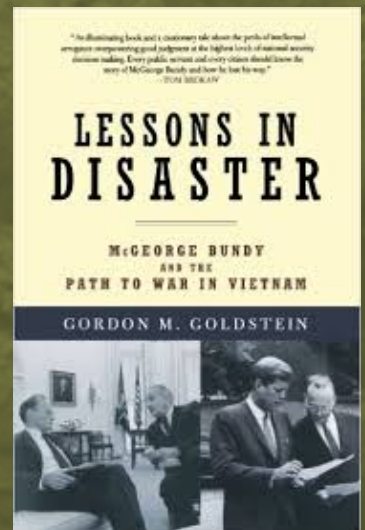




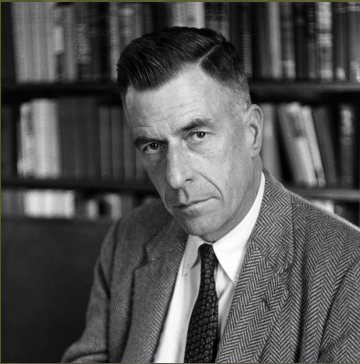
When National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy listened to the above tape with his biographer Gordon Goldstein, he realized what had happened.

Kennedy had implemented his withdrawal plan by going around him since he knew Bundy was too hawkish. Retroactively Bundy had nothing but admiration for that move.

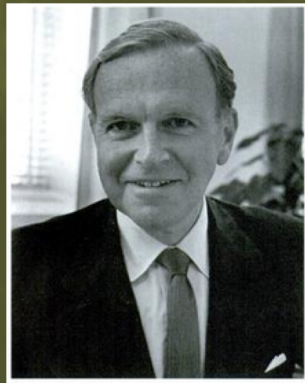
After reviewing the declassified record, he told Goldstein that Kennedy was never going into Vietnam.



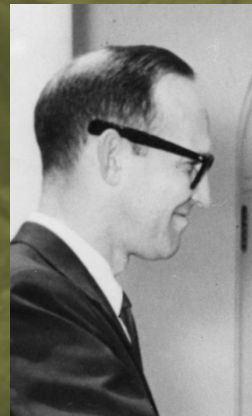
# Witnesses for Kennedy handing off this withdrawal plan to McNamara:



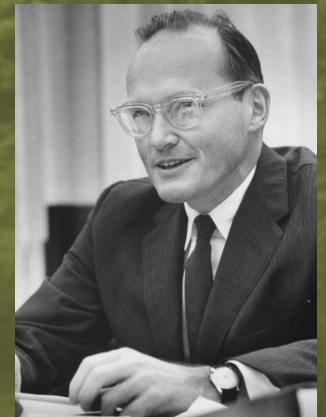
John K. Galbraith,  
Ambassador to  
India



Roswell Gilpatric,  
Deputy Secretary  
of Defense



John McNaughton,  
Assistant Secretary  
of Defense

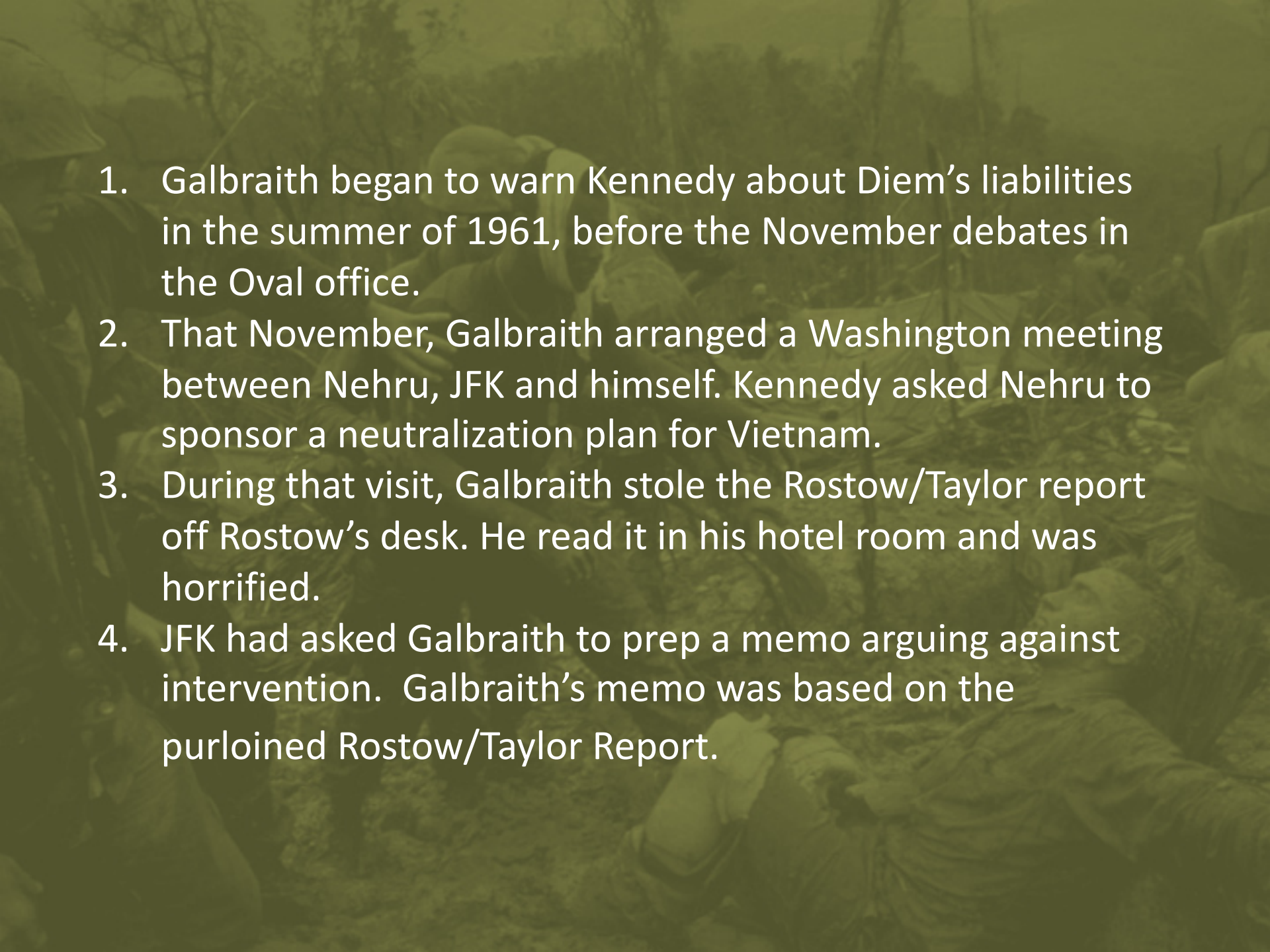


McGeorge Bundy,  
National Security  
Advisor

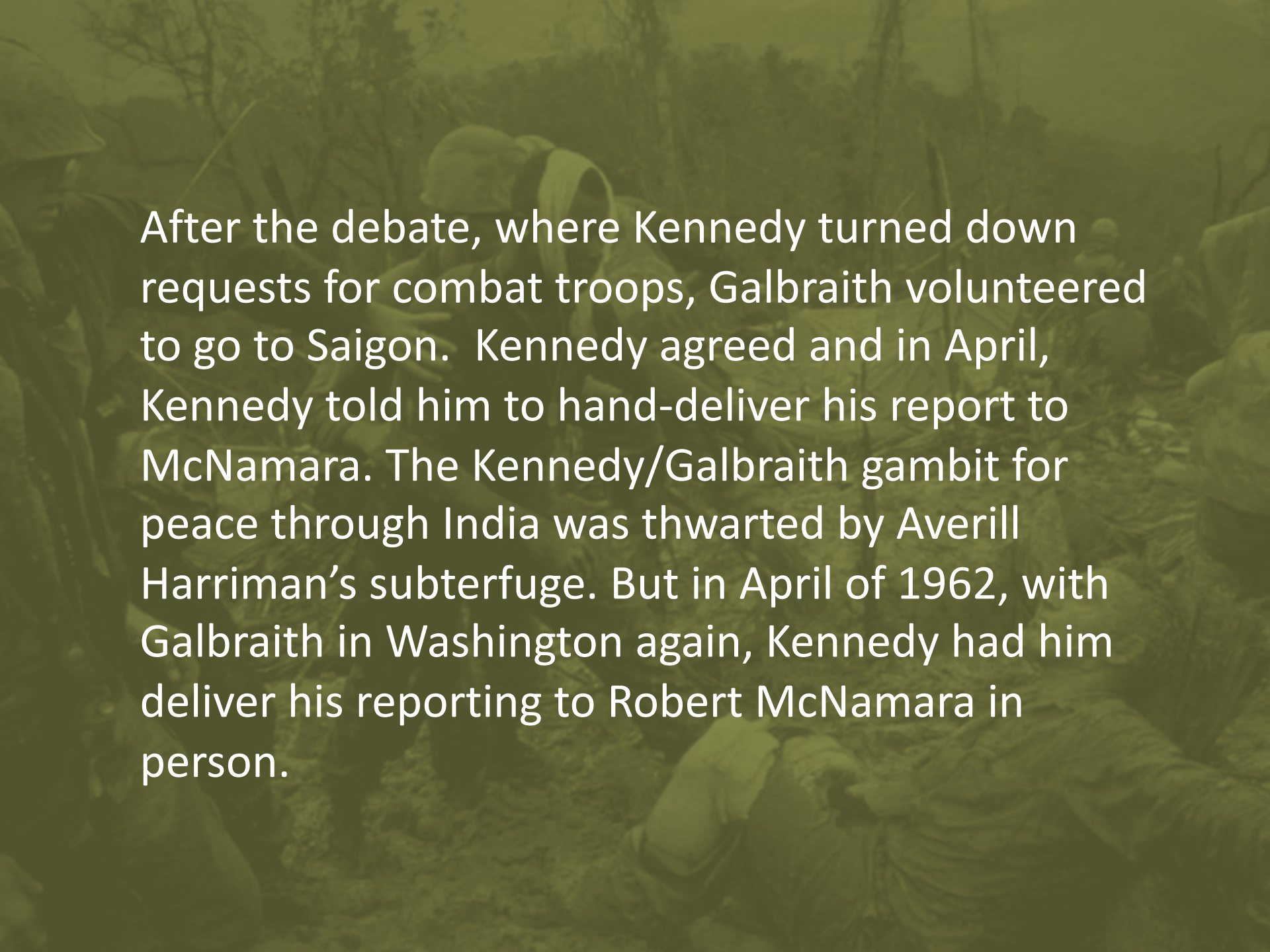




Halberstam very much discounts Galbraith's role in shaping Kennedy's Vietnam policy. He also underplays the intellectual impact of Galbraith's ideas on Kennedy's thinking about Indochina. But anyone who studied Kennedy knows that this is one of the reasons JFK appointed him ambassador to India, so he could be on the scene nearby. Contrary to what Halberstam claims, Galbraith was quite influential in this debate.

