

AN NBC NEWS WHITE PAPER

VIETNAM HINDSIGHT

PART I: HOW IT BEGAN

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VIETNAM HINDSIGHT

PART I: HOW IT BEGAN

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VIETNAM HINDSIGHT
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PEOPLE WHO WERE INTERVIEWED FOR VIETNAM HINDSIGHT IN
ORDER OF THEIR APPEARANCE AND POSITION HELD AT THE TIME

GEORGE BALL
Under-Secretary of State
1961-1966

MAXWELL TAYLOR
Military Adviser to JFK - 1961
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs
1962-64

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH
Ambassador to India
1961-63

DAVID HALBERSTAM
Correspondent - New York Times - Vietnam
1962-63

WALT M. ROSTOW
Deputy Special Assistant to the President
for National Security
1961-64

MME. NHU
Wife of Ngo Dinh Nhu, sister-in-law of
Ngo Dinh Diem

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER
Special Assistant to the President
1961-64

PAUL HARKINS
US Military Commander - Vietnam
1962-64

JOHN VANN
American Military Adviser in Vietnam

MICHAEL FORRESTAL
Senior Member - White House National
Security Staff
1962-66

ROGER HILSMAN
Assistant Secretary of State for Far
Eastern Affairs
1963-64

RUFUS PHILLIPS
American AID Mission - Vietnam

FREDERICK NOLTING
U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam
1961-63

LT. COL. LUCIEN CONEIN
CIA - Vietnam
1961-64

DEAN RUSK
Secretary of State
1961-69

GENERAL TON THAT DINH
Military Governor - Saigon
1963

GENERAL DO MAU
Director - Military Security
1963

MA TUYEN
Leader - Saigon Chinese Community

COL. DUONG NGOC LAM
Director - Civilian Guard

GENERAL NGUYEN KHANH
Commander - Second Corps - ARVN
1963

ACT I

MONTAGE OF VN PEASANTS
AT WORK

4 SHOT GIRLS ON SIDE OF ROAD

SUPER: HOW IT BEGAN

MS COWS IN FIELD

SUPER: REPORTED BY FLOYD KALBER

SCOOTER GOES BY

(MUSIC UP)
FATHERS ARE PLEADING
MOTHERS ARE ALL ALONE
MOTHERS ARE PRAYING
SEND OUR SONS BACK HOME

MONTAGE CU AMERICAN
SOLDIERS

BRING THE BOYS HOME
BRING THEM BACK ALIVE
BRING THE BOYS HOME
BRING THEM BACK ALIVE (Chorus)
BRING THE BOYS HOME
BRING THEM BACK ALIVE

KALBER (VO)

MONTAGE OF WOUNDED GIS &
VN WAR SCENES

This is the first of two programs
about this war where 32,000 Americans
died.

MONTAGE OF WEARY GI FACES

KALBER (VO)

SLOW ZOOM TO CU JFK IN
OFFICE

About the decisions he made as
President of the United States
about the war.

PULL BACK TO CORPSE OF DIEM About the death of Ngo Dinh Diem who was President of Vietnam.

KALBER (VO)

MONTAGE OF WOUNDED GIS About how his death and the decisions that led to his death changed the nature of this war and changed our part in it. About how we got there and why we got there.

KALBER (VO)

CU OF GI FACE

On January 20, 1961, the United States had 400 men in Vietnam. In November 1963 we had 16,000.

MONTAGE OF TANKS AND SOLDIERS

We had become partners in a war in Asia against Asians. How did that happen?

KALBER (SOF)

CU

To the degree that we in the media paid any attention at all to that small dirty war in those years, we almost wholly reported the position of the government. We had no more foresight about what that war would become than the men in Washington

who made the decisions. We did not foresee and we did not understand. Thus, this program and the one that will follow tomorrow night are for one thing, an exercise in hindsight.

KALBER (SOF)

MS
But we believe that hindsight is necessary. Vietnam has been an American failure. That is now generally agreed. What is important is to understand why, why we acted as we did knowing and believing what we did then.

KALBER (SOF)

CU
Vietnam has been called a quagmire into which we blundered not knowing what we were doing. It has been said that the system, the bureaucracy worked too well. It has been called an adventure in United States imperialism.

KALBER (VO)

M/2 SHOT OF SOLDIERS
DRAGGING BODY OF PRISONER

This is an attempt to see the events and options as they looked to the men who made the decisions that got us into a war that no one really wanted.

ACT II

SLOW ZOOM IN TO WHITE
HOUSE

KALBER (VO)

John F. Kennedy was President of

SLOW ZOOM IN TO JFK

the United States for 1056 days.

SPLIT SCREEN: JFK/
MONTAGE OF WAR SCENES IN
LAOS, CONGO, CUBA, ALGERIA
BERLIN. NUCLEAR BOMB
EXPLOSION

There is civil war in Laos, the
Congo, Algeria, the invasion of
the Bay of Pigs, the Berlin wall.

The resumption of nuclear testing
by the Soviet Union.

LS VN SOLDIERS IN
ACTION

There is also -- still small and
still far away -- a war in Vietnam.

DEAD BODY OF DIEM

GILPATRIC (SOF)

CU

I only say by way of comparison
that Vietnam was the terra incognita
compared to the western world...

GILPATRIC (VO)

CU/BUDDHA

...Our orientation had been principally

2 SHOT MEN AT ALTAR

in the countries forming the periphery
of the Soviet Union. And other than
the Korean experience the, not

MONTAGE OF MONTAGNARD
DANCE

many of us had the first hand

knowledge of the...the conditions
in Southeast Asia.

PAM HILL (VO)

Was there ever any kind of dialogue
about the advisability of getting
into Vietnam?

