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This proposal deals with our first great military defeat. It begins by acknowledging that truth is perhaps the first casualty of any war. As Winston Churchill put it: "In war time, truth is so precious that she must always be attended by a bodyguard of lies."

But there is a question that must always be asked: to whom are the lies being told? To the civilians? To the troops in the field? This is standard practice in all wars; we should not be surprised. But what if the lies are fundamental to any understanding of what is going on and what if those lies are being told to the very officials who the country has entrusted to make decisions about peace and war?
OCTOBER 1966 - President Johnson, attended by scores of newsmen, embarks on a triumphal tour of Asia. In Australia the President puts his hand on Harold Holt's shoulder and says "I like to come out every once in a while to see how my prime ministers are doing."

The imperial tour culminates in Vietnam at the sprawling American enclave at Cam Ranh Bay. There the leader of the free world, surrounded by the awesome might of the U.S. military, offers a rousing metaphor to his cheering troops: "We're going to nail that coonskin to the wall."

It is one of those shining moments before everything starts to change. People everywhere speak of the United States as the greatest power in the history of the world. It is still the American century and no one is telling the President he need consider anything but victory in the jungles of Southeast Asia.

TWO MONTHS EARLIER, AUGUST 18 - Sam Adams, the CIA's chief analyst in charge of studying the Vietcong, confirms a discovery he feels sure will cause the President to reexamine all his thinking about Vietnam. The captured enemy documents Adams has just finished reading clearly show that there are twice as many enemy soldiers in South Vietnam as the U.S. Military believes. In his own words Adams becomes "a galloping Paul Revere," running from desk to desk, on the fourth floor of CIA headquarters telling one colleague after another about his alarming discovery. The implications are not lost on any of them.

Viet Nam is a guerilla war and all the experts agree that for every guerilla, there is a need for at least three conventional soldiers.

The entire logic of the war is keyed to the conviction that we are fighting an army of less than 300,000 Vietcong. Increase the number by 250,000 (or more as Adams' study indicated) and you suddenly have to find at least another 3/4 of a million conventional soldiers to combat them.

It was all overwhelmingly clear to Adams. He had come across the most significant intelligence discovery since World War II. The captured enemy documents proved that we were fighting a far larger war than anyone in authority had imagined. Now the President, the Congress, the American people would have to make a choice: either escalate dramatically or get out.

Adams' figures were correct and the CIA accepted their legitimacy. But they were not sent on to the President or made available to Congress. In the year and a half that followed Adams' discovery, American troop levels in Viet Nam went from 286,000 to 500,000, and all along the way the American public was repeatedly assured that the enemy was on the ropes and victory just around the corner.

The story of Sam Adams and the suppression of the CIA's intelligence findings is not widely known, but much of it can be found on the record. What is not known at all -- and what would constitute the primary focus
of this proposed documentary, is the story of how the U.S. Military command in Vietnam entered into an elaborate conspiracy to deceive Washington and the American public as to the nature and size of the enemy we were fighting.

This is, of course, the most serious of accusations, suggesting that a number of very high officials - General Westmoreland included - participated in a conspiracy that robbed this country of the ability to make critical judgements about its most vital security interests during a time of war.

The following history has been passed on to me on a confidential basis and should be kept among ourselves.
THE CONSPIRACY

MID MAY 1967 - MACV Headquarters, Saigon. General Westmoreland arrives for a briefing on the state of the Viet Cong. Up until this time he has been operating on the assumption that we are fighting an enemy of less than 300,000 (285,400 guerrillas to be exact). But for the last few weeks his two intelligence chiefs, General Joseph McChristian and Col. Gaines Hawkins have been busy checking out a new estimate sent on to them from the CIA. On this morning they present Westmoreland with their devastating conclusion: the size of the enemy is at least twice as large as their previous estimates.

Westmoreland, according to Col. Hawkins, slumps into his chair and after a painful silence begins to talk to himself:

"What am I going to tell the President?"
"What am I going to tell the press?"
"What am I going to tell the Congress?"

