



The Secret War Against Hanoi: The Untold Story of Spies, Saboteurs, and Covert Warriors in North Vietnam

By Richard H., Jr. Shultz

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In 1963, a frustrated President Kennedy turned to the Pentagon for help in carrying out subversive operations against North Vietnam- a job the CIA had not managed to handle effectively. Thus was born the Pentagon's Special Operations Group(SOG). Under the cover name "Studies and Observation Group," SOG would, over the next eight years, dispatch numerous spies to North Vietnam, create a triple-cross deception program, wage psychological warfare by manipulating North Vietnamese POW's and kidnapped citizens, and stage deadly assaults on enemy soldiers traveling the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Written by the country's leading expert on SOG, here is the story of that covert war-one that would have both spectacular and disastrous results.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The Secret War Against Hanoi documents American covert actions in Vietnam, beginning in 1961 when John F. Kennedy decided that if Hanoi could wage a guerilla war against the South, the U.S. could do the same in the North. Dissatisfied with the CIA's initial results, Kennedy passed responsibility for covert operations to the Pentagon--which never fully supported them. For example, in an interview for this book, General Westmoreland, Commander of American forces in Vietnam, vastly underestimated the imaginative ways in which underground activities could destabilize an enemy. American covert action focused on disrupting two vital "centers of gravity": the North's own internal stability and the Ho Chi Minh Trail that ran through Laos and Cambodia. Such activities ran counter to the Geneva Accords, however, and nervous diplomats placed them under severe constraints. Permission always had to be obtained from the top, which after 1964 meant an excessively cautious President Johnson, concerned that China would be goaded into intervening openly in Vietnam as it had in Korea. The creative thinking that went into America's secret exploits reads like a racy novel, from the adroit brainwashing and release of captured fishermen to the fabrication of a phantom secret society based on a 15th-century anti-Chinese hero, plus innumerable nasty booby traps. Author Richard H. Shultz has had unusual access to prominent protagonists and to thousands of classified documents made available only to him while he researched this book. *The Secret War Against Hanoi* clearly lays out what was achieved and what might have been achieved by covert action in Vietnam, ending with a thoughtful analysis of lessons learned for future politicians and operatives in a post-cold war world. --*John Stevenson*

From Publishers Weekly

Soldiers and spies do not mix. That's the principal lesson of this alternately dry and informative analysis of U.S. covert activities during the Vietnam War. Schultz, a historian at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, uses recently declassified Pentagon documents and interviews with major players (including former defense secretary Robert McNamara) to show how secret U.S. military operations were consistently hamstrung by Washington and undercut by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The problems began in 1963, when President Kennedy took responsibility for covert action in Vietnam away from the CIA and entrusted it to the Pentagon's Special Operations Group (SOG), even though the prevailing opinion among the Pentagon brass was that espionage and covert action were a waste of time. Though there were some isolated successes, basic ineptitude and uncoordinated thinking characterized the SOG's efforts, according to the author. For example, Schultz explains how SOG officers created a radio station to broadcast propaganda into the enemy's homes: the only problem was that most North Vietnamese didn't own radios. Schultz argues that there is a place for covert activities run out of the Pentagon, but only after some far-reaching restructuring. He could have strengthened his book by including more discussions of ground-level operations and by paying less attention to bureaucratic infighting and political meddling. (Dec.)

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From Library Journal

Director of the International Security Studies Program at Tufts, Shultz examines the covert activities of the Pentagon's Special Operations Group (SOG) during the Vietnam War.

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