BALL (SOF)

CU GEORGE BALL

I think the President, er President
Kennedy had considerable reservations
about it, but at the same time he had
a very strong feeling that the communist
powers were in an expansionist mood
and he was not prepared

CU/JFK PAN TO
BALL - STILLS

to see us abdicate leadership or
responsibility in Vietnam.

TAYLOR (VO)

CU/STILL MAXWELL TAYLOR

I know of nobody, I heard of no one
in this period

TAYLOR (SOF)

MS

who opposed the broad goal, the

prevention of the imposition of a communist government on the state of South Vietnam against the will of its inhabitants. No one challenged that that I ever heard.

GALBRAITH (SOF)

MS JOHN K. GALBRAITH

The assumption as to whether we should stay in Vietnam or not, was almost, this is a shocking business, there was almost no discussion of that. And er, there were two reasons for that I think. There was first the unwillingness of anybody who seemed to be so weak, that he would say in effect, the United States should walk out of a situation or difficulty of this sort. A weakness was readily equated with you know, being soft on communism.

GALBRAITH (VO)

LS/NSC MEETING

The other and more important thing was, if you said

CUT TO MS GALBRAITH

let's pull out,

2 SHOT McNAMARA/JOHNSON

this is a hopeless situation,

MCU JFK/STILL

then you

MS RUSK/STILL

excluded yourself from all further
discussion. "Well, don't get

MS GALBRAITH/STILL

Galbraith into that discussion he has
taken a way-out position. He's wild,
he just said

ZOOM IN TO CU/GALBRAITH

we should pull out, so he's a waste
of time."

SOLDIERS ACTION
SCENES

KALBER (VO)

Thus, as the new administration begins
to consider what to do in Vietnam,

VC CAPTURE

no one considers whether the United
States should be there at all.

PAN ARVN

There is no examination of the nature
of the war of the government we are
supporting, of the

SOLDIERS CAPTURE VC

roots of the insurgency against it.

MONTAGE/SV PEASANT FACES/
ANGUISH

We assume that Vietnam is our
responsibility and that we should be

there.

KALBER (VO)

PAN DOWN FROM CAPITOL
BLDG.

The commitment in Southeast Asia goes back to the decision of President Truman to support the return of the French to Indochina after World War II.

MS TRAVEL SHOT CAR
ENTERING GATE

In its name President Eisenhower came close to ordering a nuclear strike to save Dien Bien Phu.

IKE GREETES JFK

In its name we pay 78% of Vietnam's military budget.

Now Eisenhower passes the commitment on to John F. Kennedy,

MS/IKE & JFK

as it was passed on to him.

PULL BACK FROM FLAG
PAN CAPITOL BLDG.

No one questions it. This is the time of the bi-partisan foreign policy. The men who are leaving and the

MS/RUSK TRAVEL SHOT

men who are coming in share the

MS/MCNAMARA TRAVEL SHOT

same beliefs and experiences.

MS CAPITOL BLDG.

MS IKE & JFK

GILPATRIC (VO)

At that time the view within the administration was conditioned by two principal factors. One was the Korean experience in which a number of

MS GILPATRIC

GILPATRIC (SOF)

us had participated: Dean Rusk, myself, Alexis Johnson, Max Taylor and others. The second condition which affected us all was the, the Khrushchev speech on national liberation in January, early January of 1961, which indicated to us that the Soviet Union was going to press the expansion of communist power world-wide, principally by means of wars of national liberation.

MONTAGE OF ARVN ACTION
SHOTS

KALBER (VO)

In Vietnam there is such a war. Khrushchev's words have a strong impact on Kennedy. They shape his thinking about Vietnam. In fact, Khrushchev does not intend to fight a war there.

he is responding to Peking's challenge to his leadership. But Kennedy does not know this. In Vietnam he sees the United State as the defender of a free nation menaced by communist insurgency. This is not how Vietnam looks to some in the field.

HALBERSTAM (VO)

ARVN ACTION SHOTS

What you had in South Vietnam was essentially a feudal society coming

PAN DEAD VC BODY

apart, this was really a kind of dying ember. The...this was the end of a country which had been touched by revolution.

KALBER (VO)

MS/STILL

David Halberstam reported the war for the New York Times. He has continued to study that period and is writing a book about it.

HALBERSTAM (SOF)

CU DAVID HALBERSTAM

And we were trying to do was invent a non-communist er, anti-colonialist nationalism. And the only problem was that no such thing existed.

KALBER (VO)

PAN OF VN CHILDREN FACES

What does exist is a nation created by an agreement among the great powers at Geneva.

KALBER (VO)

TRAVEL SHOT DIEM REVIEWING TROOPS

At its head is Ngo Dinh Diem, chosen with United States assistance in 1954. He is shy, withdrawn, ascetic, a stubborn man, proud, suspicious, a deeply religious Catholic in a Buddhist country.

MS DIEM

In 7 years he has suppressed all opposition. With

MS NOLTING & VN OFFICIAL

our support he has refused to hold the elections

CU DIEM

agreed to at Geneva.

KALBER (VO)

LS AIR DROP & PEASANTS COLLECTING PACKAGES

One of the first things Kennedy learns is that Diem is losing the war. Gen. Edward Lansdale, a Veteran of Indochina, our best expert on guerilla war, the man who helped beat the Huks in the Phillipines,

has just been in Vietnam.

MCU LANSDALE STILL

KALBER (VO)

CU

He has written a secret report.

It is one of the first things

Kennedy sees when he becomes President.

MS ROSTOW STILL

Walt Rostow brings it to him

ROSTOW (VO)

I said I had a memo that I thought
the President should read.