After another silence the Supreme Military Commander of U.S. Forces in Vietnam regains control of himself and addresses McChristian in a stern voice: "General, I want you to take another look at these numbers"

McChristian and Hawkins leave with the clear impression that Westmoreland has asked them to lower their figures. But McChristian stands by his new estimates and two weeks later he is abruptly relieved of his command. It is at this point that the conspiracy to conceal the size and nature of the enemy in Vietnam begins.

JUNE 14 - The military's overall strength figures are being challenged by Sam Adams and the CIA at the National Intelligence Estimates meeting in Washington. This is the annual session where any dispute between intelligence agencies is resolved. The figure agreed upon at the NIE becomes the official number presented to the President and Congress. Westmoreland orders Col. Hawkins and General George Godding to go to Washington to defend MACV's faked estimates. According to Gen. Godding, Westmoreland sends them off with the following marching orders: "I don't care how you do it. Use any number you want but don't let the total go over 300,000 VC."

In the face of Adam's attack Godding and Hawkins find it next to impossible to defend MACV's position. Hawkins in particular admires Adams, agrees with Adam's position on the numbers, and finds it humiliating to have to openly lie about such critical matters. Moreover, he and Godding are losing the debate. They start calling Saigon every day, pleading for permission to increase the numbers. The requests are repeatedly denied. Finally on Aug. 20, 1967 a telegram from General Creighton Abrams, signed off by Westmoreland, arrives:

"We have been projecting an image of success over recent months... and if the higher numbers were to become public 'all available caveats and explanations will not prevent the press from drawing an erroneous and gloomy conclusion.'
This becomes MACV's command position on the numbers dispute. The orders are clear... but Hawkins and Godding simply don't know how to carry them out. Just at this point - when they feel incapable of continuing the charade any longer, Col. Daniel Graham arrives from Saigon to orchestrate MACV's defense.

THE KEY CONSPIRATOR TAKES CHARGE

By this time Col. Graham (who will subsequently rise to become the chief of all U.S. Military Intelligence and more recently to serve as an adviser and roving ambassador for President elect Ronald Reagan) had become the key figure in the conspiracy. His role began just after McChristian was forced out, when he was summoned from Hawaii to join MACV Intelligence.

Graham had only been in Vietnam for two weeks when he produced the Crossover Memo, a report which had an immediate and extraordinary impact on those officials conducting the war. The enemy, it announced, was at long last diminishing in numbers; more VC were deserting and being killed than were being recruited and infiltrated down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Its thesis was as welcome as it was startling since it concluded that a war of attrition was guaranteed victory.

The problem is the report was based on the false premise that there were only 285,000 VC, and beyond that, it purposefully excluded the overwhelming bulk of evidence that showed the VC gaining in strength. Upon reading it, Graham's own deputy, Commander Robert Heon, who had served under McChristian, told his new superior the report was totally indefensible: "You can't do this, Danny. I don't believe any of this crap you're putting down here."

But the Crossover Thesis was just what General Westmoreland wanted. He instantly endorsed it and passed it on to the Pentagon and the White House where it was repeatedly used to explain how and why we were winning the war. It became MACV's bible, and from that time on no intelligence report that challenged the Crossover Thesis could find its way into MACV's books.1 (footnote)

And so the politicians and the military were all talking about victory that summer. Meanwhile, in Vietnam, MACV was faring worse and worse in the field. And in Washington the CIA was on the verge of totally discrediting the military's position -- That is until Col. Graham moved in to direct MACV's counter attack.

footnote 1.
1. Joseph Gorman (now an accountant with RCA in New York) was the analyst in charge of VC units in the Delta. He described what happened that summer when he tried to report a number of new Viet Cong formations:
"At first I thought they were tightening up their reporting standards... but as time went on it was clear that something funny was going on... They kept rejecting my reports for sillier and sillier reasons. They turned back one of them because they said the width of the margin on my report wasn't right; another was rejected because the translucent cover sheet wasn't attached correctly; a third because the cover sheet wasn't properly bordered with a red pencil. Even today I have a hard time reconciling what went on... They never explained to me why they turned down those units."
Immediately after arriving in Washington, Col. Graham summons the two troubled MACV officers (Godding and Hawkins) to a meeting at the Pentagon. There, in a small room adjoining the offices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he calls on them to openly falsify the estimates of specific enemy units.