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1. Galbraith began to warn Kennedy about Diem's liabilities in the summer of 1961, before the November debates in the Oval office.
  2. That November, Galbraith arranged a Washington meeting between Nehru, JFK and himself. Kennedy asked Nehru to sponsor a neutralization plan for Vietnam.
  3. During that visit, Galbraith stole the Rostow/Taylor report off Rostow's desk. He read it in his hotel room and was horrified.
  4. JFK had asked Galbraith to prep a memo arguing against intervention. Galbraith's memo was based on the purloined Rostow/Taylor Report.





After the debate, where Kennedy turned down requests for combat troops, Galbraith volunteered to go to Saigon. Kennedy agreed and in April, Kennedy told him to hand-deliver his report to McNamara. The Kennedy/Galbraith gambit for peace through India was thwarted by Averill Harriman's subterfuge. But in April of 1962, with Galbraith in Washington again, Kennedy had him deliver his reporting to Robert McNamara in person.

**Memorandum to President Kennedy from Ambassador John Kenneth Galbraith on Vietnam, 4 April 1962**

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Source: *The Pentagon Papers*, Gravel Edition, Volume 2, pp. 669-671

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
Washington

April 7, 1962

The Honorable Robert S. McNamara  
Secretary of Defense  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The President has asked me to transmit to you for your comments the enclosed memorandum on the subject of Viet-Nam to the President from Ambassador J. K. Gaibraith dated April 4, 1962.

*Sincerely*  
*Michael V. Forrestal*

Encl: Memo to Pres. from Amb. Gaibraith

April 4, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT  
Subject: Viet-Nam

The following considerations influence our thinking on Viet-Nam:

1. We have a growing military commitment. This could expand step by step into a major, long-drawn out indecisive military involvement.
2. We are backing a weak and, on the record, ineffectual government and a leader who as a politician may be beyond the point of no return.
3. There is consequent danger we shall replace the French as the colonial force in the area and bleed as the French did.
4. The political effects of some of the measures which pacification requires or is believed to require, including the concentration of population, relocation of villages, and the burning of old villages, may be damaging to those and especially to Westerners associated with it.
5. We fear that at some point in the involvement there will be a major political outburst about the new Korea and the new war into which the Democrats as so often before have precipitated us.
6. It seems at least possible that the Soviets are not particularly desirous of trouble in this part of the world and that our military reaction with the need to fall back on Chinese protection may be causing concern in Hanoi.

In the light of the foregoing we urge the following:

1. That it be our policy to keep open the door for political solution. We should welcome as a solution any broadly based non-Communist government that is free from external interference. It should have the requisites for internal law and order. We should not require that it be militarily identified with the United States.
2. We shall find it useful in achieving this result if we seize any good opportunity to involve other countries and world opinion in settlement and its guarantee. This is a useful exposure and pressure on the Communist bloc countries and a useful antidote for the argument that this is a private American military adventure.
3. We should measurably reduce our commitment to the particular present leadership of the government of South Viet-Nam.

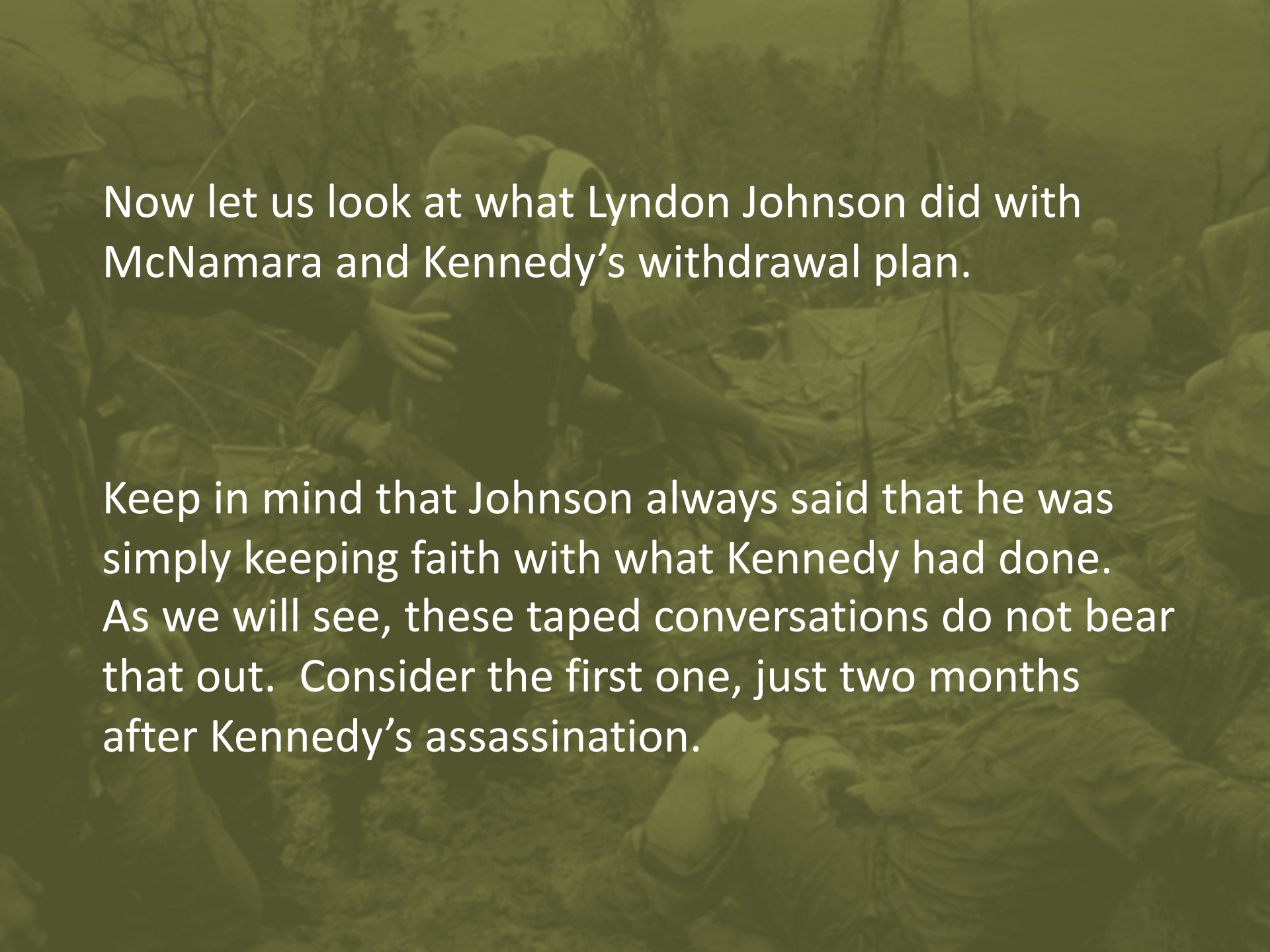
To accomplish the foregoing, we recommend the following specific steps:

1. In the next fortnight or so the ICC will present a report which we are confidentially advised will accuse North Viet-Nam of subversion and the Government of Viet-Nam in conjunction with the United States of not notifying the introduction of men and materiel as prescribed by the Geneva accords. We should respond by asking the co-chairmen to initiate steps to re-establish compliance with the Geneva accords. Pending specific recommendations, which might at some stage include a conference of signatories, we should demand a suspension of Viet Cong activity and agree to a standstill on an introduction of men and materiel.



One month later, after a Sec/Def meeting, McNamara made his request to General Harkins to devise a plan to turn over all military operations in Vietnam to the Saigon government. This was the beginning of Kennedy's withdrawal plan, which would be implemented by NSAM 263. Halberstam either ignored or missed all of this information—which is utterly crucial to understanding the war.



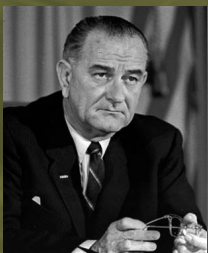


Now let us look at what Lyndon Johnson did with McNamara and Kennedy's withdrawal plan.

Keep in mind that Johnson always said that he was simply keeping faith with what Kennedy had done. As we will see, these taped conversations do not bear that out. Consider the first one, just two months after Kennedy's assassination.



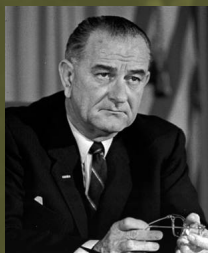
# February 20, 1964:



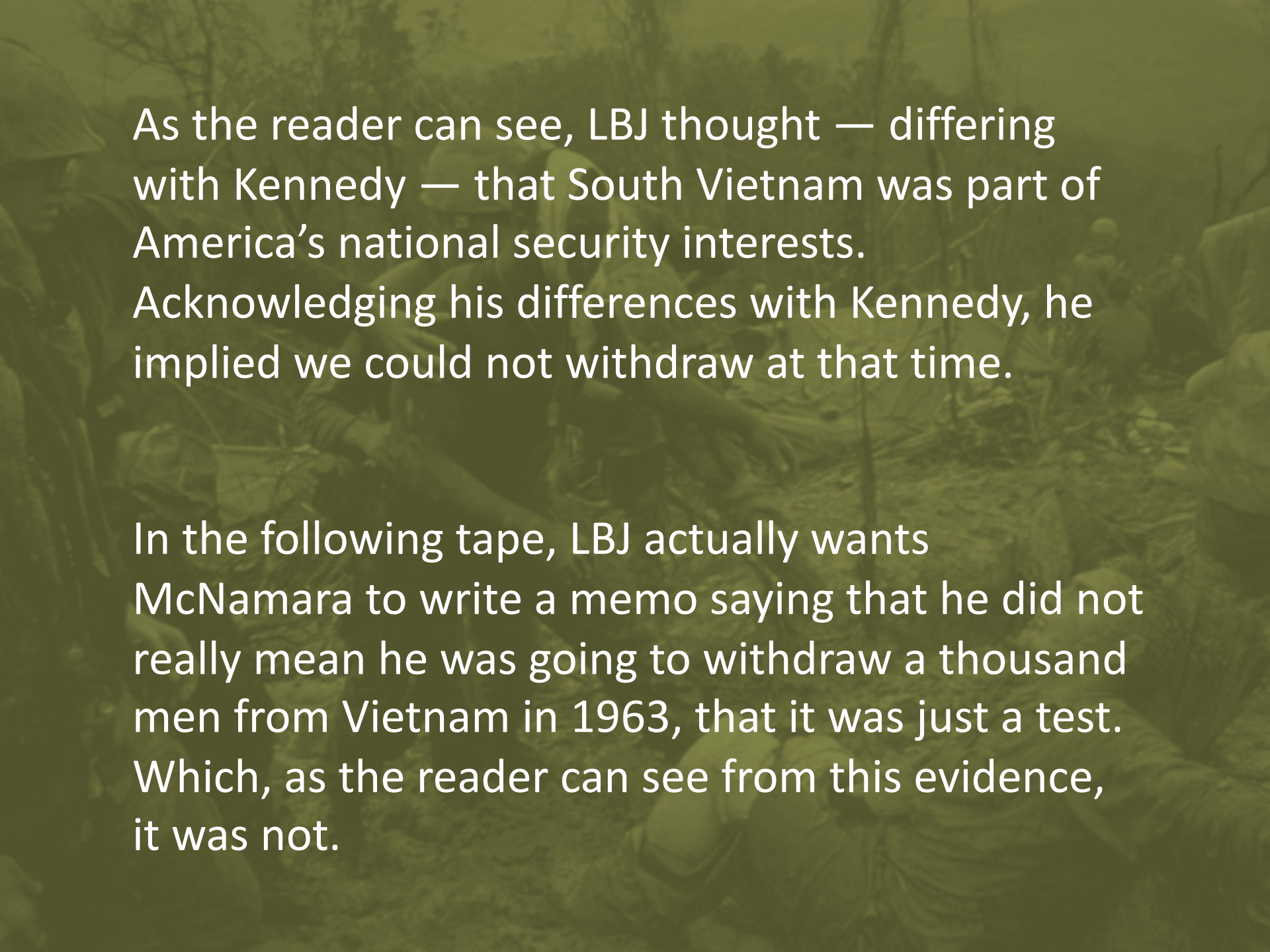
[Johnson] I always thought it was foolish for you to make any statements about withdrawing. I thought it was bad psychologically. But you and the president thought otherwise, and I just sat silent.