ROSTOW (SOF)

MS WALT ROSTOW

President Kennedy told me he only
had a half-hour that day, he had
another appointment and that did
I still want him to read it then?
I said yes sir, all of it, yes sir.

PAN FROM PAPER TO
JFK FACE & ZOOM IN
TO XCU

And he er, read it through. He could
read quickly and retentively,
and he looked up and said this is
the worst one we've got, isn't it?

CU JFK & ZOOM IN TO XCU

And he said, you know, Eisenhower never mentioned Vietnam, we talked about Laos but never Vietnam.

MLS SHRIVERS AT GALA

KALBER (VO)

MLS OF NEW MEN ARRIVING AT GALA:
(JOHNSON, McNAMARA, RFK AND WIVES)

In January 1961 new men take power. they are a generation who believe American know-how can solve any problem, manage any crisis. They believe in what Dean Rusk calls "our enormous capacity to shape the course of events".

GALBRAITH (SOF)

CU GALBRAITH

This was a period in our history when reputations were being made in foreign policy.

MS JFK INAUGURAL CROWD

A goodly number of people were saying, now if I'm...I'm just associated with the right crisis at the right time, the right association with the Pentagon, the right approach to military force, I will be the great man that nobody but my wife ever suspected me of being

MS TRAVEL SHOT JACKIE
AT INAUGURAL BALL

before, and so there was an enthusiasm
for crises.

LS OF INAUGURAL BALL

KENNEDY (VO)

Let the word go forth

LS OF INAUGURATION

from this time and place to friend
and foe alike that

JFK (SOF)

MS JFK AT PODIUM

the torch has been passed to a new
generation of Americans...

KALBER (VO)

MS JFK

John F. Kennedy is a man caught between
two times. Between old myths and new
realities. He opposed the French in
Vietnam. He opposed sending United
States troops.

LS OF INAUGURAL CROWD

He said it was hard to fight a war
where the enemy was not seen as the
enemy,

PAN CROWD

yet now he sees himself in a global
conflict with communism. And Vietnam
is a part of that conflict.

KENNEDY (SOF)

PAN CROWD TO REAR OF JFK

...to which we are committed today
at home and around the world.

APPLAUSE

KENNEDY (SOF)

MS

Let every nation know whether it
wishes us well or ill, that we shall
pay any price, bear any burden, meet
any hardship, support any friend,
oppose any foe to assure the survival
and the success of liberty.

FREEZE JFK

SUPER TITLE: VIETNAM HINDSIGHT

ACT III

SHOTS OF INAUGURAL SCENE
PULL BACK FROM JFK AT
LECTERN

MS

KENNEDY (SOF)

In the long history of the world only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility. I welcome it.

APPLAUSE

MONTAGE OF CAPTURED
PRISONERS

KALBER (VO)

93 days later Kennedy has been humiliated at the Bay of Pigs. On the day when the last prisoner is taken on the beach in Cuba, Kennedy sets in motion a review of United States Vietnam policy. He gives the assignment to Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric.

CU GILPATRIC

GILPATRIC (SOF)

The first approach was rather tentative -- rather experimental. Witness for example, the decision of the President to appoint me, a Defense Department official, as the head of the first task force to investigate a problem, which, at that stage, was primarily political.

KALBER (VO)

GILPATRIC MS/STILL

Gilpatric is asked to recommend a series of actions "overt and/or covert" which in his opinion "will prevent communist domination of that country."

GILPATRIC (SOF)

CU GILPATRIC

The President seemed to me to be, at times rather irked or, distracted by having to focus his attention on Vietnam as opposed to the problems of the Atlantic Alliance, the relations with the Soviet Union and..and this kind of competitive contest with Khrushchev which, which fascinated him and...and a ...occupied a good deal of his thinking and time.

KALBER (VO)

MS TRAVEL SHOT
JFK PRESS CONFERENCE

Six months later the President is still locked in the contest with Khrushchev, and the small war in southeast Asia, which he sees as part of that contest, is being lost.

KENNEDY (SOF)

LS JFK AT LECTERN
PRESS CONFERENCE

You will recall that in my recent address to the United Nations General Assembly I

SLOW ZOOM IN TO MS

expressed concern of this government over the situation in southeast Asia, particularly on the attacks on the people of South Vietnam. With this situation in mind I've asked General Taylor with the wholehearted endorsement of Secretary McNamara and Gen. Lemnitzer

PAN PRESS REPS.

to go to Saigon this week to discuss with the President and American officials on the spot ways in which we can perhaps assist the government of Vietnam in meeting this

MLS JFK

threat to its independence.

CORRESPONDENT (VO)

Can you give us your appraisal of the conditions under which you might find it necessary to send troops in?

KENNEDY (SOF)

MS

As you know in the last two or three months there has been a large increase in the number of the forces that have been involved. There has been evidences that some of these forces have come from

beyond the frontiers and...Gen. Taylor will give me the...and the Joint Chiefs of Staff an educated military guess as to what the situation that the government there faces and we can come to conclusions as to what is best to do.

2 SHOT TAYLOR & ROSTOW

KALBER (VO)

The key fact is that this mission is headed by a military man.

PAN MILITARY SALUTE
TAYLOR

Former army Chief of Staff, former commander in Korea.

MS TAYLOR & ROSTOW

Number 2 man in the mission is Presidential adviser, Walt Rostow.

ROSTOW (VO ROSTOW (VO)

As of 1961

ROSTOW (VO)

CU ROSTOW

it was a war clearly directed from the outside. The Viet Cong and the communist party of South Vietnam was simply a part of the Communist Party of Vietnam which was run from Hanoi.

MCU

In my judgment without the role of infiltration and without the role of the leadership in the north...even in 1961 the problem in the South would have been manageable.

