

Week 8 Forum

Fog of War

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Fog of War

by [Joe Escobar](#) – Saturday, May 14, 2016, 10:21 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Fog of War topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT – SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: Fog of War

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Re: Fog of War

by [Robert Taylor](#) – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 9:28 AM

Former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara’s statements brought a human element to the perspective of the United States government during the Vietnam War. It is easy for me to forget that the decisions made by the government are still made by people, people who have to live with those decisions for the rest of their lives. At the beginning of the video Mr. McNamara makes this abundantly clear with his statement that “Any military commander who is honest with himself will admit that he has made mistakes with the application of military power.” The effect this has on my understanding of the war is about the same effect as this entire class has had on my understanding, the war was complicated. In hindsight, with all the information from all the parties involved, its easy to judge every decision. At the time, people had to make decisions quickly with a lot on the line, and many decision were sadly more political than strategic.

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Re: Fog of War

by [Philip Highwood](#) – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 4:38 PM

Robert,

When discussing the difference between, mistakes made by Military Commanders, and mistakes made by the SecDef. Is often a huge difference. McNamara tries to justify to himself, and the American people, that any mistake he made was just a shoulder shrug; possible an "OH SHUCKS", more civilians and Soldiers died today.

The office of the SecDef. is there to run strategies, analize the what if's, ask the questions that our Commanders, (who are actively engaged in a fire fight) simply don't have time to answer. In my opinion, the office of the SecDef. failed the Soldiers, Marine's, Air Force and Navy during time of need. In the Military we do what is called a risk assessment, even in combat we analyze the mission and prepare for the mission through a risk assessment. If a risk assessment comes back to risky, we evaluate how we can accomplish the

mission with less risk. All missions have risk; however a good leader will evaluate and ensure probability of success before risking the lives of their troops. Now I don't know if the SecDef. ever did mission Risk Assessments; I am going to assume they just shot from the hip.

Here is my question to your statement about "decisions were sadly more political then strategic". What political gains were achieved during Vietnam, through the SecDef. office? Was "Agent Orange" a political gain?

Thank you in advance.

philip

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Re: Fog of War

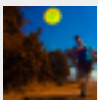
by [David Leavitt](#) – Thursday, May 19, 2016, 2:18 PM

I think that people need to be held accountable for their actions, especially when people die because of their decisions. But if McNamara had just said that he had messed up, everyone would have slammed him, and never once thought about pressure he was under and how tough the desicions were. I don't think he simply "shrugged" them off, he's just trying to say that he did mess up, but who knows if anybody else would do any different being put in his shoes. He didn't know most of the things we know today, since we're looking back in time.

The gains they were trying to get were to stop the spread of communism, to keep those people free, and to get the choice to elect their own leader instead of a tyrant taking over. (I mean, people have written whole books on the issue, and this is overly simplistic, but in a nutshell) We failed at this, but how could they have known that was going to happen? It seems all too clear to us today, but they didn't have the luxury of hindsight.

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Re: Fog of War

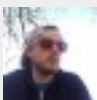
by [Adam Clairmont](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 9:36 PM

David,

We may have not known many of the things that we know now, but I pose a simple question to that. Why not? We had arguably the most powerful military at that time and yet we were unable to really “know” the North Vietnamese. If we had done more research into this topic I wonder if it could have greatly influenced our policies or maybe even the outcome of the war. We should have tried to understand, not just the Vietnamese’s general motivations, but found out truly what was going through their minds. Not just what they were fighting for but why they were fighting for it. I find it extremely difficult to analyze any of these scenarios without applying hindsight. But, I also believe that it is important to learn from our mistakes. George Santayana once said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

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Re: Fog of War

by [Robert Taylor](#) – Friday, May 20, 2016, 10:19 AM

Hi Philip, I appreciate such a quick reply so we have a chance to get a dialogue going before the week is over.

I dont disagree with your feelings toward the Mr. McNamara. I also agree with your claim that he failed soldiers, (although I feel compelled to point out that the Coast Guard played an active combat role in Vietnam as well) with all the first hand account in the Appy book this is hard to deny that he failed soldiers. None of this however changes my realization that Mr. McNamara is still a person, who has to live with these decisions. We will never know how much he regrets, or how much he is simply justifying to

feel better. Either way it I find it fascinating that their are still people alive who made these decisions for the war, and still have to live with it today.