[McNamara] The problem is...



[Johnson] Then come the questions, how in the hell does McNamara think when he's losing the war he can pull men out of there?



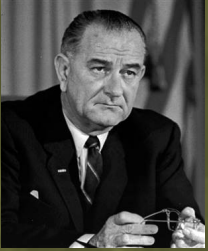
As the reader can see, LBJ thought — differing with Kennedy — that South Vietnam was part of America's national security interests.

Acknowledging his differences with Kennedy, he implied we could not withdraw at that time.

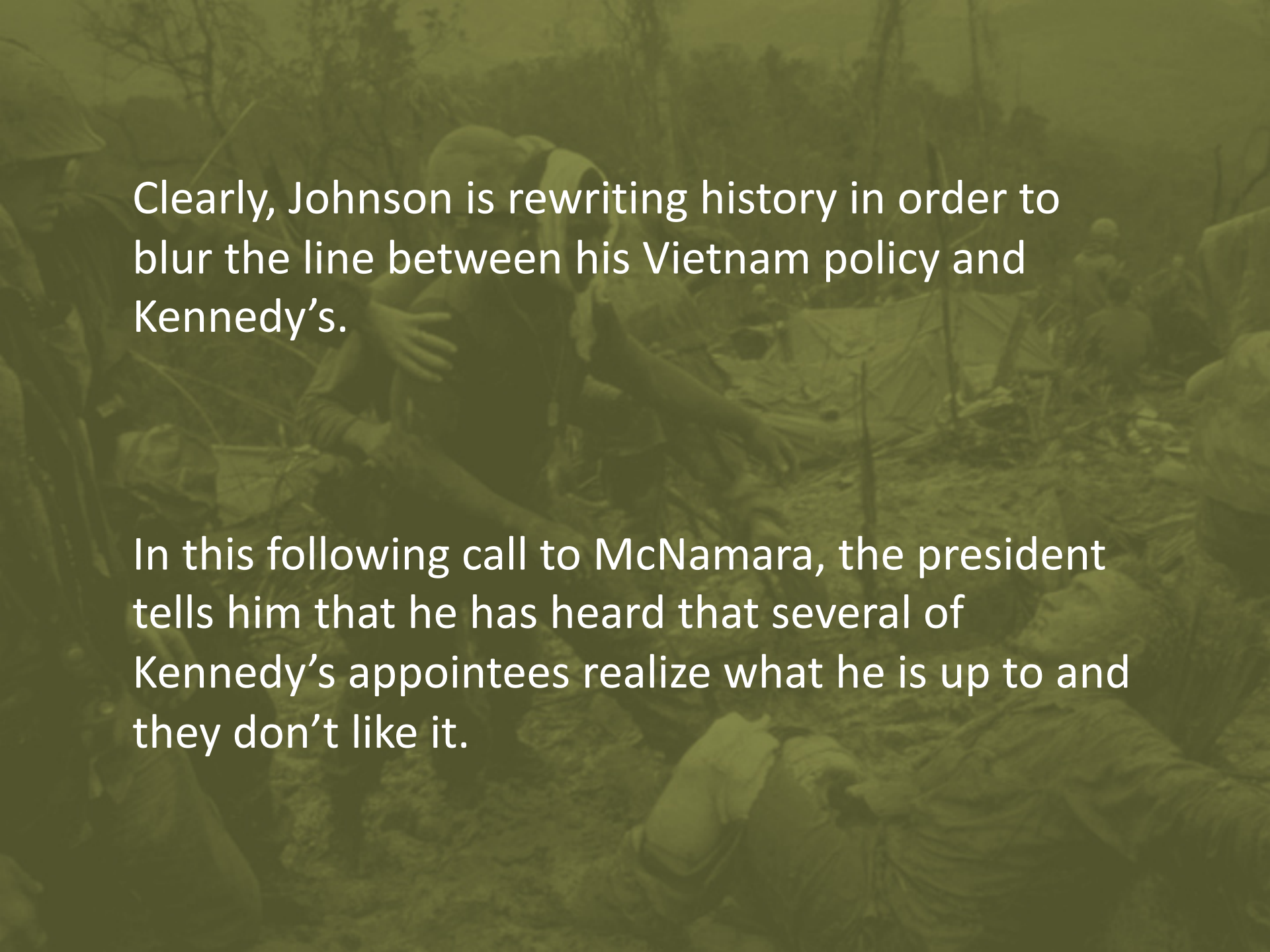
In the following tape, LBJ actually wants McNamara to write a memo saying that he did not really mean he was going to withdraw a thousand men from Vietnam in 1963, that it was just a test. Which, as the reader can see from this evidence, it was not.



# March 2, 1964:



[Johnson] I want you to dictate me a memorandum ... Now why'd you say you'd send a thousand home in October of 1963? Why did McNamara say they were coming back home in '65? ... That doesn't mean everybody comes back, but that your training ought to be in pretty good shape by that time. That's what's said, not anything inconsistent.

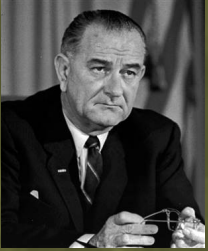


Clearly, Johnson is rewriting history in order to blur the line between his Vietnam policy and Kennedy's.

In this following call to McNamara, the president tells him that he has heard that several of Kennedy's appointees realize what he is up to and they don't like it.



January 13, 1965:



[Johnson] Well, it was at [Rowland] Evans' house. And the Kennedy crowd decided that I had framed up to get the Armed Service committee in the Senate to call McCone to put the Vietnam War on Kennedy's tomb ... and this was my game ... to lay Vietnam off onto Kennedy's inexperience and immaturity and so forth.

One by one ...



Salinger



O'Donnell



Bundy



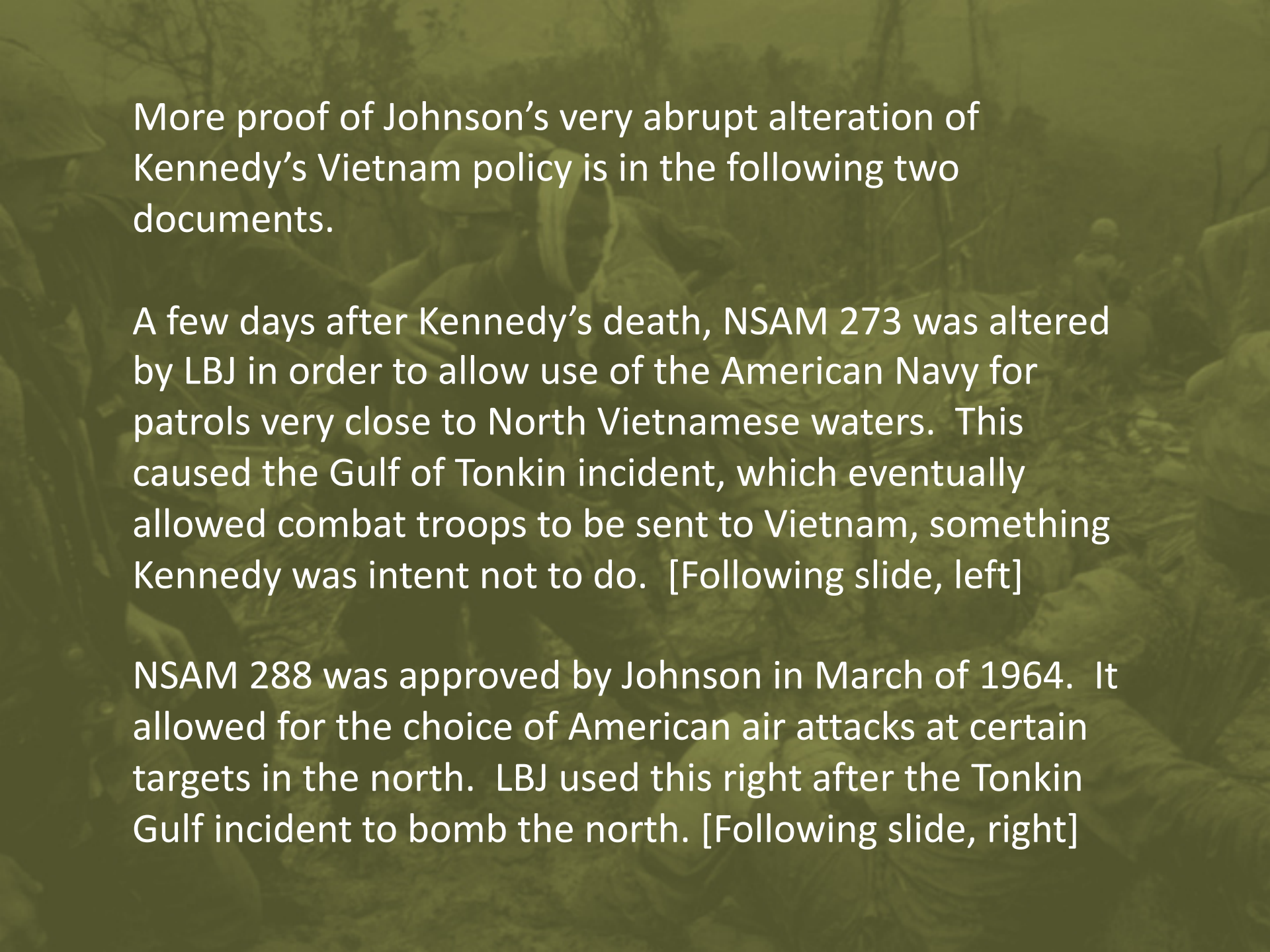
Ball



McNamara

... leave the White House.