MS TAYLOR & ROSTOW
AT AIRPORT

KALBER (VO)

These judgment will be the basis for the report on the nature of the Vietnam crisis that Taylor's mission will bring back to the President.

CU TAYLOR

TAYLOR (SOF)

We arrived in Saigon at a time where... when the local situation, both military, political and psychological, was at a low ebb.

MS TAYLOR

And there was great fear in Saigon

3 SHOT-TAYLOR
NOLTING, ROSTOW

that we might indeed sell Vietnam down the river, so to speak,

DIEM AND VN OFFICIALS
IN PALACE

by a week or ineffective settlement in Laos. Next there was great discouragement over the course of the war.

MS TAYLOR & NOLTING
WITH DIEM

PAN OF FLOOD AREA

Finally in the south, in the Mekong

Delta, there was the greatest flood that had ever devastated that area in this century. So a combination of circumstances made it a very gloomy period indeed.

MS AMERICAN ADVISERS
WITH ARVN

KALBER (VO)
The United States now has 400 advisers in Vietnam. Gen. Taylor proposes that 6,000 troops be brought in to help with flood relief.

CU MME NHU

MME. NHU (SOF)
They started under the pretext of the flood which happened to us to send 6,000 GIs to help for the flood. We were amazed...of course we said, Oh this is very good...this is very nice of you to help us, but do you not think it is a little too much?

MCU ROSTOW

ROSTOW (SOF)
What we proposed essentially was one, a system of advisers...it would run from the palace down to the villages to help strengthen the military and civil administration of the country. Two quite a lot of hardware that would

help, the most notable being, the development of aircraft units...air... airforce units for the South Vietnamese and helicopters.

MONTAGE OF AM
HARDWARE AND EQUIPMENT
ON DOCK

In addition we proposed that a unit... an American unit be put in at that time for several purposes, one of them being to strengthen morale and symbolize the seriousness of our commitment, er, to South Vietnam. The second was as a reserve force and third we wanted it to be an engineering, engineering unit that could help with the flood and when the flood was over, they could build roads, airfields, and do other logistical jobs.

PAN PILE UP ON DOCK
AREA

FREED (VO)

MS ROSTOW

There's no doubt in your mind that er, if the situation got bad enough, or even as it existed then, there might be need for American units who would actually have to do fighting...?

ROSTOW (SOF)

MS

That is right.

TAYLOR (SOF)

MS TAYLOR

I thought to bring the forces in rather underlining, underscoring this task, the flood task...was good from many points of view. Good, good news to the South Vietnamese, a humanitarian motion, er, motive of er, genuine importance and also when the flood was over if indeed by that time we had discovered that...that the presence of our forces didn't have the effect that we had expected then we had a good reason to withdraw them.

PAN DOWN FROM JFK
TO DESK

We'd say they came...we...we repaired flood damage and then went home. So it gave us an out if you want to put it that way

PAN UP TO MS JFK

which I thought had considerable... might have considerable value.

KALBER (VO)

MS JFK & PULL BACK

Not all the advice Kennedy gets supports Gen. Taylor's recommendations.

GALBRAITH (VO)

LS JFK

I was mostly horrified by the proposal that we send in troops into the delta.

CU GALBRAITH

GALBRAITH (SOF)

This seemed to me to be such a fraudulent suggestion that there was no chance of it washing, but also it meant that we would from that point on have a military commitment there.

MS GEORGE BALL

BALL (SOF)

I talked with Secretary McNamara, I talked with Secretary Rusk. I told them that I thought that the acceptance of the recommendations of the Taylor/Rostow report could very well lead to the commitment of forces to Asia...in fact I said that in my view if we went down this road we might find ourselves with 300,000 men in 5 years time in the jungles and paddies of South Vietnam. They didn't agree with me. I then indicated that I wanted to discuss this with President Kennedy which I did.

ZOOM IN TO XCU JFK

KALBER (VO)

The President listens to Ball's prediction and then he says, "you're crazier than hell."

MLS JFK & MILITARY
LEADERS AT FT. BRAGG

SCHLESINGER (VO)

President Kennedy said to me one

afternoon they want a force of American troops out there. They say it is necessary in order to restore confidence. But the President went on, it will be just like Berlin.

SCHLESINGER (SOF)

CU ARTHUR SCHLESINGER

Troops will march in and in 4 days everyone will have forgotten, then we will be told we will have to send in more troops. It's like taking a drink, the effect wears off and then you have to take another.

MLS JFK AT FT. BRAGG

KALBER (VO)

The President is at Fort Bragg to review the 82nd Airborne.

PAN FT. BRAGG AREA

He has decided to send helicopters to Vietnam. He will send 300 more advisers even though this violates the Geneva agreement.

3 SHOT BOMBERS

In the end Kennedy does not follow Gen. Taylor's recommendation.

MONTAGE OF FT. BRAGG
DISPLAY

He does not send combat troops to Vietnam. But the Taylor report has a decisive effect on our Vietnam commitment.

MONTAGE OF GIS IN HAND
TO HAND COMBAT PRACTICE

It assumes the need for a United States presence in Vietnam. It does not ask, as Rusk has, whether Diem is giving us "something worth supporting."

FORT BRAGG
ACTION SHOTS

It commits the United States to a military not a political solution. And, on the basis of Gen. Taylor's report the President will decide that the price of

MS JFK

not committing ourselves to save Vietnam is too high.

GALBRAITH (SOF)

CU GALBRAITH

I heard him say many times, a number of times, now, there...there are just so many defeats, there are just so many concessions that one can make to the communists in one year and survive politically. In 1961 he liquidated the Cuban, the Bay of Pigs thing, Er... er very quickly and on terms which invited er, criticism. The military wanted to go ahead as usual. He had called off the hawks in Laos and gone for the er...negotiations in Geneva

and I remember his saying we, we just can't er...we just can't have another defeat this year in Vietnam.