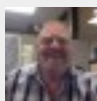
I don't know if what, if any political gains were achieved through the Secretary of Defense office, or Agent Orange. Maybe politics is not the best word, but for lack of a better one that is what I chose. In my statement I was referring to politics as in a lot of people involved in the decision for multiple reasons. Not every decision was made from a standpoint of military strategy. As we have read in the Herring text, many decisions were made because of pressure from other politicians, the pro war Americans, and the people involved in protest against the war. Now in pointing this out I am in no way trying to justify any of these decisions, and i wish "politics" were not such a large factor in the war, but they were.

After reading your bio i see that you are a veteran yourself, and i believe I recognize you from a persuasive speech class we had earlier in the year. I have a question for you as a veteran who possibly could have been put in harms way because of other peoples decisions. Do you believe that Mr. McNamara, or people in similar positions during the Vietnam War should be held accountable for their decisions? What if any punishments do you think would be appropriate?

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Re: Fog of War
by [Philip Highwood](#) – Friday, May 20, 2016, 11:43 AM

Robert,

Good morning, ahh persuasive speech, that was an interesting speech class to say the least; possibly not so much the class as much as some of the students.

I guess what bothers me the most is McNamara's tone, and the fact that he persuade's us (the American people), that although he made mistakes (SecDef office), he should not be questioned, as the war was foggy. There are lot's of particulars about the Vietnam war that we have studied; like communism, domino effect, Ho Chi Minh, Kennedy and LBJ; just to mention a few. I really lean towards this "Agent Orange" spray due to the fact that still today, we (you and me) are and will be paying for this decision for many years to come.

My thoughts on punishment, are this; the punishment should fit the crime! Saddam Hussein killed and tortured many people while he was in power, some were his own military commanders. He ruled Iraq with a sharp sword, and raised fear in the eyes of others so insure that Iraq was not taken over by terrorist/ Islamic groups. For the most part, he was successful for many years. We captured him put him through trial and eventually hung him. McNamara, never publicly executed any individual person, however, the blood of many innocent Vietnamese and Americans are spilled due to his office. Should he go to trial? I say yes! I also feel that any person who is still alive and had anything to do with the decision to use the mixture of Dioxide and a mixture of other toxins, capable of eating vegetation of of trees. Should be put on trial.

I also feel that Hillary Clinton should be on trial for Benghazi, and if all jury members say, without a doubt, she knew first hand and did nothing to help the situation. She too should be brought up at the vary least for murder! However she is running for President of the United States of America. Commander in Chief?

I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Philip

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Re: Fog of War
by [Robert Taylor](#) – Saturday, May 21, 2016, 10:33 AM

I agree completely that Mr. McNamara and other government officials suspected of knowingly causing harm to soldiers should be held accountable and made to stand trial. It is completely ridiculous to think that if a soldier makes a decision that harms people they are court marshaled and yet a Secretary of State is seemingly immune. We are told that these atrocities are just a cost

of war but I wonder if they would do a better job at preventing them if their own fate was on the line. I have alway heard people say things like “make every politician draft their children” and I understand the sentiment, but it seems more practical to simply hold these people responsible instead. I see the potential for this to become a slippery slope but their needs to be some accountability.

This brings me to the second question for the forum, If LBJ or Nixon were still alive and in a similar documentary, would they add to our understand of the war? I think not only would they add to our understanding, I don’t think it would be possible to bring anyone to trial without their presence. Not just the past presidents, but I believe many other dead government officials would be needed to for fair trials. I see this as just another opportunity to learn from our mistakes, and not let these kinds of issues go unresolved for so long.

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Re: Fog of War
by Philip Highwood – Saturday, May 21, 2016, 1:04 PM

Robert,

Good thoughts fine sir. When discussing the draft and LBJ it is interesting that he talked of sending the flower of our youth, however he had girls; who are not required by law to sign up for Selective Service (the draft). Imagine if LBJ would have had teenage boys, would he have been so excited to send the flower of our youth? Or perhaps, women are allowed to be in combat rolls like Infantry, do we then reform law to make women who turn 18 sign up for Selective Service? I have a son and a daughter, i went to combat in hopes that they would never have to see combat.