More proof of Johnson's very abrupt alteration of Kennedy's Vietnam policy is in the following two documents.

A few days after Kennedy's death, NSAM 273 was altered by LBJ in order to allow use of the American Navy for patrols very close to North Vietnamese waters. This caused the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which eventually allowed combat troops to be sent to Vietnam, something Kennedy was intent not to do. [Following slide, left]

NSAM 288 was approved by Johnson in March of 1964. It allowed for the choice of American air attacks at certain targets in the north. LBJ used this right after the Tonkin Gulf incident to bomb the north. [Following slide, right]

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET~~

November 26, 1963

NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. 273

TO: The Secretary of State  
The Secretary of Defense  
The Director of Central Intelligence  
The Administrator, AID  
The Director, USA

The President has reviewed the discussions of South Vietnam which occurred in Honolulu, and has discussed the matter further with Ambassador Lodge. He directs that the following guidance be issued to all concerned:

1. It remains the central object of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported Communist conspiracy. The test of all U. S. decisions and actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contribution to this purpose.
2. The objectives of the United States with respect to the withdrawal of U. S. military personnel remain as stated in the White House statement of October 2, 1963.
3. It is a major interest of the United States Government that the present provisional government of South Vietnam should be assisted in consolidating itself and in holding and developing increased public support. All U. S. officers should conduct themselves with this objective in view.
4. The President expects that all senior officers of the Government will move energetically to insure the full unity of support for established U. S. policy in South Vietnam. Both in Washington and in the field, it is essential that the Government be unified. It is of particular importance that express or implied criticism of officers of other branches be scrupulously avoided in all contacts with the Vietnamese Government and with the press. More specifically, the President approves the following lines of action developed in the discussions of the Honolulu meeting of November 20. The offices of the Government to which central responsibility is assigned are indicated in each case.

DECLASSIFIED

~~TOP SECRET~~

(page 1 of 3 pages)

Authority: NSC memo 5/23/78  
By: MJE/LW, NARS, Date: 9/16/83

FILE COPY

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

~~SECRET~~

March 17, 1964

NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. 288

TO: The Secretary of State  
The Secretary of Defense  
The Secretary of the Treasury  
The Attorney General  
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff  
The Director of Central Intelligence  
The Director, United States Information Agency  
The Director, Bureau of the Budget  
The Administrator, Agency for International Development

SUBJECT: Implementation of South Vietnam Programs

1. The report of Secretary McNamara dated March 16, 1964 was considered and approved by the President in a meeting of the National Security Council on March 17. All agencies concerned are directed to proceed energetically with the execution of the recommendations of that report.
2. The President, in consultation with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, has designated the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs to coordinate the execution of the recommendations in the report.

McGeorge Bundy

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4  
NLI: NSC # 76-00574  
By: NARS, Date: 12-4-87

cc: Mr. Bundy  
Mr. Forrestal  
Mr. Johnson  
NSC Files

C. Casper 3/17/65

~~SECRET~~

NSAM 273

NSAM 288



# *“Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye”*

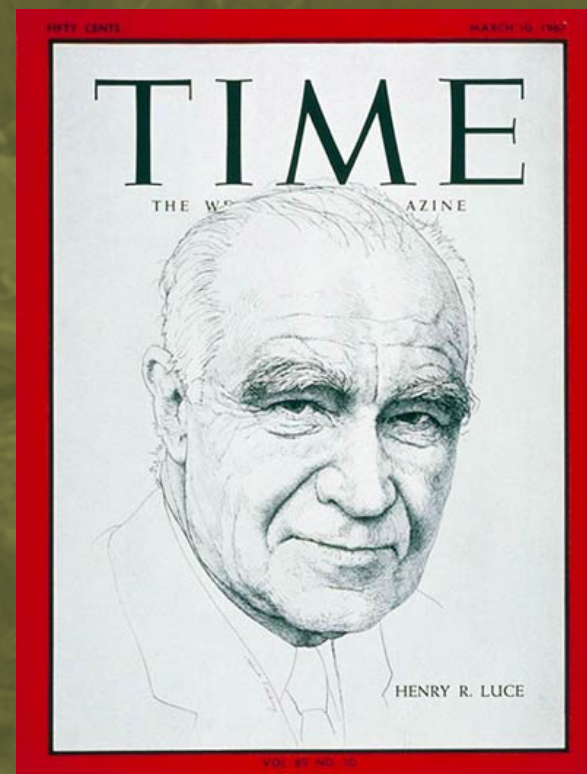
Memories of  
John Fitzgerald Kennedy



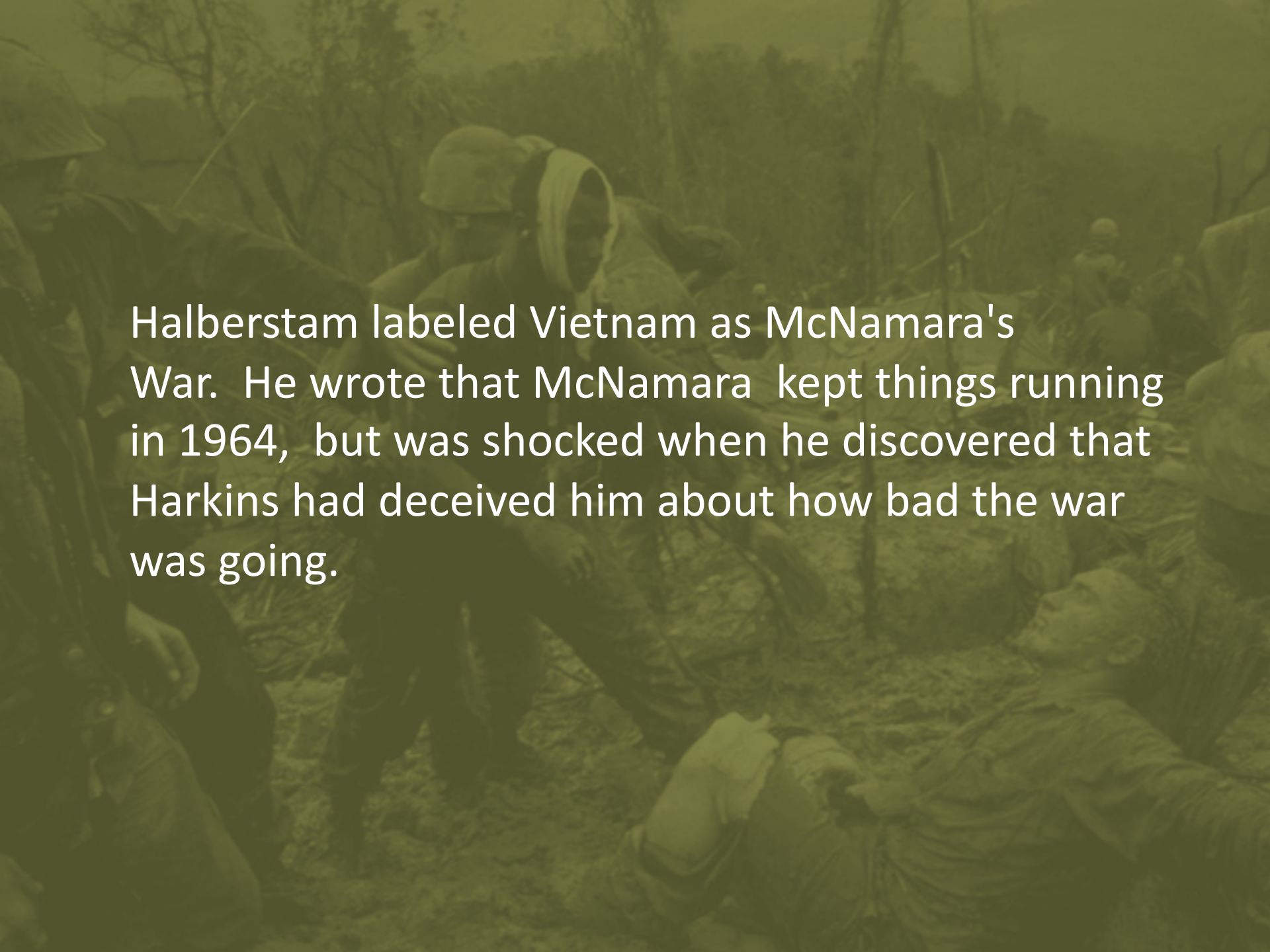
Kenneth P. O'Donnell  
and David E. Powers  
with Joe McCarthy

In this 1972 book, two of Kennedy's closest advisors wrote that LBJ broke with Kennedy's Vietnam policy. They mention how NSAM 263 was rescinded and the number of advisors actually increased under LBJ.

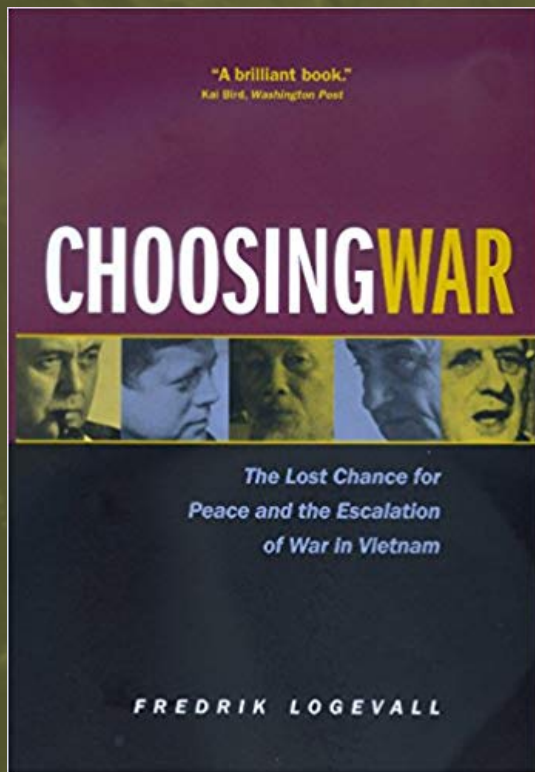
In the November 22, 1963 issue of *Life Magazine*, the editors asked for an escalation of the war effort, rejecting the withdrawal option. We know that JFK's last words on the subject before Dallas were: We have about a 100-1 chance of winning. When I get back we are going to go through everything, including how we got involved there. LBJ sided with Henry Luce over Kennedy.