According to Col. George Hanscher, who was in the room at the time, Graham took the list of VC units in the Order of Battle and began to arbitrarily cut them down:

- See the 83rd Rear Service Unit," Hanscher remembers.
- Graham saying, "there must be a lot of civilians in there. Let's knock it down. It's not 3,100; it's 1,900. The 516th Local Force Battalion. We all know it just got clobbered the other day. Let's lower it...."

In this manner Col. Graham managed to march enough VC soldiers out of the Order of Battle to allow MACV's totals to conform with the ceiling that General Westmoreland had ordered.

Armed now with Col. Graham's figures, Hawkins and Godding go back into battle against Adams and the CIA. The military, they contend, has jurisdiction over military intelligence. They say that no matter what CIA says, it is MACV that has to fight the war and its figures are right.

Adams knows they are lying. He calls on the Agency to challenge the military then and there; but it is all too much for CIA Director Richard Helms who is already fighting other bureaucratic battles and who knows of the President's hatred for bad news about the war.

Finally, after the longest National Intelligence Estimate session in history - it has gone on for several months - Helms orders his men to give up the fight. Adams is told to back off; MACV's estimates become official.

From that point on, the enemy was not to be seen as a force of 600,000 guerillas as Adams had found in August 1966, and as McCrystal and Hawkins had informed Westmoreland in June 1967. Instead, it was to be considered to be a guerilla force of 299,000... and soon even that number would be reduced.

For Sam Adams this was the beginning of the end of his CIA career. He had been a rising star at the Agency. He liked the work and wanted to make the CIA his career. His superiors respected his reporting on the VC and made it clear that he would do well at the Agency if he would just forget the numbers dispute.

But Adams could not. As he saw it, the ultimate consequence of the lying would be the useless death of thousands of American soldiers, and ultimately...sure defeat. In the months that followed, he continued to wage a futile and increasingly strident battle from within the CIA.

Finally, he was angry enough to seek the dismissal of Helms and the court martial of Westmoreland. But it was a quixotic gesture which went unnoticed in the outside world, and which only succeeded in destroying his own career.
THE CONSPIRACY IS FORCED TO EXPAND

SEPT. 1967 - MACV Headquarters, Saigon. Hawkins arrives back in Saigon with an ugly problem. The falsified figures for VC strength have now been officially accepted but the unaltered subtotals are still in MACV's records. To complicate matters there is a separate intelligence analyst for every category of VC troops and each of these analysts is the custodian for the real figures. Fearful of an investigation Hawkins and his deputy, Lt. Col. David Morgan, carry the conspiracy an extra step. In a scene out of Catch 22 they move from desk to desk in the large building housing the 100 odd Viet Cong analysts and order their junior officers to march tens of thousands of soldiers out of their columns. At one point, a young analyst stands up in a fury and points his finger at Morgan: "Colonel, you're doing wrong." But the conspiracy is now too far underway to heed such minor grievances.

Marshall Lynn, now a New York advertising executive, was one of the analysts at MACV headquarters. He talks freely about his experiences that day:

"The Colonel came to my desk and said 'we've been looking over your figures. Don't you think they're too high.'
"Maybe a little," Lynn replied.
"No, a lot," said the Colonel who took Lynn's list of units and proceeded to cross out the 3,100 total for the 83rd Rear Service Unit and replace it with the 1,900 figure that Col. Graham had dictated a few days earlier in the Pentagon.
"Okay Colonel, you can have it anyway you want. I'm short in Vietnam" (his tour of duty was about up) 
" and I don't have to put up with this madness anymore."
With that Morgan quickly sliced the rest of Lynn's units and moved on to the next desk.

Col. Morgan who is now retired and living in California is still haunted by his part in the conspiracy.

"We cut lots of units ... it was terribly wrong. We had no criteria for dropping people. It was guess work. There was nothing to back it up. Why did we do it? To make ourselves look good - to make Danny Graham look correct - so we could prove we were winning the war."

