

Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War

By William M. Hammond

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For many Americans during the Vietnam era, the war on the home front seemed nearly as wrenching and hardfought as the one in Southeast Asia. Its primary battlefield was the news media, its primary casualty the truth. But as William Hammond reveals, animosity between government and media wasn't always the rule; what happened between the two during the Vietnam War was symptomatic of the nation's experiences in general. As the "light at the end of the tunnel" dimmed, relations between them grew ever darker.

Reporting Vietnam is an abridgment and updating of Hammond's massive two-volume work issued by the Government Printing Office. Based on classified and recently declassified government documents—including Nixon's national security files—as well as on extensive interviews and surveys of press war coverage, it tells how government and media first shared a common vision of American involvement in Vietnam. It then reveals how, as the war dragged on, upbeat government press releases were consistently challenged by journalists' reports from the field and finally how, as public sentiment shifted against the war, Presidents Johnson and Nixon each tried to manage the news media, sparking a heated exchange of recriminations.

Hammond strongly challenges the assertions of many military leaders that the media lost the war by swaying public opinion. He takes readers through the twists and turns of official public affairs policy as it tries to respond to a worsening domestic political environment and recurring adverse "media episodes." Along the way, he makes important observations about the penchant of American officials for placing appearance ahead of substance and about policy making in general.

Although Richard Nixon once said of the Vietnam war, "Our worst enemy seems to be the press," Hammond clearly shows that his real enemies were the contradictions and flawed assumptions that he and LBJ had created. *Reporting Vietnam* brings a critical study to a wider audience and is both a major contribution to an ongoing debate and a cautionary guide for future conflicts.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Chess lovers will relish every move and countermove in this exhaustive unearthing of the machinations between the military and the press during the Vietnam War. Hammond, senior historian with the U.S. Army's Center of Military History, depicts the tension between the armed services and the media as a game of strategy, with the Pentagon trying to impose order on a bevy of reporters, only to find that the journalists got the scoop anyway. The author points out that the military's efforts to control the way the war was perceived were determined at times not by the public's need to know but by the political fortunes of the president and presiding military officer. Drawing on a thorough examination of military documents and newspaper and broadcast reports, Hammond explains how the press allowed the military to bring back tear gas for use in the war; how various news organizations contradicted themselves and one another in describing the war's unfolding; and how much of the American public came to feel that the war was a hopeless effort. The book would have been stronger had the author done more to personalize the reporters. From the Baltimore Sun's daring John Carroll to the AP's resourceful Peter Arnett (who even today finds himself embroiled in controversy), the reporters are left faceless for the most part, because in the battle between Pentagon and Fourth Estate, Hammond focuses mostly on institutions, not individuals. Still, the author has turned his academic search into a highly readable account of one-upsmanship and high-stakes jockeying. Illustrations not seen by PW.
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Review
"Few issues have aroused more controversy than the role of the news media during the Vietnam War. Hammond demystifies the subject in a book that is scrupulously researched, authoritative, and, above all, readable."—**Stanley Karnow**, author of *Vietnam: A History* "*Reporting Vietnam* is a classic journalism history and an essential work in helping understand America's most controversial foreign conflict. It is not only the definitive account of Vietnam war reporting, but also an engrossing read."—**Peter Arnett**, CNN correspondent and author of *Live from the Battlefield* "By far the best study of the press and armed services yet written."—**Stephen E. Ambrose**, author of *Citizen Soldiers*

From the Back Cover
Winner of the Richard W. Leopold Prize

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sheila Gallagher:

Spent a free time to be fun activity to complete! A lot of people spent their spare time with their family, or their friends. Usually they carrying out activity like watching television, about to beach, or picnic in the park. They actually doing same thing every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your personal free time/ holiday? Could possibly be reading a book could be option to fill your free time/ holiday. The first thing that you ask may be what kinds of publication that you should read. If you want to try out look for book, may be the publication untitled Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War can be excellent book to read. May be it could be best activity to you.

Joyce Cassady:

Why? Because this Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War is an unordinary book that the inside of the guide waiting for you to snap that but latter it will shock you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who all write the book in such remarkable way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this any more or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book include such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking way. So , still want to delay having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

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