A sepia-toned photograph of soldiers in a jungle setting. In the foreground, a soldier lies on the ground, possibly injured or dead. Other soldiers are visible in the background, some standing and some crouching. The scene is dense with foliage and trees.

Halberstam labeled Vietnam as McNamara's War. He wrote that McNamara kept things running in 1964, but was shocked when he discovered that Harkins had deceived him about how bad the war was going.



As Frederick Logevall notes in *Choosing War*, LBJ had planned on entering the war after the November '64 election. Everything done that year was a preplanned preparation for that. By 1966, McNamara was showing signs of stress and depression that led to a nervous breakdown. It was not his war.





This is another reason why Warren Hinckle called *The Best and the Brightest* one of the greatest bullshit books ever written.

Johnson escalated the war to heights unimaginable during the Kennedy years. The price of the war soared to the point that it cost 75 bombs and 150 artillery shells to kill one enemy soldier: or about \$400,000. Adjusted for inflation, it would be about 3 million today



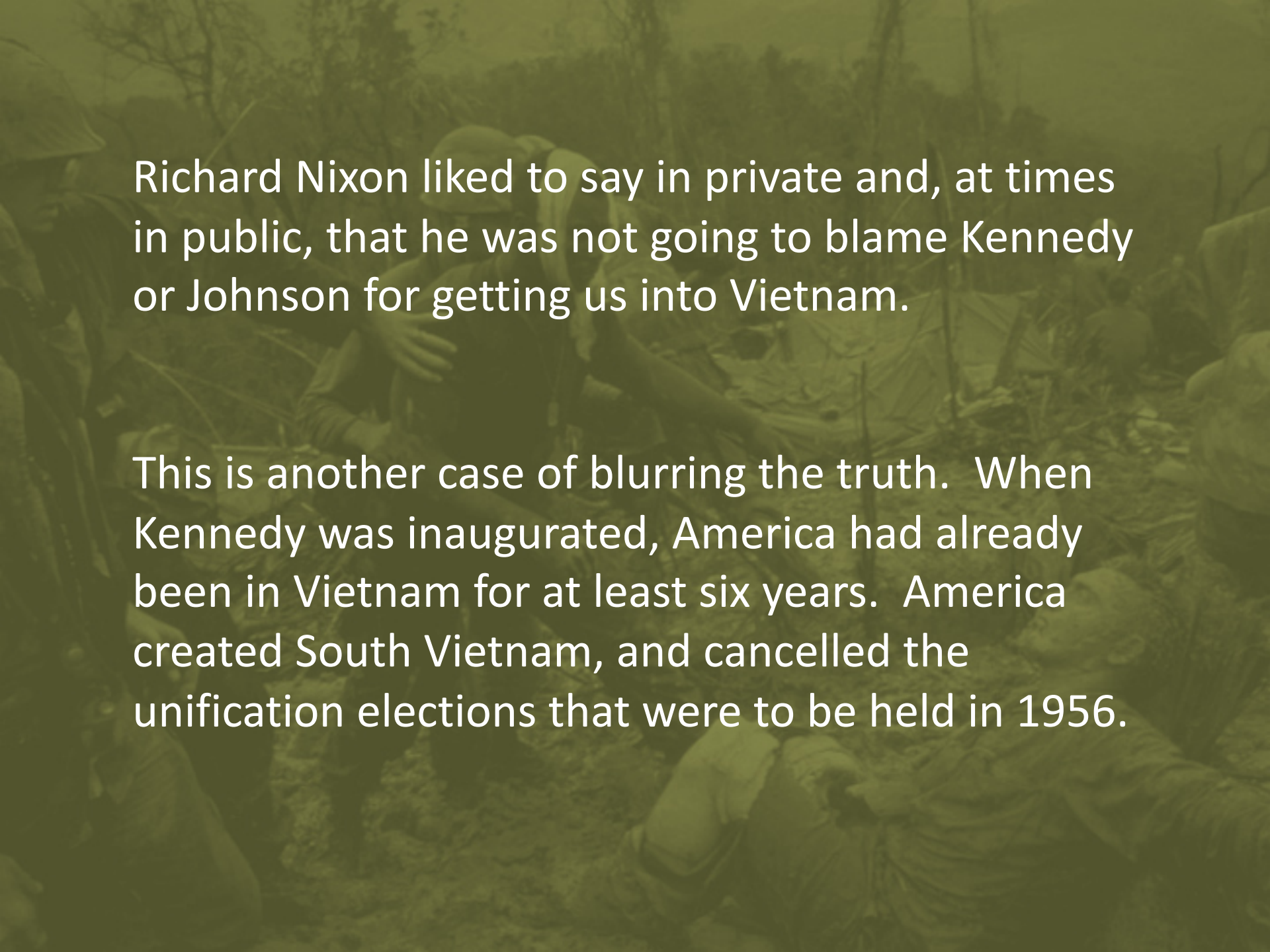
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During the siege of Khe Sanh, Johnson seriously considered using atomic weapons—which puts him in league with Eisenhower and Nixon.

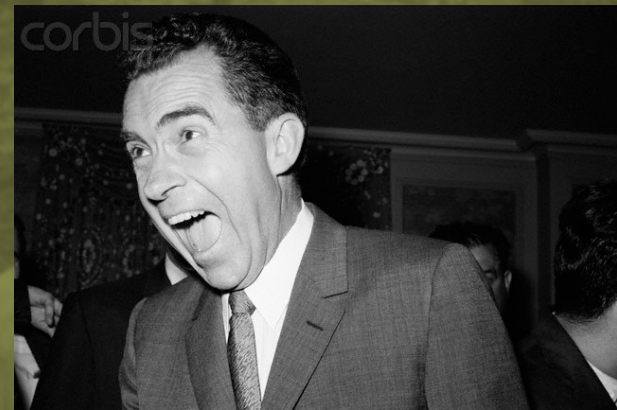


Richard Nixon liked to say in private and, at times in public, that he was not going to blame Kennedy or Johnson for getting us into Vietnam.

This is another case of blurring the truth. When Kennedy was inaugurated, America had already been in Vietnam for at least six years. America created South Vietnam, and cancelled the unification elections that were to be held in 1956.



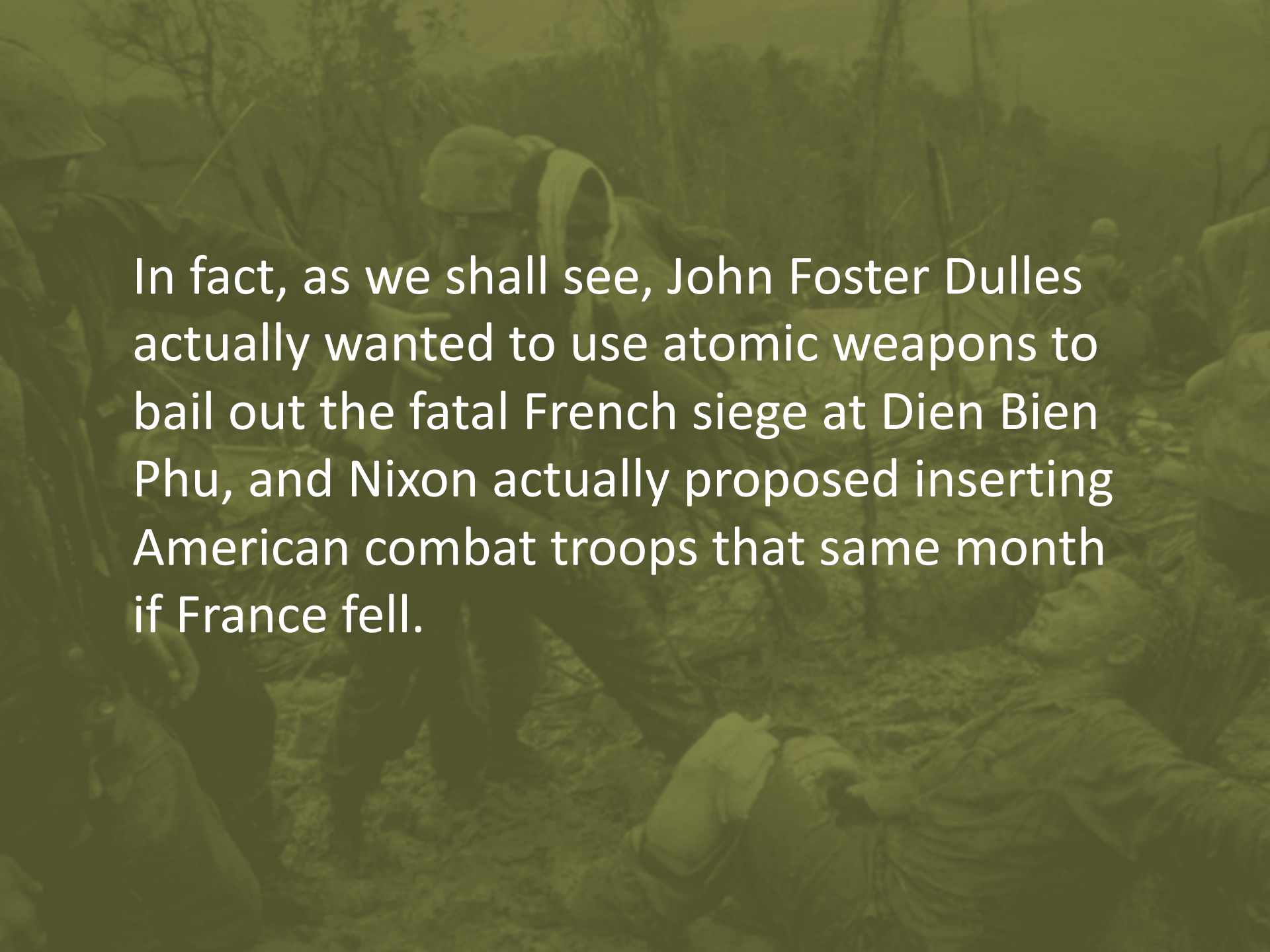
# The Four Men Who Got Us into Vietnam





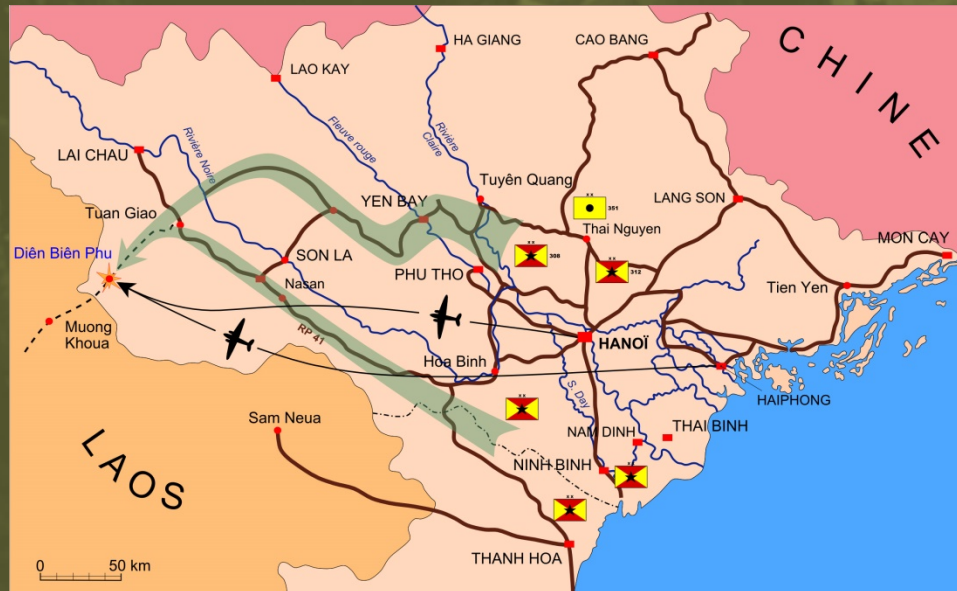
[John Foster Dulles] “We have a clean base there now without a taint of colonialism. Dien Bien Phu was a blessing in disguise.”