By the time Hawkins and Morgan had finished they had marched so many VC cut of the Order of Battle that they were faced with the embarrassment of having brought the totals down well below the figure agreed to at the NIE. There was nothing to do but announce another significant sign of progress in the war. A front page New York Times report on Nov. 12 reported the good news: "U.S. Aides Say Foe Is Weakening Fast." The article goes on to note that the VC strength had fallen from 285,000 to 242,000.
MACV BLINDS ITSELF

NOV. 15 - Lt. Col. Everett Parkins, MACV's intelligence officer in charge of Viet Cong studies, uncovers a truly frightening phenomenon. North Vietnamese regulars in full combat uniform are pouring down the Ho Chi Minh trail at a rate between 20,000 and 25,000 a month. This is at least three or four times higher than the average number. Clearly, something awesomely big is underway.

Since the Joint Chiefs had just asked for a new manpower study, Parkins, rushes his report over to his superior, Col. Charles Norris. He is astounded when Norris, in an office just 2 doors away from General Westmoreland, says the report can not be filed. Parkins demands to know why and finds himself shouting at Norris: such critical information has to be passed on to Washington. But Norris says the report is killed, and Parkins, like McChristian before him, is promptly reassigned. He is charged with insubordination and given a bad fitness report, his career in the Army destroyed.

NOV. 17 - Two days after Parkins' report is suppressed, Westmoreland arrives in Washington for a round of meetings and press briefings. Brandishing the altered estimates and citing the Crossover Memo, he tells the press that "We have turned the corner, the enemy is running out of men." The boosterish claim is taken up by McNamara, Ambassador Bunker, the President.

NOV. 24 - A CIA analyst named Joseph Hovey reading captured enemy documents along with recent interrogations of Viet Cong reaches the conclusion that the VC are on the verge of mounting an all out countrywide offensive. He is puzzled because he doesn't know that MACV's strength estimates represent only less than half the number of real VC in the field, or that a small army of North Vietnamese Regulars is pouring down the Ho Chi Minh trail. It seems out of character for the VC to abandon their guerilla tactics when they are so vastly outnumbered. Nonetheless, he writes up his report. A copy is sent to the President. Hovey's predictions are actually accepted in many quarters, but the military takes the position that there is no cause for alarm, the VC, they explain, can't carry off such an offensive with any hope of success. There simply aren't enough of them. Confident that we are fighting an enemy on the run, President Johnson tells the Australian cabinet that the VC are about to launch a kamikazi attack.

DEC. 1967 - On this day MACV issues more good news. The VC are down to 224,651. By now Col. Graham's Crossover Thesis is being used with a cynical vengeance to wrench all reality out of focus.
TET: THE FACTS BREAK THROUGH

Jan. 29, 1968 - It is now Tet, the religious holiday and General Westmoreland declares a unilateral cease fire. A few days earlier, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara has assured Congress that the enemy is in a state of decline. There are only "224,651 VC," he declares with customary precision, and less than 7000 infiltrators coming down the Ho Chi Minh trail each month. Our 500,000 American soldiers along with approximately 700,000 South Vietnamese troops are more than enough to defeat the enemy.

Late this evening the VC strike in cities throughout the Northern Provinces. It is an impressive attack which catches MACV by surprise, but no one worries about a similar attack in the South - certainly not in Saigon.

JANUARY 30 - The entire senior staff of General Westmoreland's headquarters gathers around a pool at the former headquarters of the French Foreign Legion. They are attending a going away party for Commander Heon, the man who originally challenged the Crossover Thesis. Col. Graham and the 200 other Colonels who really run the war drift in and out of the party this night completely oblivious to what is happening just blocks away. Meanwhile, all around them, long files of VC infantrymen are stuffing their pockets with grenades, ramming clips into their submachine guns. In all 10 battalions of the finest infantrymen in the world are preparing for an all out offensive right in the middle of the allied capital.

The same awesome developments are underway in cities and villages all across the country. Sapper units which MACV has long since marched out of its order of battle, are preparing their satchel charges to blow up American airplanes. Rocket units that according to MACV's official estimates are not supposed to exist, are screwing in their warheads.

