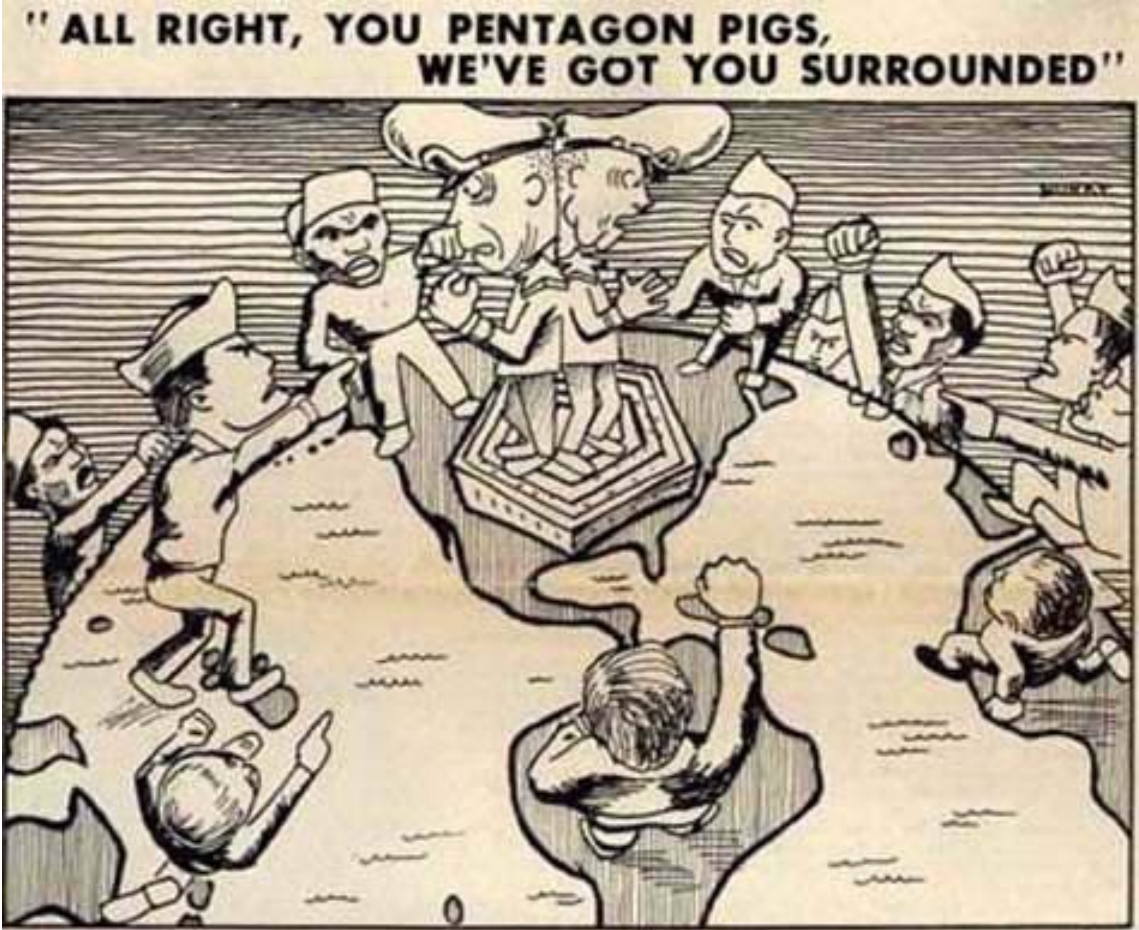


Subversion of the US Armed Forces in the Vietnam War (1961-73)



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“The morale, discipline and battle-worthiness of the U.S. Armed Forces are, with a few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly in the history of the United States. By every conceivable indicator, our army that remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non-commissioned officers, drug ridden and dispirited where not near mutinous. Elsewhere than Vietnam the situation is nearly as serious”

Colonel Robert D. Heinl, June 1971

Subversion of the US Armed Forces in the Vietnam War (1961-75)