A sepia-toned photograph of soldiers in a jungle setting. In the foreground, a soldier is crouched, looking down at the ground. Other soldiers are visible in the background, some standing and some crouching. The scene is dense with foliage and trees.

In fact, as we shall see, John Foster Dulles actually wanted to use atomic weapons to bail out the fatal French siege at Dien Bien Phu, and Nixon actually proposed inserting American combat troops that same month if France fell.

# Operation Vulture: Dulles' Plan to Save France



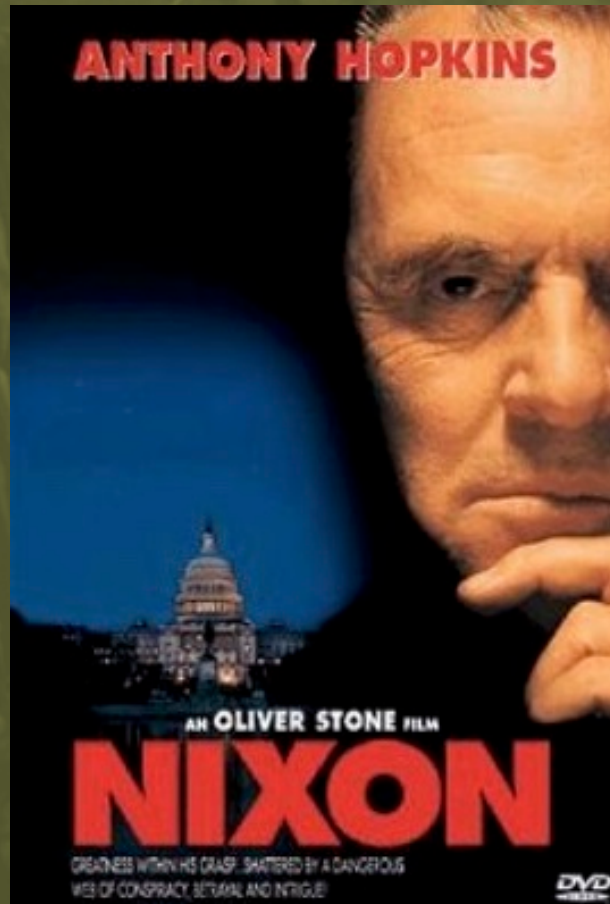
- ✓ 60 B-29's
- ✓ 150 jet fighters for cover against the Chinese
- ✓ 3 Convair B-36s to drop three atom bombs





In April 1954, Nixon said that if the French were defeated, the plight of the free world was desperate:

“In order to avoid it we must take the risk now by putting American boys in, I believe that the executive branch has to take the politically unpopular position of facing up to it and doing it, and I personally would support such a decision.”



When Oliver Stone started his film, only 3% of Nixon's audiotapes had been declassified, and only 15% of his presidential papers had been released.



But still, the *LA Times* got, of all people, Henry Kissinger to review the film.



## 'NIXON' THE FILM : Stone Leaves the Truth on Cutting-Room Floor

January 21, 1996 | Henry A. Kissinger | Henry A. Kissinger, former secretary of state, writes frequently for The Times

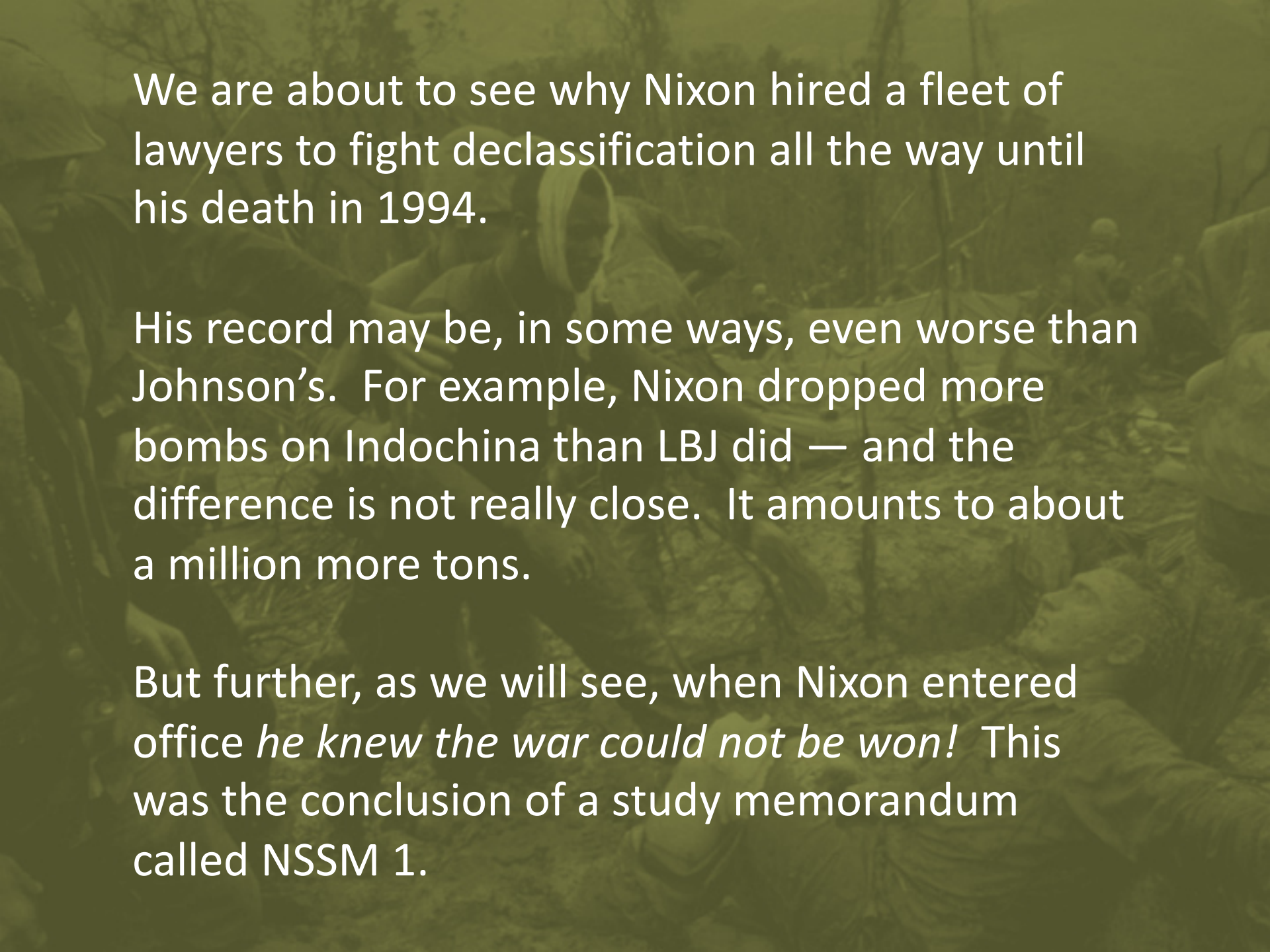


Los Angeles Times

NEW YORK — Oliver Stone's "Nixon" is disappointing and regrettable. The film is a disappointment because it distorts and misrepresents; and it's regrettable that a brilliant filmmaker failed to realize the compassionate portrait for which at least one side of him seemed to be striving. Stone is defeated by his inability to disenthral himself from the passions of his youth in the radical wing of the Vietnam protest movement. His characters repeat the familiar slogans but, lacking a context, they no longer elicit the same knee-jerk reactions.

In the film, Richard M. Nixon's policies are presented as the product of a disturbed personality--frequently inebriated and driven by a combination of inferiority complex and pressure from a shadowy conspiracy of Mafia, CIA, military and big-business figures. As a grotesque, the former president is deprived of the stature that would give his fall the tragic dimension Stone aims to convey.

Ironically, the truth would have offered a much better backdrop to Stone's intended tale of the fallen overachiever. Few presidents have agonized more deeply or meticulously over his decisions than did Nixon, at least in making foreign policy. Nixon's decision-making reflected a nearly obsessive reluctance to overrule subordinates to their faces. He preferred to hear disagreements one-to-one or, better yet, via memorandum. Nixon almost never conveyed his decisions orally to a group. If he rejected the views of Cabinet members or other senior associates, he would generally do so in writing or through emissaries.



We are about to see why Nixon hired a fleet of lawyers to fight declassification all the way until his death in 1994.

His record may be, in some ways, even worse than Johnson's. For example, Nixon dropped more bombs on Indochina than LBJ did — and the difference is not really close. It amounts to about a million more tons.

But further, as we will see, when Nixon entered office *he knew the war could not be won!* This was the conclusion of a study memorandum called NSSM 1.



1969 (after NSSM-1 was compiled):



[Nixon to Kissinger] “In Saigon, the tendency is to fight the war for victory. But you and I know it won’t happen, it is impossible. Even General Abrams agreed.”

Yet, he still expands the war into the B-52 carpet bombings and the invasions of Laos and Cambodia, the latter causing the fall of Sihanouk and Lon Nol, and the rise to power of Pol Pot and the deaths of about a million people.