That night, tens of thousands of VC who are not supposed to exist attack MACV positions in 40 out of 44 Provincial Capitals. They destroy or damage over 1,200 U.S. aircraft and even managed to break into the American Embassy compound.
The Tet Offensive caught everyone by surprise, but unlike Pearl Harbor which inspired a generation of young Americans to rush out to join the war, Tet seemed to shake everyone's confidence. Suddenly people realized that we were fighting a very large and very formidable enemy, and that for some reason this indisputable fact had not been shared with the American public.

Tet was the turning point in the Vietnam war, but it can also be seen as a turning point in recent American history: it was at this moment that much of the country simply stopped trusting its government.

General Ky, Prime Minister of Vietnam during Tet, offered this observation in his memoirs. "Of course Westmoreland must have known all about the strength of the impending attack. I am convinced the White House did not, but for a good reason. It was clear that some of the American leaders in Saigon deliberately issued a string of lies to the White House, in an effort to maintain the impression that the Americans were getting on top of the Viet Cong."
The Conspiracy Continues

MACV was now walking an increasingly dangerous tightrope. It's books carried indefensible estimates of VC strength which, if reduced further, would simply look absurd. The conspirators were trapped in their own web of deception: if they admitted to the real size of the enemy, the war effort might be irreparably damaged, and all of them would risk exposure. At a bare minimum they would be accused of inexcusable incompetence.

And so the conspiracy moved to its next phase. Under the direction of Col. Graham, MACV boldly set forth to assert that Tet was a major allied victory. Yes, the VC had made it look as if they were a bigger and stronger force than anyone had previously thought, but it was all an illusion. Actually, Tet was a desperate VC gamble - a kamakazi raid designed to capture the headlines and scare the American public. Anyone who considered the facts honestly they asserted could see that victory was now closer than ever.

Despite the growing skepticism of the American public, the White House accepted MACV's explanation that the VC were on the edge of defeat. MACV, forced to reduce its overall strength estimates yet again. This time to account for the huge VC losses in Tet. As always when the totals were faked, the adjustments had to be made all down the line.

Feb. 13, 1968 - MACV's analyst in charge of VC guerrillas, Lt. Richard McArthur (now a housing official with the City of New York) arrives at his desk this morning to discover that the wall chart on which he maintains his guerilla estimates province by province has been altered drastically. Thirty five thousand enemy soldiers have simply been removed from the total. Enraged, McArthur confronts his commanding officer, Lt. Col. Paul Weiler, demanding to know why his guerillas have been cut. "Sorry Mac," Weiler responds "we had to do it." "That's no answer sir, why?" Weiler then ends the conversation with a plea for McArthur to stop making trouble: "Lie a little, Mac. Lie a little." But McArthur, like Col. Parkinson before him, is not willing to join the conspiracy. "I refuse to do so, sir," he snaps back, and just like Parkinson before him, McArthur is given a bad fitness report and transferred. This time MACV does not bother to assign a new guerilla analyst.

Feb. 23, 1968 - The President is horrified when he reads the latest dispatch from General Westmoreland. The General wants 200,000 more American troops. He is now saying he needs 700,000 American soldiers in Vietnam. How can this be? Hasn't Westmoreland just said the VC were on the run? Wasn't Tet supposed to be a great victory for the allies? Westmoreland offers the old military explanation: We are not asking to reinforce failure, we need the troops to "reinforce success."

Deeply troubled, the President asks former Secretary of State Dean Acheson to form a committee of 'wise men' to independently evaluate the course of the war.
THE GAME IS UP

Commander James Meachem was well known to the press corps in Vietnam as one of the self-assured MACV officers who regularly briefed them at the daily "five o'clock follies." It was also Meachem's responsibility to produce MACV's reports on enemy strength. These reports were, of course, faked, but after being concocted in MACV's computers they were stumped top secret, encrypted and cabled to Washington where they were rushed to the White House by special courier. No one told the President they were faked.

In the days after Tet, Commander Meachem began to be troubled by a bad conscience. He started writing home to his wife each night, telling her of his part in the conspiracy, sometimes using the letters as a kind of confessional.