MS HARKINS ARRIVES
IN SAIGON

KALBER (VO)

Part of the American buildup is the new United States military commander. Paul Harkins, a four-star general.

HARKINS (SOF)

MS PAUL HARKINS

Well I don't think that er...I ever had the experience to deal with the kind of a war I ran into in Vietnam. It is entirely different from the wars I'd been in World War II and Korea. It was a war over there in Vietnam that families were either mixed up in it, opposed to each other-- there was no way that you could really pick out the enemy -- they were all dressed in the same kind of uniform -- black slacks and black jackets and a straw hat. and it was very difficult to determine who you were fighting at the time I was there.

GILPATRIC (SOF)

CU GILPATRIC

General Harkins went out to Vietnam

and from that point on the regular military establishment er...er, took over and its thinking tended to prevail as against the what I might call the amateurs, who were...who were trying to be innovative and experimental and who, who weren't satisfied that er, that the regular army training and tactics would suffice in this new environment we found ourselves.

MONTAGE OF COMBAT
HELICOPTERS

KALBER (VO)

There are now 1364 Americans in Vietnam.
14 Americans died in Vietnam in 1961.

CORRESPONDENT (VO)

Sir, what are you going to do about American soldiers getting killed in Vietnam?

MS JFK AT PRESS
CONFERENCE

KENNEDY (SOF)

Well I'm as a...I'm extremely concerned about American soldiers who are in a great many areas in hazard. We are attempting to help Vietnam maintain its independence and not fall under the domination of the communists.

FRED RHEINSTEIN (VO)

SHOTS OF SOLDIERS ON
PATROL

4 days ago another patrol just like this one with the code name RED BALL moved down this road to a fly speck hamlet named AN CHAW. At 7:04 this hot Sunday April morning, in a war that isn't a war, where Americans fight but they don't fight, RED BALL is in trouble. "Flag Pole, Flag Pole this is Red Ball, we're encircled, under attack from all sides."

SHOTS OF GIS IN
HAMLET

Then James Gabriel said loudly to his radio, "we're being over-run," and that was the last ever heard from Red Ball.

MONTAGE OF HELICOPTER
IN SEARCH

The choppers recklessly brush treetops and slip through ravines. American eyes strain to find Red Ball and then a white spot under a clump of trees. You can't see what it is but you know.

SOLDIERS SEARCH FIELD

And then look and find.

2 SHOT SOLDIERS & DEAD RED
BALL PATROL
FREEZE

"Oh God" he said, "Oh my God."

SUPER

ACT IV

IV-p/1

AMERICAN MILITARY HARDWARE

KALBER (VO)

In Vietnam as 1962 begins we have decided to apply our technology to a guerilla war. We believe that if we give our side the right weapons, support them with enough technology, the war can be won.

MONTAGE VN WAR SCENES

What is hardly noticed is that in raising the scale of firepower we have widened the scale of the war.

2SHOT OF GIS WALKING
MS GI SMOKING

There are 5500 Americans in Vietnam. Not as many as his advisers have proposed. More than Kennedy wants to be there.

MS GIS DISTRIBUTING FOOD
TO VN CHILDREN

But he sees no alternative.

FREEZE ON MCNAMARA & ZOOM

In the councils of the President, a significant thing has happened. The Secretary of Defense, not the Secretary of State, has become his chief adviser on Vietnam.

CU SCHLESINGER

SCHLESINGER (SOF)
Secretary Rusk was somewhat skeptical About American Troop commitment to Vietnam. Moreover in a number of ways the State Department in 1961 disappointed the President when it came to...to getting things done quickly and effectively.

CU/STILL MCNAMARA &
JFK

SCHLESINGER (VO)

And I think both these things may have led the

3 SHOT/STILL
MCN, JFK, RUSK

President to give major authority
for Vietnam in '62 and '63

MONTAGE OF MCNAMARA
CU SHOTS

to Secretary McNamara and the Defense
Department. I think he felt that
Secretary McNamara had the qualities
of energy and er...

PULL BACK FROM XCU

decisiveness that this problem needed.

SCHLESINGER (SOF)

CU SCHLESINGER

I think it was a great error not because
of the abilities of Secretary McNamara
but because it helped the general
assumption throughout the government
that Vietnam was a military problem.

MCNAMARA (SOF)

MCU MCNAMARA

In these conflicts of which the present
confrontation in southeast Asia is an
excellent example, the force of world
communism operates in the twilight zone
between political subversion and military
...or quasi-military action. The military
tactics are those of the sniper, the
ambush, the raid. The political tactics
are those of extortion, of assassination,
terror and we must help the people of
these threatened countries to resist

these tactics by whatever means are appropriate.

KALBER (VO)

He believes in technology, in efficiency, in statistics.

He is forceful, brilliant.

He is convinced that American technology properly applied in proper amounts can solve any problem. He sees Vietnam as a management problem.

GILPATRIC (VO)

The tab management is often applied to McNamara. I think it's a shorthand way of saying

GILPATRIC (SOF)

that he addressed every problem, whether it was the closing of a base or, our role in Vietnam.

GILPATRIC (VO)

as something which should be approached in an orderly, organized fashion and he is a man of great neatness and efficiency of thinking and of effort and he applied that approach to whatever

PAN UP FROM BOOK TO
MCU McNAMARA/STILL

MCNAMARA AT AIR SHOW
SCENES OF AIR SHOW

McN ACTION SHOTS

MS McNAMARA AT
AIRPORT

CU GILPATRIC

MS McN ACTION

he undertook, large or small.