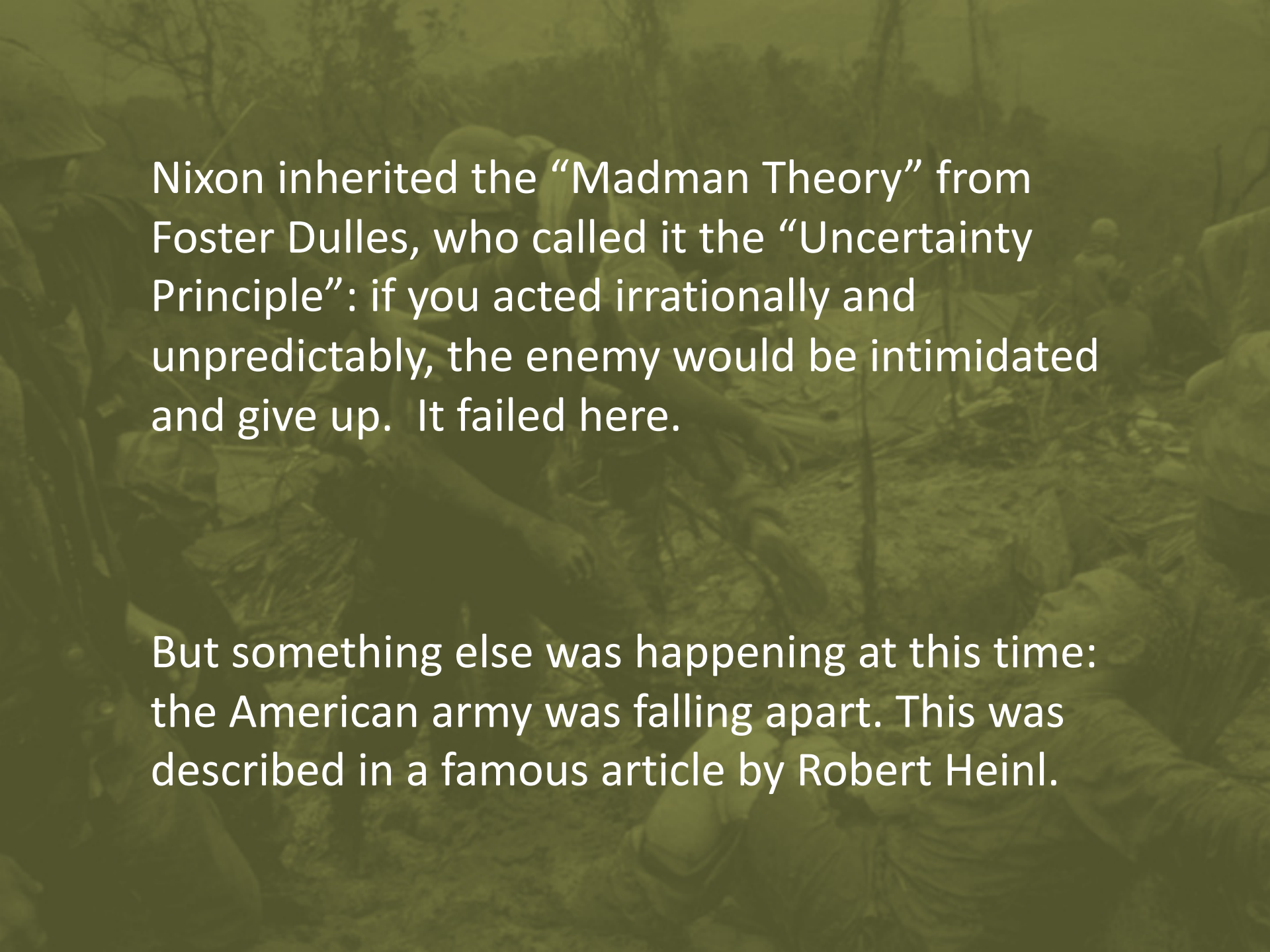


This was all part of the “Madman Theory.”



Kissinger: “When in doubt, we bomb Cambodia.”





Nixon inherited the “Madman Theory” from Foster Dulles, who called it the “Uncertainty Principle”: if you acted irrationally and unpredictably, the enemy would be intimidated and give up. It failed here.

But something else was happening at this time: the American army was falling apart. This was described in a famous article by Robert Heinl.



Col. Robert D Heinl



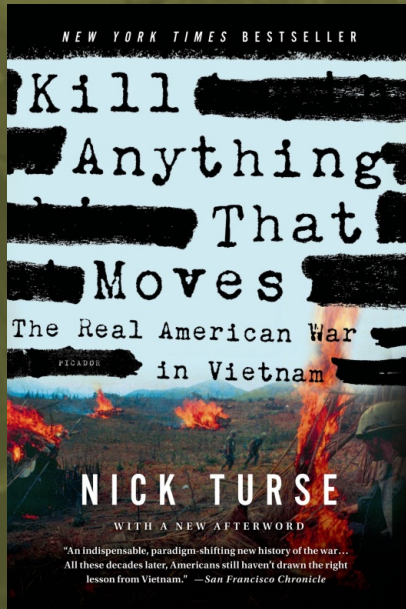
## Fraggings:

1969 = 96; 1970 = 209


1971 = 235 (end of year projection)

Some U.S. pilots refused to fly during the Christmas bombings.





Although My Lai was by far the largest single massacre, it was not an exception. Many smaller-scale atrocities were covered up and documents deep sixed.



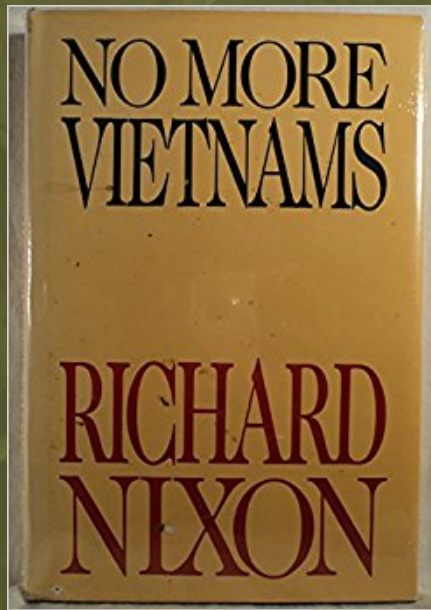
In spite of all this, Nixon still secretly planned a major offensive against the north in order to get a Korea style settlement. It was called Operation Duck Hook:

1. Heavy bombing against the north including cities of Hanoi and Haiphong
2. Mining of ports, bombing of dikes
3. Invasion of the north
4. Atomic bombs over Ho Chi Minh Trail





Along with many things, Ken Burns and Lynn Novick left Operation Duck Hook out of their 18-hour PBS documentary, probably because their film criticized the people whose actions caused Nixon to shelve the operation: namely, the October and November 1969 peace moratoriums and Washington demonstration.



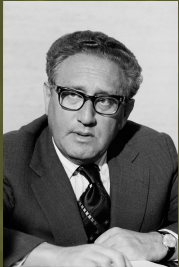
Contrary to what he says, Kissinger did consider the use of tactical atomic weapons for interdiction purposes, near the Chinese border.



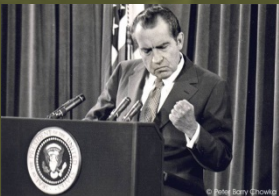
# During Easter Campaign:



[Nixon] Should we take the dikes out now?



[Kissinger] That will drown about 200,000 people.



[Nixon] Well no, no I'd rather use a nuclear bomb. Have you got one ready?

# 1968:



[Nixon] “I’ve come to the conclusion that there’s no way to win the war. But we can’t say that of course. In fact, we have to say the opposite, just to keep some degree of bargaining leverage.”

The end game became the Decent Interval strategy, Vietnam can fall after the USA leaves. In his China briefing book, Kissinger wrote: “We want a decent interval. You have our assurances.”

What was this decent interval really about then?



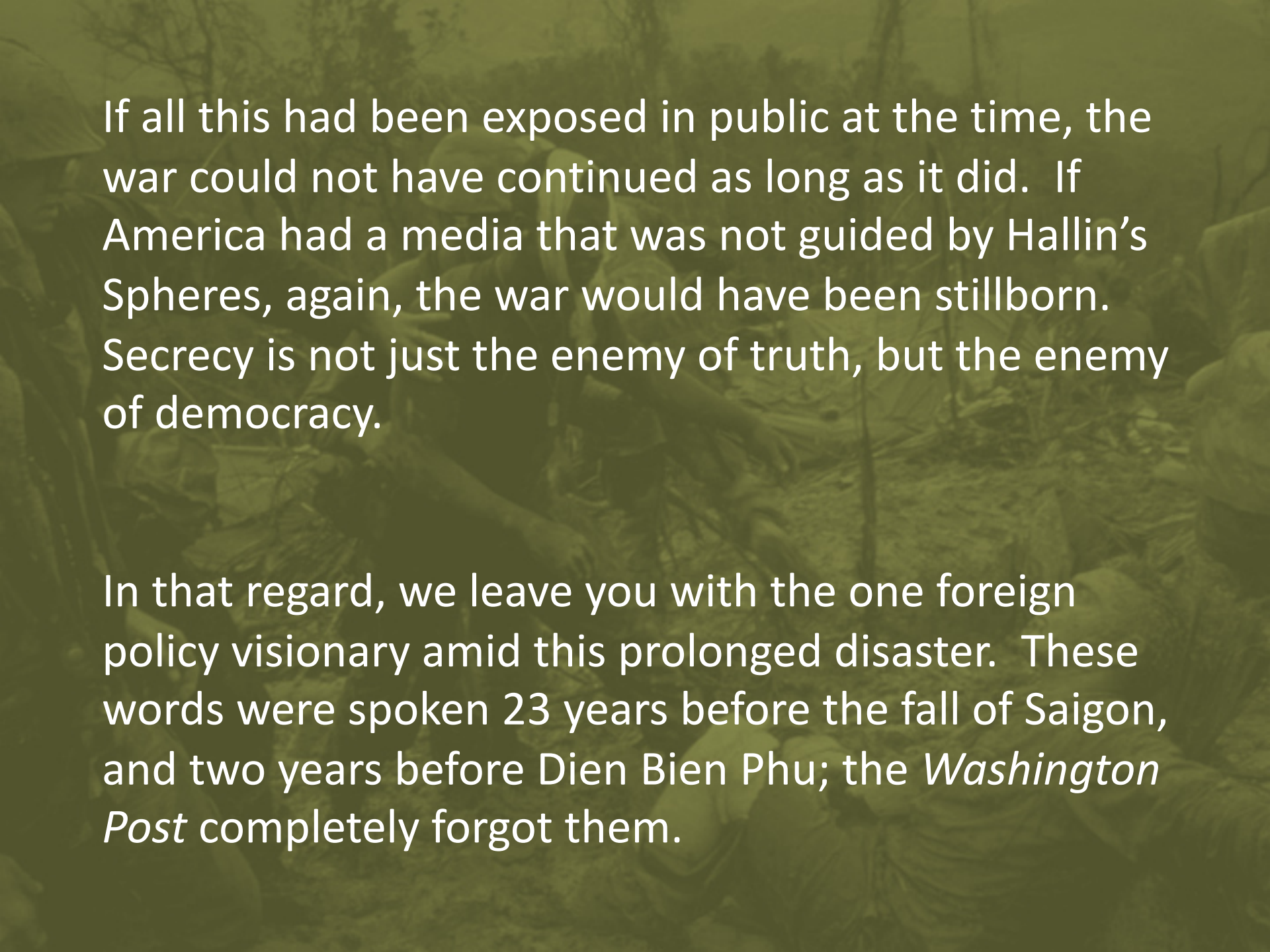


[Haldeman notes]  
“... won’t be the 1st P to lose war ...”