MARCH 2, 1968 - "Tomorrow will be a sort of day of truth. We shall see if I can make the computer sort out the losses since the Tet Offensive began in such a manner as to prove we are winning the war. If I can't we shall of course jack the figures around until we do show progress ... Everyone realizes without saying it that the enemy is a good deal more formidable than we have let ourselves believe for 10 these many months. We are all a little bit scared ... not for ourselves yet but for the war in general. The entire rural area belongs to the VC, and there is no two ways about it..."

MARCH 3, 1968 - "One can have no small comprehension of the mismanagement of this goddam war unless he has seen the outright lies and machinations of MACV ... The crime is you couldn't tell anyone even if you wanted to -- no one would believe it ... Anyhow we are winning the war, and now I can prove it, having received sufficient and adequate guidance from my leaders..."

MARCH 21, 1968 - "We had a crash project to prepare a briefing for the press on enemy strength... I have never in my life assembled such a pack of truly gargantuan falsehoods... God knows what the reporters will think when we try to sell them this crap."

Somehow MACV managed to get away with its shell game until March 14, when it cabled its latest estimates of enemy strength to the Pentagon. Throughout the previous day Commander Meachem and his computer specialist Lt. Bernie Gottazi had struggled to make their computers justify the latest strength estimate dictated by MACV's intelligence chief. Repeatedly, they slashed the totals of individual units, but no matter how many troops they cut it wasn't enough - the computer kept coming up with totals 100,000 more than the mandated figure. That night Meachem wrote to his wife describing the days work.

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"You should have seen the antics my people and I had to go through with our computer calculations to make the February strength calculations come out the way the general wanted them to. We started with the answer, and plugged in all sorts of figures until we found a combination which the machine could digest, and then we wrote all sorts of estimates showing why the figures were right which we had to use. And we continue to win the war."

When the report reached the White House President Johnson was delighted to see that the VC were down to only "204,000" soldiers. Happily he told Dean Acheson who was lunching with him. Acheson unnerved the President by saying that he absolutely did not believe the report. In fact, he said he had reason to suspect all of the reporting from Vietnam. He offered to have his group of wise men consider the numbers question for the President. Johnson agreed.

MARCH 24 - The analysis which Adams had first put forth 2 years before is presented for the first time to a group with direct access to the President. At first, the wise men are confused by the rival sets of statistics being offered by representatives of MACV and the CIA. But the absurdity of MACV's position suddenly came into focus for former Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg when he questioned MACV's representative, General William DePuy:

Goldberg: General, you said the Communists have lost 80,000 killed in the Tet Offensive so far. Is that correct?
DePuy: Yes, sir.
Goldberg: Now can you tell me what the killed to wounded ratio might be?
DePuy: Sir, I'd guess that for each VC killed, there are about six wounded.
Goldberg: That's a big figure, General, so let's assume the Viet Cong aren't as solicitous of their wounded as we are of ours. Let's say they don't treat their slightly wounded, and put them back into combat, whereas we wouldn't. Would you say that three to one is a conservative figure for those rendered ineffective by wounds?
DePuy: That sounds fair enough to me, Sir.
Goldberg: Now how many effectives did you say they had operating in the field?
DePuy: Sir, about 230,000. That's the latest estimate.
Goldberg: Well, General. I am not a great mathematician, but with 80,000 killed and a wounded ratio of three to one, or 240,000 wounded, for a total of 320,000 casualties, just who the Hell are we fighting out there?

DePuy was not able to offer an explanation.
MARCH 25 - The wise men deliver their judgement to an astonished Lyndon Johnson. Their counsel is direct: "We should begin disengaging from the war."

MARCH 31 - Lyndon Johnson goes before the American public on national television and says the U.S. will stop the bombing in the hope of bringing North Vietnam to the peace table. But the main message which catches the nation by surprise is his announcement that he will not seek re-election. From this point on, the American Government accepts the legitimacy of Adams' original estimates, and it no longer believes it can succeed against such a large and determined guerilla army.
After the President's announcement, the conspirators find themselves dangerously exposed: "There is a new and suspicious Secretary of Defense and a growing anti war sentiment at home. There could be investigations, and there is the problem of the evidence of their conspiracies. It is all contained in the memory banks of MACV's computers.