Here is another thought, should we reform the Presidential criteria, requiring military service to be President? Should we as Americans require 2 years military service for all? For each year of active duty receives 1 free year of college?

This is a little off topic but I am interested to hear thoughts of others on this topic.

Philip.

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Re: Fog of War
by Adam Clairmont – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 10:05 PM

Philip,

An interesting idea requiring the president to have served in the military. I am not sure this would always be a good thing. During times of war absolutely. Having a military background would help the president to put into perspective what he/she was asking the men and women in the service to do. However, when in times of peace what would a militarily minded Commander in Chief accomplish? Not all Americans can physically serve in the military. For example, I have a hip problem that inhibits my ability to walk. I do like the idea fo a year in the service for a year in school though.

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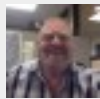


Re: Fog of War
by Amelia Hansen – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 7:19 PM

I defiantly see your point, Robert. I think that one must consider the position that Robert McNamara was in as well as the stress that he endured as a result of being the Secretary of Defense. While it is easy and simple for us to look back on the Vietnam War and criticize every move made during that time, when you're the

actual individual making the life-changing decisions in the heat of the moment, I honestly don't know if anyone else would or could have done any different than Mr. McNamara. I think that the United States failed to conduct thorough enough research on both North and South Vietnam and their cultures (as mentioned by Mr. McNamara in the *"Fog of War"* video – 2:35 minutes), which not only made it exceedingly difficult for the many branches of commandment (such as Secretary of Defense) to sufficiently do their jobs, but it also set the United States up for failure in succeeding their goal to halt communism in Vietnam.

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Re: Fog of War, before or after "Operation Ranch hand?"

by Philip Highwood – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 11:39 AM

Secretary of Defense, this position is second in command of our military; behind only the president of the United States of America. One would argue that the Secretary of Defense is an extremely powerful position and is responsible for any and all Military operations foreign and domestic. So, when discussing issues like, oh, troops in combat, it’s safe to say that the person, man or woman who is selected by the president to assume such a powerful roll, would have knowledge of any and all issue that might cause mass casualties; like dropping a nuclear bomb; or perhaps ensuring that the use of a known chemical like dioxide; (used in herbicide Agent Orange), would be dangerous, possibly killing innocent civilians and American troops. Affecting health problems for our Soldiers for many years to come.

Robert McNamara, talks about the “fog of Vietnam”, the facts that we all make mistakes, or have errors in judgment; this is true. However, if I have an error in judgment, and drive a vehicle to fast in foggy conditions, hitting and killing a pedestrian; most likely I would be charged with, vehicular manslaughter. Is it not a wise choice to slow down when visibility is impaired by fog, at the vary least, to insure the safety of you and others?

McNamara, talks about decisions made by him during Vietnam as decisions that we might not understand, and although may look bad now, was good then.

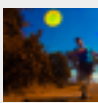
So, what was good about “Agent Orange (operation Ranch hand)? Mostly sprayed in the Demilitarized Zone and North Vietnam; is still today affecting Soldiers and Airmen, some of whom never steeped foot in combat or in Vietnam. As the C–123’s which delivered the herbicide spray, was still being used at least up to 1986; and as reported the after dust in the C–123 has been the blame of “Agent Orange” diseases. Also for discussion, surviving spouses and dependents of Vietnam Veterans exposed to “Agent Orange” and show symptoms or have been diagnosed with cancer, or cardiovascular disease; linked to “Agent Orange” can receive a monetary compensation.

We are still paying for McNamara’s foggy choices, ah hell who am I fooling he doesn’t even recall “Agent Orange” other then he knows it was used while he was SecDef. McNamara, in my eyes is no better a man then Osama bin Laden; or Saddam Hussein. McNamara is vary assertive with the facts that him and the office of the President made the right choices, even if the vision was blurred by the fog.

If, LBJ or Nixion were to make a documentary about Vietnam and their decisions of right and wrong. They of course would not self incriminate, and would only remember what they wanted to, or what was right in the eyes of we the people. I feel that if they were to make a documentary, we would have even more questions then before the documentary.

(R) Sergeant Major, Philip Highwood.