KALBER (VO)

MCNAMARA ACTION SHOTS

In the end it will come to be called McNamara's war. But that will be because the President of the United States will allow it to happen. For McNamara, Vietnam will become a testing ground for what he believes about the scientific application of the United States' power.

3 SHOT FIGHTER PLANES
LEAVING CARRIER

It will become an obsession to which he returns again and again.

KALBER (VO)

TRAVEL SHOT McNAMARA
& ARMY PERSONNEL

In 1962 McNamara is in Vietnam he is told things are going well. The Generals he talks to assure him with charts and statistics. Only people in the field have doubts.

HALBERSTAM (SOF)

CU HALBERSTAM

You had a marvelous system of lying that the American Military had built up. You know reporting really should go from the ground up.

HALBERSTAM (VO)

MILITARY HEADQUARTERS -
SAIGON

Well this reporting went the other way. It went from Washington to MACV Saigon and then down until Washington was in a

MS AM & VN AT CONFERENCE

way telling MACV what it wanted to hear and MACV was implanting down to the field what it wanted to hear and then

MS MCNAMARA ON INSPECTION TOUR

eventually the field would tell MACV what it wanted to hear if it wanted to get promoted and then it would go back to Washington and Washington would say isn't this marvelous...we're doing so well.

VANN (VO)

MONTAGE OF MCNAMARA ACTION SHOTS IN VN

I used to despair because Secretary McNamara and others would come here and would go out on pre-arranged; rehearsed itineraries and briefings, all of which emphasized the good points and skipped lightly over er...the difficulties.

MS MCNAMARA WITH AM & VN OFFICIALS

VANN (SOF)

CU JOHN VANN

We think that er, if we're given a job to do it's a sign of weakness to tell our superiors about the problems. We have that old aggressive er, can-do attitude and this er, this has certainly carried the United States to a position of

a world power. But there comes a time when sledge hammers can't work on gnats. And er, one of these times was Vietnam.

PHILLIPS (SOF)

CU RUFUS PHILLIPS

We fell in love with statistics and this was one...one of our real problems in Vietnam and I think in part this was McNamara's fault because he stressed that...and he wanted to quantify the Vietnamese war. Well, you can't quantify a war like that because it is about people

2 SHOT MEN UNLOADING
WEAPON

It's not about quantities of things.

KALBER (VO)

More and more sophisticated hardware arrives in Vietnam. Headquarters reports are more and more optimistic.

MCNAMARA DISEMBARKS

McNamara is convinced he has things under control. The crisis has been managed.

McNAMARA (SOF)

MS AT PRESS CONFERENCE

The training aids and the logistic assistance which is being provided by the United States to the South Vietnamese military forces are becoming more and more effective.

MCNAMARA (SOF)

The effectiveness of the U.S. assistance requested by the Vietnamese government and provided to the Vietnamese government has greatly increased over the past several months.

MS McNAMARA

MCNAMARA (SOF)

I've been very much encouraged by the progress which the South Vietnamese forces have been making and by the assistance which our forces have rendered to them.

CU. ROSTOW

ROSTOW (SOF)

It was limited progress. It was fragile. No one I knew was throwing his hat into the air at the end of '62 and early '63.

3 SHOT OF CAPTURED
VC

ROSTOW (VO)

But the evaluation I think of all hands at the time was that...

ARVN SEARCHING HAMLET

that the crisis of '61 had been surmounted and that they were on an improving track and without the use of regular American forces.

ZOOM IN TO MS VN
CORPSE

LS OF CHRISTMAS TREE

KENNEDY (VO)

MONTAGE OF CHRISTMAS SCENES

In this year of 1962 we greet each other at Christmas with some special sense of the

blessings of peace. This has been a year of peril when the peace has been sorely threatened, but it has been a year when peril was faced and when reason ruled. As a result, we may talk at this Christmas more confidently

PAN CHRISTMAS TREE -
LIT

of peace on earth, goodwill to men.

KALBER (VO)

VN WAR SCENES

It is an optimistic Christmas in Vietnam too. A war of national liberation is being contained.

ARVN BOARDING
HELICOPTER

ZOOM IN TO HELICOPTER

On January 2, 1963, 2300 South Vietnamese troops surprise a Viet Cong battalion of 200 men

MONTAGE OF HELICOPTERS
IN AIR

at a village called Ap Bac.

HALBERSTAM (VO)

Up til then the Americans had brought in all this gear and they brought their advisers and the Viet Cong force was fighting a guerilla war and the great frustration of the Americans

HELICOPTER LANDS

was...if we could only get the Viet Cong to stand and fight.

HALBERSTAM (SOF)

CU HALBERSTAM

Well at Ap Bac we had them trapped and they stood and fought and the ARVN were there with everything. I mean, armored personnel carriers, I mean they had a whole, squadron of them. They had the armored helicopters, they had the whole thing and the ARVN's best division, allegedly best division, the 7th division, absolutely refused to fight, refused to make the assault...

HARKINS (SOF)

CU HARKINS

We alerted the paratroopers, the ~~stack~~ troops of the Vietnamese then and they were dropped at Ap Bac, but the only landing place that they could...landing zone they could drop in, unless they landed in jungle trees and swamps, was on the wrong side of the village. So when the partroops landed and of course they were responsible for collecting their parachutes, by the time they collected their parachutes, and got together as a fighting unit the Viet Cong had dispersed and disappeared. It was just an unfortunate thing that happened.

KALBER (VO)

LS HELICOPTER

5 American helicopters are shot down.
3 American advisers are killed. 63
Vietnamese die. Half of them shooting
at each other.