EARLY MAY 1968 - Col. Graham approaches Commander Meachem telling him he should "retroactively readjust the present force levels."

In plain language Graham was asking Meachem to erase the computers memory, an illegal action akin to burning official records. Meachem, who had gone along with the faking from the start, suddenly got religion. He had had enough of the conspiracy and even though the computers contained evidence of his own complicity, he refused.

Graham was thus forced to do the dirty work himself. In early May, he took MACV's computer specialist, Lt. Bernie Gottozi (who is now with the security division of the U.S. Department of Justice) aside and ordered him to erase the entire record.

With this act the conspiracy came to a close. But there was the outstanding question yet to resolve: what to do with the conspirators?

In official life there are some failures too terrible to acknowledge. They have to be presented as victories. In Catch 22 the military, when confronted with the dilemma of what to do about the Air Force captain who mistakenly bombs his own troops, solves the problem by giving him a medal. In this case the key conspirators were similarly rewarded.

General Westmoreland was brought back to Washington where he became the Chief of the Army. Col. Graham became General Graham and then the chief of the Defense Intelligence Agency. Later he was appointed to Team B, the highest level Presidential commission formed to evaluate the relative strength of the U.S. versus the Soviet Union. Today he is expected to join the Reagan administration in a National Security related post.
This is a general outline of the story as far as it has been developed. I should add a note explaining how I came upon it and what reporting remains to be done.

I met Sam Adams four years ago when I was the Washington editor of Harper's Magazine. Adams was then living on his cow farm in Waterford, Virginia and starting work on a book. I convinced him to do an article for Harper's and helped him write it. That led to a substantial book contract with NY Norton.

Since that time, Adams has traveled to England and throughout this country seeking out the key participants in the conspiracy (most of them are retired military men). Had it been anyone else I don't believe they would have talked. But Adams is known to them all as the one person who acted as a patriot and who sacrificed his career to alert the country to the dangers it faced.

As I understand it, he became a kind of father confessor to them. Many wept when they told him their stories. Col. Meacham gave him his letters. They all spoke on the record and acknowledged their part in the conspiracy. And most of them spoke of it in just those terms - as having participated in a conspiracy.

Adams has chronicled that conspiracy with unbelievable detail all the way to General Westmoreland's doorstep. It is for us to go beyond - to find out whether Westmoreland was acting on his own authority or whether, as it seems more likely to me, he was receiving direct authorization or at least encouragement from above. The task will be to follow the trail of the conspiracy, to see how far up the chain of command it goes - first to the Pentagon, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, then to the Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, and finally to see what the White House knew about it.

Adams' book has been a long time in the coming and if I'm not mistaken, it has a ways to go before it's finished. That's at least one of the reasons Adams is willing to cooperate with us on the documentary now. I have told him I would see if we could pay him for his research (in the same way I was paid for my research when I signed on to do the CIA's Secret Army.) I made it clear to him, however, that this might not be possible - among other reasons because he is sure to be a key interview in the show.

There are other compelling reasons why I feel we should do this documentary now. Adams knows and trusts me and would like to have us do the story. But if we don't, I can only assume that he will eventually go elsewhere in the not too distant future. Certainly the WGBH team with its monumental $4.2 million 14 hour series on Vietnam, will soon end up at Adams' doorstep. I don't see him turning them away if he is not signed up with us.
But there is an even more compelling reason beyond the question of securing an historic scoop. What we see in this history is an open conspiracy, organized by our military establishment to deceive the country about a matter of critical concern to the nation. Presumably, General Westmoreland and the others felt that the Johnson White House wanted only good news and hence served it up. But what does that say about the reliability of military intelligence.

Today, there is a controversy over the integrity of the Pentagon's assessment of our relative strength vis-a-vis the Russians. General Graham, the architect of the Vietnam conspiracy, is one of the principle spokesmen warning us that we have fallen dangerously behind. Graham has been a close adviser to President elect Reagan and may end up in a key national security post in the Reagan administration.

Are our present estimates based on fact or deception?
Is the public being told the truth?
Is the Congress?
Is the President?
Can we be confident that our country's leaders will be basing their future decisions about peace and war on reliable information?