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Re: Fog of War, before or after "Operation Ranch hand?"
by Adam Clairmont – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 9:13 PM

Phillip,

A few very interesting and insightful points are made here. I enjoyed your analogy pertaining to the error of judgement. If you were to hit and kill an innocent due simply to impaired visibility and negligence on your part you are correct, you would most likely be charged with man slaughter which in most cases will net you at the minimum a felony and at least a 12 month stay in a jail or prison. For accidentally killing one person. I’m curious how many involuntary manslaughter cases McNamara would be responsible for when ordering Operation Rolling Thunder, or Operation Ranch Hand. Granted we are looking at this many years later with a considerably better viewpoint than the commanders had to apply at the time. Still, McNamara sounded in his interview that he was proud of what he “accomplished.” Also, stating that “if LBJ or Nixon were to make a documentary about Vietnam,” “we would have even more questions than before the documentary,” brings up an interesting point. People sometimes remember the best of bad situations or edit information to make them sound less of an antagonist. I’m not sure if I would personally go so far as to compare McNamara to Saddam or Osama but I can certainly see him as a man that used his power in a less that positive way.

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Re: Fog of War
by Philip Highwood – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 11:48 AM

12 Diseases Linked to Agent Orange Exposure

VA offers compensation to Vietnam veterans suffering from any of the following conditions, as well as their children stricken with spina bifida.

Chronic lymphatic leukemia: An uncontrolled growth of white blood cells in the blood, bone marrow and lymphatic tissues.

Chloracne: A skin condition that appears similar to common acne found among teenagers.

Diabetes: Disorders in which the body has trouble regulating its blood sugar levels.

Hodgkin’s disease: Cancerous growth of cells in the lymph system.

Multiple myeloma: Cancer of white blood cells in bone marrow.

Non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma: Cancers of the lymph nodes, spleen

and other immune system organs.

Peripheral neuropathy: Damage to the nerves involved with sensation and feeling.

Porphyria cutanea tarda: A defective enzyme in the liver involved in producing the red pigment in blood cells.

Prostate cancer: Cancerous tumors on the male glands that surround the urethra at the bladder.

Respiratory Cancers: Cancerous tumors of the lung, larynx, trachea and bronchus.

Soft tissue sarcoma: Cancerous tumors in fat, muscles, nerves, tendons and blood and lymph vessels.

Spina bifida: Literally means “split or open spine” and is a birth defect that may affect children of Vietnam veterans.

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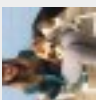


Re: Fog of War
by Amelia Hansen – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 7:47 PM

Wow, that is interesting (and sad!). Where did you locate this information?

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An apologetic McNamara
by Brittany Aldinger – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 5:33 PM

While Robert McNamara is apologetic and expresses sorrow for the lives lost when he was Secretary of Defense, he speaks with an assertive tone about the choices he made and believes that he had no other options while in the midst of the Vietnam War.

Robert McNamara’s statements made it clear to me that, for the most part, our military and presidents were all unsure of what Vietnam was fighting for but chose to step in and take drastic military action within the country of Vietnam anyway. This is most prominent when McNamara tells us about his visit to Vietnam, and the conversation that he had with the prior Prime Minister, who’s name I couldn’t hear very clearly in the video. McNamara tells us the Prime Minister exclaimed to him ““You’re totally wrong! We were fighting for our independence; you were fighting to enslave!”” (2min. 40sec). He continues to tell McNamara that he should read a history book because he clearly did not know that Vietnam had been fighting for independence for so long.

One of the more “foggy” or unclear memories that Mr. McNamara recollected was of the Agent Orange operation where it was sprayed throughout the country of Vietnam, killing soldiers and civilians alike. To get the audience to try and relate to his decision making McNamara asks “What is morally appropriate in a war–time environment?” (4min 40sec). He uses the operation Agent Orange as an example of what is right and wrong in the heat of war, and then states that he doesn’t remember if he authorized the operation or not, but that he would never authorize illegal action. It is unclear to me why that was the first thing his mind went to for an example when he is not sure if he was involved with the operation in the first place.

McNamara describes the term “Fog of War” as a mental state in which one can’t think logically or make appropriate choices due to the stress and pressure of the war at hand. If at any point in his roll as the Secretary of Defense he was feeling the “fog of war” then it would have been better for him to leave the decision making to those handling the pressures better than he.

