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Admiral Says Viet War Was Wrong

Annapolis, Md.

Vice Admiral William P. Mack said in his retirement speech at the U.S. Naval Academy yesterday that most of the decision makers who led the nation into the war in Vietnam were wrong.

Both the Navy and the government must start listening to the dissenters within the military ranks, Mack said, because "if we are wrong again there may not be any 21st century civilization as we know it."

Mack, 59, who was assigned to the Pentagon from 1967 to 1971, said there were many intelligent decision-makers in those years, "but most of them were wrong."

"In those years dissenters were not popular. Most wound up either far forward in Vietnam or far to the rear in Iceland," he said.

"Oh, I said it many times in staff meetings and conferences," he said.

What was the response?

"I was told to be quiet or I'd wind up in Vietnam," he said.

Mack did go to Southeast Asia



WILLIAM P. MACK
He retired yesterday

in April, 1971. He served as commander of the Seventh Fleet.

"I am not advocating the overthrow of the principle of loyalty to command as all of us know it," Mack said yesterday. "There is no other way."

"In the future I hope some of you will be the best and brightest, but by all means listen to the others — they may be right," he told the few midshipmen who were on hand with numerous top-ranking Navy officials and academy staff for the change-of-command ceremony.

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