POST BATTLE SCENES

HARKINS (SOF)

CU HARKINS

The Vietnamese soldiers had...had the
village by the next day. It was a pretty
good fight but by noon the next day it
was in their hands. They had disappeared.
But the Viet Cong had disappeared. They
had just fled down the little canals.

DAVIS (VO)

MS HARKINS

Then you would conclude it was a victory
as you reported?

HARKINS (SOF)

CU HARKINS

It was a victory in that it took a day
to win the victory.

KALBER (VO)

VN WAR SCENES

Whether it was a victory or not, we have
learned a bitter lesson. The army of
South Vietnam cannot cope with the Viet
Cong, with a committed guerilla enemy.

ARVN IN POST BATTLE SCENE It is trained for conventional war, in
American style. It has little will to
fight.

VN TROOPS BURNING HAMLET

KALBER (VO)

The war goes on but we have our first
hint that perhaps American technology
and know-how are not enough

CU OF VILLAGERS-
ANGUISH

that we may need social reform as well
as helicopters.

MS BURNING HAMLET

to win this war.

2 SHOT PEASANT WOMEN

BURNING

SUPER

ACT V

V - p/1

MONTAGE DIEM, NHU
& MME. NHU SMILING

HELICOPTERS IN AIR

MONTAGE OF AM
TROOP ACTION IN FIELD

MONTAGE OF INJURED
VIETNAMESE

MLS

MCU JFK

KALBER (VO)

Early in 1963 Secretary of State Rusk says Vietnam has "turned a very important corner." He sees a "steady movement toward constitutional system resting on popular consent."

There are now 11,000 Americans in Vietnam. American weapons. American helicopters. American advisers.

The fact is, the war is going badly. Has been since Ap Bac. The political failures of Diem are beginning to affect the war effort.

APPLAUSE

KENNEDY (SOF)

I can report to you that the state of this old but youthful union is good.

KALBER (VO)

Publicly, the United States remains optimistic. Some estimate the war will be won within a year.

KENNEDY (SOF)

MLS

The spearpoint of aggression has been blunted in South Vietnam...

KALBER (VO)

CUT TO CONGRESS FLOOR

Privately, neither the President nor some of his advisers are so optimistic

LS JFK/JOHNSON/
McCORMICK

FORRESTAL (VO)

JFK LEAVES PODIUM

The President's concern about the country... it was always there, but he began to have doubts about our ability to carry on the policy that we started, really as early as 1962.

GILPATRIC (SOF)

MS GILPATRIC

I remember well sitting in at briefings when we'd be given a map of South Vietnam, and there'd be cross-hatched areas and underlined areas, red areas, green areas, each one indicating a degree of government support or

GILPATRIC (VO)

control by the Viet Cong.

PAN OF DEVASTATED AREA

Unfortunately, very often the intelligence upon which those judgments were based were not very sound. So as we became aware of the fragility of our intelligence, it's shortcomings, we sensed that maybe some of our earlier

MONTAGE OF VN WOMEN
WEEPING

confidence was misplaced.

KALBER (VO)

Some in Washington have insisted the war cannot be won unless Diem makes political and economic reforms.

FORRESTAL (VO)

The argument was always made that to implement land reform in a time of virtual war in the country would undermine the political basis of President Diem's regime.

FORRESTAL (SOF)

MS MICHAEL FORRESTAL

So the net result was in the interest of stability. These reforms were never carried out.

CU ROGER HILSMAN

HILSMAN (SOF)

It was so ~~easy~~ for President Diem to put us on. We would send our Ambassador in and mention the need for reforms and the Ambassador and Mr. Diem would agree and say, well, I certainly will do that and nothing would happen.

LS DIEM REVIEWS TROOPS

KALBER (VO)

Diem does not trust Americans. He thinks Kennedy is trying to take control of his country. He trusts no one but his brother Nhu. He sees his army as a weapon to hold power not to fight a war.

SLOW ZOOM IN TO MLS
DIEM

He is alone. Isolated from his people.

PAN UP OVER ETERNAL
FLAME

CUT TO MONTAGE MONK
DEMONSTRATIONS

KALBER (VO)

On May 8 there is a confrontation between Buddhists celebrating the birth of Buddha and Diem's troops. Before it is over 8 Buddhists are

dead -- two of them children.
Diem's commanders say they were
killed by a Viet Cong grenade.

MONTAGE OF INJURED

The Buddhists say they were shot by
Diem's soldiers. Buddhists begin to
demonstrate in cities all over
Vietnam. Kennedy's advisers have
not expected this development.

FORRESTAL (SOF)

MS FORRESTAL

This is hard to believe in hindsight,
but my strong recollection is they
came as a complete surprise. In fact
I recall that it was very difficult
to find anyone in our government who
knew anything about Buddhism in
South Vietnam.

PAN FACES OF VIETNAMESE

KALBER (VO)

A month later a Buddhist monk burns
himself to death in the streets of
Saigon in protest against Diem's
government.

MS MONK IMMOLATION

Mme. Nhu says that all that has
happened is that a monk has been
barbecued.

MS MONK PRAYING

General Harkins says there is no religious persecution. Ambassador Nolting says the Buddhists' aims "are the same as

CUT TO MLS IMMO.

those of the Viet Cong."

LS IMMO.

HALBERSTAM (VO)

To try and understand what the Buddhist crisis was

HALBERSTAM (SOF)

I think you have to look upon it as a vestige of nationalism in Vietnam. And the Buddhists

CU HALBERSTAM

HALBERSTAM (VQ)

were untainted by colonial hands, by western language, by western dollars, by western er, er, fellowships, scholarships. They were a pure movement.