I also found it a bit sheepish to blame historians for not being interested in what could have been.

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Re: An apologetic McNamara
by [Amelia Hansen](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 6:35 PM

I noticed Mr. McNamara's assertive tone in the interview as well, which instantly struck me as odd considering that he was discussing his remorse towards the lives lost during his time as Secretary of Defense. But as I continued the video, I began to understand his position to some extent. I had to remind myself to put myself in his shoes and try to understand things from his point of view. From what I have read about Mr. McNamara, I don’t agree with all of the actions that he took regarding the war in Vietnam, however, one must take into account the position that he was in as well as the stress and pressure that he was put under. While it is easy to look back some 45–50 years later and criticize every move made during the Vietnam War, when you’re the individual making decisions in the heat of the moment, I don’t know if anyone else really could or would have done any better. I think that the U.S. failed to do sufficient enough research on Vietnam and their culture (as Mr. McNamara mentioned in the “*Fog of War*” video – *1:11 minutes*), which not only made it extremely difficult for many branches of commandment, such as Secretary of Defense, to do their jobs, but it also made it rather impossible for the United States to get the “upper hand” on the war.

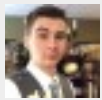
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Colonial Interest or Containment?
by [Delynne Frank](#) – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 8:27 PM

In the "Fog of War" video clip, Robert McNamara talks about Vietnam's view of the United States' involvement in the war. He explains that the Vietnamese were looking at the U.S. in the same way they had the French. They believed our presence in Vietnam had to do with colonial interest and that we were going to replace the French as the colonial authority. These statements by McNamara left me a little confused. To my understanding, one of the United States' main goals was containment– stopping the spread of Communism. On page 4 of the Appy book, Bernard Trainor talks about the Indonesian Communist Party attempt to take over Indochina. Then, in reference to the U.S. he says, "We were on a holy crusade to stop the spread of godless Communism..."

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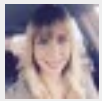
Re: Colonial Interest or Containment?

by [David Leavitt](#) – Saturday, May 21, 2016, 9:46 AM

That was very interesting. I think that one of the biggest things we did wrong in Vietnam, was that we didn't do enough research and on their culture, and we didn't do enough propaganda. Because many of the Vietnamese had the wrong idea of what we were fighting for, we ended up fighting not only north Vietnam, but also much of southern Vietnam, because all they heard (or believed) were what the Vietcong said about us, which was wrong. In the end, and to win a war in a area like that, you really have to have at least a fair amount of support from the people, which from what I've got from the videos and books, we lacked.

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Re: Colonial Interest or Containment?

by [Delynne Frank](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 3:45 PM

David,

You make an interesting point about the U.S not doing sufficient research on the Vietnamese culture. I hadn't really thought about that, but I suppose doing so would have been to our benefit. Also, from the texts and videos it seems that the Vietnamese were stronger and more resilient than the U.S. had anticipated.

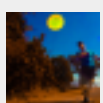
In the Patriots book (page 42), in reference to the U.S., Vo Nguyen Giap says, "But they made the same mistake as the French– they underestimated Vietnamese forces of resistance."

Your statement about the importance of having a good amount of support from the Vietnamese people made me think of Ngo Vinh Long's story in the Patriots book. He tells us how he learned about the U.S. from this father and how Vietnamese people called the U.S., hiep chung quoc hoa ky which meant, "racially harmonious country." He had this wonderful view of the U.S., almost in an idolizing way. However, as he got older his view of the U.S. and particularly American policy changed. He traveled through South Vietnam making maps for the military. Through his travels he witnessed starvation and did not agree with the creation of "agrovilles". He attempted to stop the policies causing all of this by going to the U.S. Embassy. On page 75, Long says, "I became convinced that U.S. policies in Vietnam were wrong."

i'm sure that other Vietnamese felt the same way as Long did, thus creating the lack of support from the people of Vietnam.