- Introduction
- Sources
- The phases of the US Armed Forces resistance to the Vietnam War
- Some statistics
- Some interesting misconceptions
- The historical effect of the movement

Sources

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The phases of the US Armed Forces resistance to the Vietnam War

- **1961-68: The early years**
 - Resistance is individual, moral, generally isolated
- **1968-70: Expansion of the ground war**
 - Resistance is collective with combat refusals, ‘search and avoid’ missions, desertion, fragging begins, stockade revolts, GI newspapers
- **1970-73: Collapse of the ground war - expansion of the air war**
 - The US ground forces in Vietnam collapse with rampant insubordination, fragging, drug use and outright mutiny
 - Resistance is political, collective and expands to the Navy with sabotage and protest

1971

‘Since the end of the Cambodian Operation last June, the United States Army in Vietnam has fought no major actions, launched no significant operations, captured no territory and added no battle honours to its regimental flags. In the same period, the army has abandoned at least one base under enemy fire and suffered most of its losses from accidents and booby traps’ Journalist

‘Vietnam has become a poison in the veins of the U.S. Army’ Top ranking officer

Statistics 1: US Army Desertion Rate (in US)

Year	Desertions/1000
1966	14.7
1968	26.2
1970	52.3
1971	62.6

- Jan 1967 - Jan 1972: 354,112 soldiers AWOL
- At the end of the war: 98,324 soldiers still missing
- 64% AWOL's were enlistees (Pentagon)

Statistics 2: US Army: 'Fragging' Officers

Year	Attacks	Deaths
1969	126	96
1970	271	209
1971	425	?

- Statistics do not include deaths due to 'friendly fire' or attacks by automatic weapons, handguns or knives
- Bounty's offered generally ranged from \$50 to \$1000
- \$10,000 offered for the death of the commander at 'Hamburger Hill'
- In 1971, the America 1 division sees 1 fragging a week!
- 1970-72, 80% troops taking drugs, 30% taking heroin

Statistics 3: US Naval sabotage and mutiny

Month/Year	Ship	Type	Incident
Mar 1970	SS Columbia Eagle	Merchant	Armed mutiny*
May 1970	USS Anderson	Destroyer	Sabotage (1)
Nov 1971	USS Coral Sea	A/C Carrier	SOS protests/march
Fall 1971	USS Hancock	A/C Carrier	SOS protests
June 1972	USS Ranger	A/C Carrier	SOS protests/sabotage (3.5)
July 1972	USS Forrestal	A/C Carrier	Sabotage - fire (2)
Oct 1972	USS Kitty Hawk	A/C Carrier	Racial unrest - riot
Oct 1972	USS Hassayampa	Oil Tanker	Racial unrest - riot
Nov 1972	USS Constellation	A/C Carrier	SOS protests/sabotage

SOS = 'Stop Our Ship' movement (#) = Months ship delayed by sabotage/mutiny

*Attempt to hand ship over to pro-communist forces

Some interesting misconceptions

- Morale in the US army was already low in the early 1960s
- Conscripts (draftees) were the majority of deserters and mutineers
- The ‘horror’ of actual combat explains the majority of desertion and mutiny
- The movement was limited to the front line of the Vietnam ground war

What really happened....

- Morale collapsed rapidly from an all time high (1968-72)
- ‘Professionals’ (enlistees) were the majority of protesters, deserters and mutineers
- Non-frontline personnel were a major part of the movement
- The movement spread throughout the US armed forces across the world

Some thoughts....

- Refusals, mutinies and desertion in the US armed forces were linked to wider social movements of the 1960s/70s (including the anti-war movement)
- The movement was mostly self-organised
- The movement was class and race conscious
- The movement became overtly political in its stance against the Vietnam War
- It had a world wide effect on the US armed forces

The historical effect of the movement

- Foreign policy
 - From Nam' (1973) to Grenada (1983)!
- Military strategy
 - Mechanisation, special forces, precision weapons
 - Use of proxy and mercenary forces
- Re-organisation of the US armed forces
 - 'All-volunteer' army
 - Pay hikes, college tuition, skills based training
 - Attempts to address the institutionalised racism