MONTAGE OF BUDDHIST DEMONSTRATION

CU MONK FACES

They were anti-foreign, they were anti-Diem. They were

CUT TO MS DEMO

deeply nationalistic and that was their attractiveness.

SLOW ZOOM TO PIX OF
IMMOLATION

KALBER (VO)

In the next 4 months 7 Buddhists
will burn themselves to death.

MONTAGE OF FUNERAL
SCENES

They will focus the attention of the
world on what is happening in
Vietnam. Diem will refuse to listen
to American advice. He will yield
nothing to the Buddhists.

MCU PHILLIPS

PHILLIPS (SOF)

I talked to him about the problem
with the Buddhists and I tried to
persuade him as a friend that he
ought to be making some conciliatory
moves.

MS DIEM TALKING

PHILLIPS (VO)

And I could tell that, you could see
a flicker, a sort of doubt go across
his eyes.

CU PHILLIPS

PHILLIPS (SOF)

But I think that he so depended on
his brother at that time that he
really had no other recourse, except
in his own mind at least, to believe
his brother Nhu.

TRAVEL SHOT JFK &
AIDE

KALBER (VO)

The President has been willing to allow the United States to compromise on the issue of social reform in order to press the military effort.

SLOW ZOOM TO MLS
JFK & PRESS

CUT TO CU

It is a compromise that goes against all he has believed in the past.

FORRESTAL (SOF)

MS FORRESTAL

I think he began...he had...he had developed a sense of about to get into a trap. I think the President was worried that events were moving in a direction which might be very hard to reverse, or even become irreversible unless he gave far greater thought to the problem than he had up 'til then.

SLOW ZOOM MS JFK
& ADVISERS

KALBER (VO)

On July 4 in Washington the President meets with his advisers.

For the first time they discuss seriously the possibility that it may be necessary to get rid of the Nhus.

PAN VN FACES

BALL (VO)

From our point of view they were extremely distasteful people

CUT TO CU/STILL

BALL (SOF)

and the totalitarian attitude that they displayed toward the er, Buddhist dissent was such that it was making the position of the United States a very unattractive one.

MS BALL

TRAVEL SHOT JFK
& RUSK

KALBER (VO)

Kennedy is now faced with a hard decision. What can he do about Nhu. If he does nothing, how long can he go on supporting Diem.

2 SHOT NOLTING &
HARKINS

In the opinion of Gen. Harkins and Amb. Nolting who are in Saigon, the seriousness of the crisis is exaggerated.

NOLTING (SOF)

MS FREDERICK NOLTING

I definitely felt that under the Diem regime real progress was being made in pacifying the country and in bringing under control the threat of the Viet Cong.

MS
PICKETS AT WHITE
HOUSE

KALBER (VO)

This debate as to whether we can go on supporting Diem becomes what McGeorge Bundy calls "the most divisive issue of the Kennedy administration."

CUT TO STILLS NSC
MEMBERS

The political conservatives feel our job is to help Diem win the war, not tell him how to run his country. The liberals feel we have to make him reform or get rid of him.

HILSMAN (SOF)

CU HILSMAN

The people in the State Department and the White House felt that a, it was insulting and demeaning for

the United States to go on aiding a man who wouldn't even listen to our advice and who was doing things that hurt the United States.

Second of all we felt that if... that even if we went on aiding him with the policies he was pursuing it was...he would very quickly... the country would be lost.

KALBER (VO)

In the United States public opinion is aroused against Diem.

Against United States support of Diem. Now the President's options are narrowed.

He is being forced to make a decision that will affect the survival of the Vietnam government.

BALL (VO)

It was either a question of pulling out of Vietnam at that time or having the Diem regime shape up

PICKETS BEFORE
WHITE HOUSE

MCU JFK/STILL

ZOOM IN TO XCU
JFK

CUT TO MONTAGE OF
PICKETS

BALL (SOF)

CU BALL

or, er, facing the possibility of
some other regime coming in:

KALBER (VO)

MONTAGE OF JFK/
STILLS

Thus in the summer of 1963 Vietnam
has become a major crisis. The war
is no longer so far away. The
decisions no longer so simple.

JFK IN OFFICE
FREEZE

The price of our involvement in
Vietnam has gone up. In 3 months
it will be the life of Ngo Dinh
Diem.

SUPER

KALBER (SOF)

MS

By summer of 1963 John F. Kennedy had begun to feel trapped by Vietnam. When he began his term in the White House it had been a small crisis. He had seen his confrontation with Khrushchev as the real foreign policy crisis of his administration. He had not wanted to send American troops to Vietnam or get involved there. But in his first months in office he had had a series of setbacks -- at the Bay of Pigs, in Vienna, in Berlin. He felt he could not afford a "defeat" in Vietnam, President Kennedy did not accept Gen. Taylor's recommendation to send combat troops to Vietnam. But that report led him to deepen a commitment to a corrupt and inefficient government divorced from its people and to an army without the will to fight.

MCU

We tried to save that government and that army with our technology and our know-how. With this began our decisive

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involvement in Vietnam. By the summer of 1963 Kennedy was faced with the choice of continuing to support Diem who was losing the war and who was a dictator who embarrassed us by his undemocratic actions. Or he could acquiesce to the overthrow of Diem.

KALBER (VO)

LS DIEM IN MOTORCADE

His decisions and the events that followed in the fall of 1963 are the subject of a second NBS WHITE PAPER tomorrow night: THE DEATH OF DIEM.

MS WHITE HOUSE PICKETS

CUT TO MONK DEMONSTRATION

CUT TO MS DIEM

CUT TO CU JFK

CUT TO MONKS DEMOS

CUT TO WHITE HOUSE PICKETS

PULL BACK FROM DIEM CORPSE AND FREEZE

SUPER TITLE