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Adv. 6:30 p.m. EST

Shoup-Vietnam Bjt 500

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON AP - Gen. David M. Shoup, former Marine Corps commandant, says "an aggressive military" encouraged the Johnson administration to wage war in Vietnam in 1964 and abandon long-standing opposition to involvement in an Asian land conflict.

Shoup, as head of the Marines, was a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for four years before that date, retiring in December 1963. He since has been a critic of the U.S. role in Vietnam.

Writing for the March 27 issue of Atlantic Monthly, Shoup portrayed "belligerent", "glory seeking" military leaders who succeeded him as competing with one another to have their services play big roles in Vietnam.

"In Vietnam during 1965," he said, "the four services were racing to build up combat strength in that hapless country."

Indicative of this eagerness, Shoup said, was the Navy's and Air Force's competitive attitude in the bombing of North Vietnam.

"The punitive air strikes immediately following the Tonkin Gulf incident in late 1964 revealed the readiness of naval air forces to bomb North Vietnam," Shoup said, adding parenthetically:

"It now appears that the Navy actually had attack plans ready even before the alleged incident took place."

The Johnson administration ordered the first air strikes against North Vietnam after the Tonkin Gulf encounter, saying North Vietnamese gunboats had attacked U.S. vessels in the area.

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WASHINGTON Shoup-Vietnam Bjt A215WX add: area.

Shoup decried the U.S. bombing campaign as "one of the most wasteful and expensive hoaxes ever to be put over on the American people."

By early 1965, he said, the Navy and Air Force were caught up in a bombing "contest" over the North, reporting "misleading data or propaganda to serve Air Force and Navy purposes."

Shoup said the Army and Marines "played a similar game" trying to outdo each other getting troops into Vietnam.

"Top ranking Army officers," Shoup said, wanted to commit forces for a variety of reasons, among them "to test plans and new equipment, to test the new air mobile theories and tactics, to try the tactics and techniques of counter insurgency and to gain combat experience for young officers and noncommissioned officers."

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"The Marines had similar motivations, the least of which was any real concern about the political or social problems of the Vietnamese people," Shoup wrote. "In early 1965 there was a shooting war going on and the Marines were being left out of it, contrary to all their traditions."

Shoup said the Marines for years had explored the idea of conducting an amphibious operation to solve "a hypothetical aggressor-insurgency problem" in Vietnam.

So Marine planners were seeking an acceptable excuse to thrust a landing force over the beaches of Vietnam when the Viet Cong attacked the U.S. Army special forces camp at Pleiku in February 1966," Shoup recounted. "It was considered unacceptable aggression and the President was thereby prompted to put U.S. ground combat units into the war."

In a matter of months, "the Johnson administration, encouraged by the aggressive military, hastened into what has become the quagmire of Vietnam," Shoup said.

In addition to Vietnam he cited U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965 in which the military's "contingency plans and interservice rivalry appeared to supersede diplomacy."

"Before the world realized what was happening, the momentum and velocity of the military plans propelled almost 20,000 U.S. soldiers and Marines into the small turbulent republic in an impressive race to test the respective mobility of the Army and the Marines," Shoup said.

"A small 1935-model Marine landing force could probably have handled the situation."

AG251pes March 26