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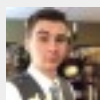
"Learn form your mistakes."

by [Adam Clairmont](#) – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 8:44 PM

The statements made by former Secretary of Defense McNamara in Fog of War worry me slightly. When talking about thousands or even hundreds of thousands of lives you should be working to make as few mistakes as possible. "Learn from your mistakes," he says. When talking to the former Foreign Minister of Vietnam he was told that the North Vietnamese thought we were trying to enslave them, that they were fighting for their independence. We knew that they were fighting for their independence, but to enslave them? Perhaps we should have spent more time trying to talk with the North Vietnamese instead of just assuming they were the next domino of communism. The fact the the North Vietnamese say that they were not pawns of the Chinese or the Russians is interesting. They had been fighting the Chinese for a thousand years so I can see where they would be hesitant to jump into bed with them. The thought during the war (or so I gather) was that the Chinese, Russians, and North Vietnamese were all in it together. I would be interested to hear things from the side of the Chinese on the war in Vietnam and whether they were just using the Vietnamese as pawns to indirectly attack America, if they were just trying to spread communism, or if they truly wanted the Vietnamese to be independent. McNamara's recollection of Agent Orange was a bit interesting. It was my understanding that JFK authorized the use of Agent Orange. Makes me think he is beginning to get a little foggy himself.

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Hind sight is 20/20, but we take that for granted.

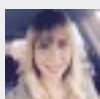
by [David Leavitt](#) – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 10:45 PM

It made me think about how hard it must be to make hard decisions in times of war. I mean, we have a tendency to criticize their decisions today, and never really think about how hard it really would have been, to make those decisions that could cause thousands of lives, or save thousands. I think we really need to learn about the other events going on when a big decision was made, to learn more about what the people in charge we taking into consideration when deciding. We very well have made the exact decisions if we were put in their shoes. He said that he couldn't remember if he had authorized the use of Agent orange, which makes me think that maybe some of the events might have been a tad foggy, but more then that, I think he feared people more then his memory was foggy. Like in the end, he wouldn't answer a couple questions because of what people would think. This makes absolute sense, because we don't know what else was going on back in the day.

I think anybody with first hand experience can add to out understanding of the war, but the president could add a lot of understanding of the war. Especially since he was one of the main one making decisions.

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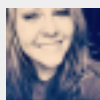
Re: Hind sight is 20/20, but we take that for granted.

by [Delynne Frank](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 1:27 PM

Absolutely, there had to of been many factors to consider when deciding when and where to bomb, the use of Agent Orange, the destruction of villages, etc. I think in many situations decisions were made quickly– maybe they didnt have sufficient time to think things through. Also, I'm sure at times they thought that they were making the best decision and later realized that it wasnt necessarily the best decision– like the toxic effects caused by Agent Orange.

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Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara

by [Amelia Hansen](#) – Thursday, May 19, 2016, 1:06 AM

The statement from former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara that I found had the most effect on me, was spoken in the beginning of the "Fog of War" video (0:00:12 seconds):

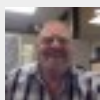
"Any military commander, who is honest with himself, over those he is speaking to, will admit that he has made mistakes in the application of military power."

I found this statement interesting because later in the video "Fog of War", though he addressed some issues, such as "Agent Orange" (the toxic chemical that was spread over Vietnam), he chose to "dodge" some of the other questions towards the end of the video, such as the reason why he didn't vocally oppose the Vietnam War after he left the Johnson Administration and if he in anyway felt responsible for the war or guilty. His answer for not replying to either question was due to not wanting to open up controversy. Whether or not that is the legitimate reason for disregarding the questions, he did, indeed, have some history with criticism and controversy during and after his career as shown in the "Patriots" book (pages 83–84, 152–153).

If former Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon were to be filmed in a documentary such as "Fog of War", I think that they could have added some valuable aspects to our understanding of the Vietnam War, for each of them possessed their own level of experience, controversy, and knowledge of the event that no one else will ever be able to truly answer.

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Re: Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara

by [Philip Highwood](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 9:34 AM

Amelia,

Good morning sorry this is so late. I hope that you took some time to read some of the other threads about Agent Orange and McNamara. When discussing, how he specifically compares his wrong doings and mistakes to Military commanders. The facts are this; when Military commanders make "GRAVE" mistakes they are relieved of command or sent through the military courts. McNamara and the office of LBJ made "GRAVE" mistakes and had absolutely zero repercussions; except having to live with it every day (the man in the mirror).

