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Tragic Consequences of the Vietnam War:

After reading this week's assignment in *Appy*, I took a moment to reflect on the reading. Though I enjoyed the reading, there were some sections that caught my attention more than others did. Though not all of the stories carried the same tone, overall I feel the carrying opinion through the section was one of dissatisfaction regarding the war and war efforts.

The first story that caught my attention was the story told from James Thomas in the section *You Want Me To Star World War III*. The reason this story caught my attention was simply the lack of attention Thomson paid regarding the documents he was approving. The documents approved missions described as "Armed reconnaissance" with no further questioning allowed soldiers to fly over land masses armed with missiles and fire upon anything that looked out of the ordinary (Appy). The reading never mentioned how many targets were indeed valid targets VS how many targets were invalid. I can only imagine how many civilians were affected by the unguided attempts to bomb suspicious targets. I found this passage disturbing; I was appalled by the lack of further investigation regarding the missions. The reason I chose this section to support my opinion regarding the reading was because of Thomson's response when he learned exactly what he had approved, "I realized I was authorizing quite a bit of killing with no knowledge of what it was all about and it staggered me" (James Thomson). Though I am sure he felt remorse for his actions, in all reality he should have asked further questions to prevent the unnecessary killing of other human beings.

The second story I chose to discuss was from the *Trials of War* section of the reading by Helen Tennant Hegelheimer. I too believe this is an important section of the reading. Hegelheimer discussed how she was a flight attendant on flights of uniqueness. It was her job to make sure soldiers were comfortable on their flights home from Vietnam. She explained how she could tell by the demeanor of the soldiers whether they would be likely to engage in conversation. She explained she often tried to keep the tone on the lighter side, never asking about their experiences of the war. She explained she often had soldiers ask to help them practice their table manners, in a sense it was their way of acclimating from wartime back to civilian life. I chose this section for many reasons. First, Hegelheimer stated that when soldiers would depart the plain she made a special effort to not say good-bye instead saying, "I will see you in twelve months" (Hegelheimer). Hegelheimer claimed she could see fear and even death in the eyes of the soldiers. Knowing that many of the soldiers who departed the plane would not return did not denture her from having a positive attitude. Though she was not directly fighting the war, she was affected with the knowledge that she may have been the last to see them, she stated she had to be their "Wife, their sister, their girlfriend, and for those troops who had no one else...their mother" (Hegelheimer). This job was not any easy role, Hegelheimer often admitted she found herself and fellow flight attendants turning to alcohol to help with the discomfort of saying goodbye to those who will not return and morning those who did not return.

The last section I chose from *Central Highlands* by Dennis Deal. The reason I chose this section was that the detailed description of Deals experience in Vietnam. Deal's first encounter with Vietnam was described as "Peaceful" even describing it as being as beautiful as "A national park", suggesting a softening tone (Deal). A paragraph later, we learn of his horrific experience that goes along with the war. Deal describes

situations many would only experience through DVD's, never first hand. He witnessed his fellow comrades become casualties of war. Deals first impression of Vietnam quickly changed as he ventured through the jungle fearing for his life. He described a situation where he witnessed a soldier gun down, "Horrendous amount of lead coursing through the battle area. I couldn't see who it was through all the battlefield haze and smoke" (Deal). Unfortunately, this is not an isolated story. Many soldiers experienced this type of combat. Hearing from someone who lived through it with great, detail simply solidifies the harsh reality of war like environments.

I enjoyed the reading this week. I am aware there were many political reasons for the United States present in Vietnam. As with any war, there were unfortunate casualties. However, I do believe many decisions were made selfishly with a political agenda. This type of attitude simply cost many soldiers an unnecessary premature death. Though there were many tragic stories that would have supported my opinion, I felt these stories held more influence. My overall opinion regarding the reading was that it was aimed more at the tragic side of the Vietnam War instead focusing on the political aspects. I believe there is a lot that can be learned from this war, not simply tactical strategies, but also the political aspect of how not to make decisions.

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