Henry Kissinger called an old friend that day and said, “We should have never been there.”





If all this had been exposed in public at the time, the war could not have continued as long as it did. If America had a media that was not guided by Hallin's Spheres, again, the war would have been stillborn. Secrecy is not just the enemy of truth, but the enemy of democracy.

In that regard, we leave you with the one foreign policy visionary amid this prolonged disaster. These words were spoken 23 years before the fall of Saigon, and two years before Dien Bien Phu; the *Washington Post* completely forgot them.

“No amount of American military assistance in Indochina can conquer an enemy which is everywhere and at the same time nowhere, ‘an enemy of the people’ which has the sympathy and covert support of the people.”

Senator John F. Kennedy  
(1952 speech)







Jim Garrison is properly given credit as being the first critic of the Warren Report to say that there would have been no Vietnam War had JFK lived. Bobby Kennedy said the same in 1967, and Arthur Schlesinger said it on the stand at the trial of Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo.

But there was one other person who voiced these doubts about Kennedy and Vietnam. And he did so before Garrison. Unlike Garrison, he voiced that view in private, but with a rather important person. That important person was former president Harry Truman. This conversation took place while the Warren Commission was active.





The Washington Post  
December 22, 1963 - page A11

Harry Truman Writes:

## Limit CIA Role To Intelligence

By Harry S Truman

Copyright, 1963, by Harry S Truman

INDEPENDENCE, MO., Dec. 21 — I think it has become necessary to take another look at the purpose and operations of our Central Intelligence Agency—CIA. At least, I would like to submit here the original reason why I thought it necessary to organize this Agency during my Administration, what I expected it to do and how it was to operate as an arm of the President.

I think it is fairly obvious that by and large a President's performance in office is as effective as the information he has and the information he gets. That is to say, that assuming the President himself possesses a knowledge of our history, a sensitive understanding of our institutions, and an insight into the needs and aspirations of the people, he needs to have available to him the most accurate and up-to-the-minute information on what is going on everywhere in the world, and particularly of the trends and developments in all the danger spots in the contest between East and West. This is an immense task and requires a special kind of an intelligence facility.

Of course, every President has available to him all the information gathered by the many intelligence agencies already in existence. The Departments of State, Defense, Commerce, Interior and others are constantly engaged in extensive information gathering and have done excellent work.

But their collective information reached the President all too frequently in conflicting conclusions. At times, the intelligence reports tended to be slanted to conform to established positions of a given department. This becomes confusing and what's worse, such intelligence is of little use to a President in reaching the right decisions.

Therefore, I decided to set up a special organization charged with the collection of all intelligence reports from every available source, and to have those reports reach me as President without department "treatment" or interpretations.

I wanted and needed the information in its "natural raw" state and in as comprehensive a volume as it was practical for me to make full use of it. But the most important thing about this move was to guard against the chance of intelligence being used to influence or to lead the President into unwise decisions—and I thought it was necessary that the President do his own thinking and evaluating.

Since the responsibility for decision making was his—then he had to be sure that no information is kept from him for whatever reason at the discretion of any one department or agency, or that unpleasant facts be kept from him. There are always those who would want to shield a President from bad news or misjudgments to spare him from being "upset."

For some time I have been disturbed by the way CIA has been diverted from its original assignment. It has become an operational and at times a policy-making arm of the Government. This has led to trouble and may have compounded our difficulties in several explosive areas.

I never had any thought that when I set up the CIA that it would be injected into peacetime cloak and dagger operations. Some of the complications and embarrassment I think we have experienced are in part attributable to the fact that this quiet intelligence arm of the President has been so removed from its intended role that it is being interpreted as a symbol of sinister and mysterious foreign intrigue—and a subject for cold war enemy propaganda.

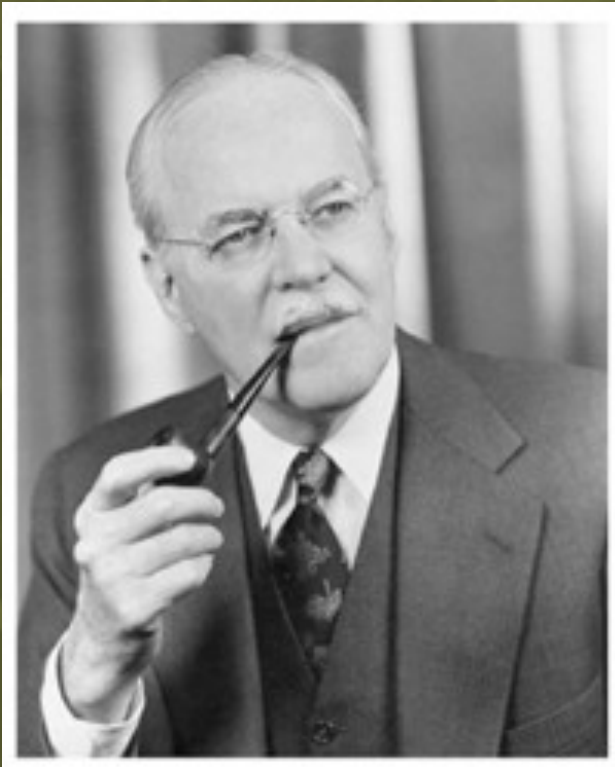
With all the nonsense put out by Communist propaganda about "Yankee imperialism," "exploitive capitalism," "war-mongering," "monopolists," in their name-calling assault on the West, the last thing we needed was for the CIA to be seized upon as something akin to a subverting influence in the affairs of other people.

I well knew the first temporary director of the CIA, Adm. Souers, and the later permanent directors of the CIA, Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg and Allen Dulles. These were men of the highest character, patriotism and integrity—and I assume this is true of all those who continue in charge.

But there are now some searching questions that need to be answered. I, therefore, would like to see the CIA be restored to its original assignment as the intelligence arm of the President, and that whatever else it can properly perform in that special field—and that its operational duties be terminated or properly used elsewhere.

We have grown up as a nation, respected for our free institutions and for our ability to maintain a free and open society. There is something about the way the CIA has been functioning that is casting a shadow over our historic position and I feel that we need to correct it.

In the spring of 1964, Commissioner Allen Dulles visited Truman at his home in Missouri. Dulles was upset about an editorial Truman had published one month after the assassination. It had strongly criticized what the CIA had become of late and stated he had not originated it to be such a cloak and dagger agency. Dulles wanted him to retract the essay, but Truman held fast.



Dulles walked to the door. Before he left, he turned to Truman and made a comment that, for the first time, brought JFK's name up. Dulles said that the late president had repudiated the false attacks on CIA in relation to Vietnam. This may be a referral to the famous Starnes/Krock articles in the fall of 1963. Truman had not come close to mentioning any of this in his editorial. It was all on Dulles.



One way to understand this bizarre meeting is to recall what Truman said to the *NY Times* in 1961, after Dag Hammarskjöld's death in Congo. He said Hammarskjöld was about to get something done when they killed him. He then added, "Notice I said when they killed him." In *Who Killed Hammarskjöld*, Susan Williams advances evidence that Dulles was in on the plot to blow up Hammarskjöld's plane.





Dulles understood that what Truman said about Hammarskjold was due to his consultations with JFK on Congo. He now thought Truman was going to voice similar suspicions about Kennedy's assassination. In the trade, prosecutors like the late Vince Bugliosi would term this "consciousness of guilt."





After all the sound and fury, this is Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) today.





McDonald's Ho Chi Minh City



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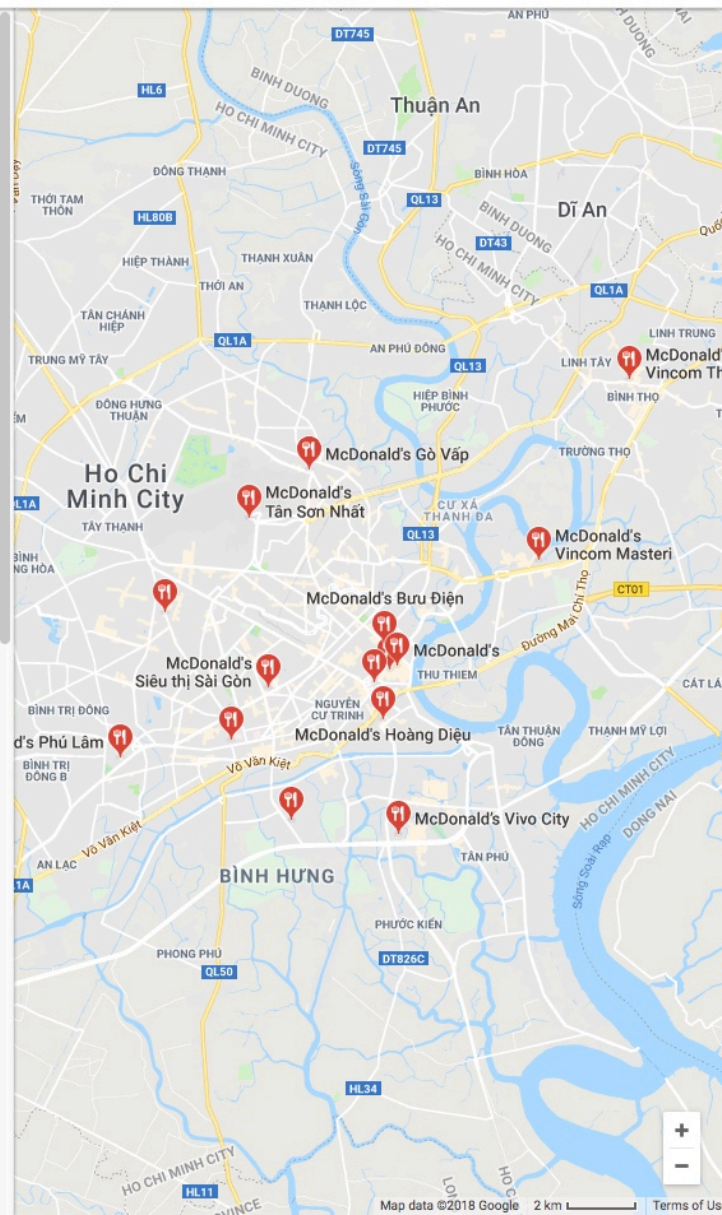
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