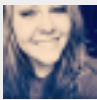
The facts are that the SecDef and LBJ and of course, let us not forget about Nixon; used toxic chemical on civilians and American Soldiers; that caused severe birth defects, cancer, psychological diseases, and death. We are still today and will be for many years to come, paying for Operation "RANCH HAND". Hold them (SecDef, JBJ, Nixon), responsible for their actions!! If we would have put them on trial then then Hillary Clinton would also have been put on trial for Benghazi.

I would like to hear your thoughts on this.

Philip

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Re: Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara

by [Amelia Hansen](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 10:37 PM

Excellent point, Philip. I wholeheartedly believe that everyone should be held accountable for their actions, especially when their actions involve the lives of others. However, regarding the reasons behind the lack of repercussions towards Robert McNamara (and others), I think that it may be because it was not Robert McNamara alone who ordered the use of "Agent Orange" to be spread across the jungles of Vietnam, it was the entire U.S. government and military. In addition, the U.S. government was not aware until years later of the severe and devastating side-effects that "Agent Orange" would cause for both Vietnam and U.S. veterans ("*Fog of War*" – 5:12 minutes). At the time, it was considered just another "war-time tactic" to give U.S. soldiers the "upper hand" so to speak. *Pages 138-141* of the "*Appy*" book and *page 189* of the "*Herring*" book both offer stories regarding the use of and the side effects of "Agent Orange". I also found an interesting video from *PBS Learning Media* titled "*Agent Orange and the Vietnam War*" that provides a short interview from a Vietnam veteran regarding the chemical. In conclusion, I think that it would be the U.S. government that would be held accountable for "Agent Orange", not just Robert McNamara, Lyndon B. Johnson, or Richard Nixon (though they were involved to an extent). No one at that time had the foresight to see the unintended consequences that would result from the use of "Agent Orange".

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Re: Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara

by [Mikayla Cervantes](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 11:54 PM

While it is not just McNamara's fault about Agent Orange, there still should have been some repercussions for their actions. I agree that the side effects of Agent Orange were not known at the time, no president should have willingly spread a disease over a country yet alone civilians despite it being used to give an upper hand. The government does try to fix their problems though by giving money to the families of dead soldiers that had died from Agent Orange because the military and government are now aware of their horrible choices that had been made. I do agree that the government should had been held accountable rather than the specified people because it takes a majority vote for any military action to take place and so it is therefore known that McNamara, Johnson, and Nixon were not the only ones responsible for the spread of a incurable disease.

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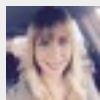
Missed Deadline

by [Mikayla Cervantes](#) – Thursday, May 19, 2016, 2:16 AM

Missed the deadline for initial post

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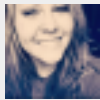
LBJ and Nixon: Adding to our understanding

by [Delynne Frank](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 7:04 PM

If Lyndon B. Johnson and/or Richard Nixon were alive today and had been interviewed about the Vietnam war, I think that it's possible that they could have added to our understanding of the war. However, I think that the effect that their words would have on us would greatly depend on what information they gave. Would they be forthcoming? Or would they be vague? They would have definitely given a unique account as their experience and perspective would have been unlike anyone else's.

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Re: LBJ and Nixon: Adding to our understanding

by [Amelia Hansen](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 8:45 PM

I agree. With each man possessing their own level of experience, knowledge, reasoning, as well as a great deal of controversy regarding the Vietnam War, I think that both former Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon would have had the ability to provide valuable aspects to our understanding of the Vietnam War.

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Re: LBJ and Nixon: Adding to our understanding

by [Mikayla Cervantes](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 11:47 PM

If you look back on it, every president that had to deal with a war did not deal with it well enough. Every president did not inform the civilians or the soldiers the exact reasoning behind the war, the majority of the time it was just a horrible excuse in order for them to not have a riot. I think from previous experiences with presidents, that LBJ and Nixon would have been very vague on the information they gave on the war. Every government official had their own reasoning for entering a war and none seem to ever give the honest reason behind their choices, which is also a huge issue with mankind because everyone gives an excuse rather than the honest truth. It would have been rare if the two presidents at that time actually gave information on their experience and perspective.

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