

FRAGGING IN VIETNAM:  
MEDIA REPRESENTATION AND HISTORICAL DATA

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MEDIA REPRESENTATION AND HISTORICAL DATA

A thesis presented to the College of Graduate Studies, Austin Peay State University, in  
partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Military History

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May, 2013

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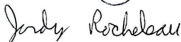
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## ABSTRACT

DANIEL M. CAMPBELL. *Fragging in Vietnam: Media Presentation and Historical Data*. (Under the direction of Dr. David R. Snyder).

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to thoroughly investigate media references to the Vietnam War phenomenon of “fragging,” wherein soldiers murdered their superiors, on base, with explosive devices, and to compare the media presentation with historical data.

Methods: To determine an overview of how fragging has been portrayed across various media, an exhaustive search and review was performed, of references to fragging in historical monographs, journalism, the U.S. Congressional record, oral history, fiction, and film. To determine facts about actual cases, the work of Army psychiatrist Thomas C. Bond, the work of historian George Lepre, and numerous U.S. Army and Navy court-martial records were consulted.

Results and Conclusions: A review of media resources revealed a consistent presentation of fragging that characterized the perpetrators as desperate men who murdered officers whose zeal or incompetence endangered their troops’ lives. Fragging is repeatedly explained as an act of preemptive self-defense. This study refers to this explanation as the *classic paradigm*. The actual data on fragging cases revealed a very different reality. In fact, most fraggings were born of personal grudges, over mundane matters, in rear areas and were not related to combat. Most fraggers exhibited mental or emotional problems and almost all cases involved drug or alcohol abuse. This study refers to this data-based description of fragging as the *alternate version*.

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## INTRODUCTION

"In all the lexicon of war there is not a more tragic word than 'fragging' with all that it implies of total failure of discipline and the depression of morale."<sup>1</sup> So stated U.S. Senator Charles Mathias of Maryland on the Senate floor on the morning of April 20, 1971. Mathias was referring to a phenomenon of the American military involvement in Vietnam that had only recently come to light in various reports, including one by the Pentagon. "Fragging" was military parlance for an incident wherein one soldier murdered another, usually a superior, on base, with an explosive device. The typical weapon was an M-26 fragmentation grenade, hence the term. Other types of grenades, mines, and explosives were sometimes used.

Fraggings are generally regarded separately from other assaults or homicides within the military. The distinguishing characteristics of fragging include the location (on base, where soldiers live), the weapon (explosives, which almost always destroy the critical physical evidence and create collateral damage), and the usual intended victim (an officer or NCO). Battlefield murders, such as when one soldier kills another in the heat of a firefight by shooting him in the back, are nearly impossible to identify and prosecute. Thus very little information exists about these incidents. Also, victims of such incidents range across the spectrum regarding rank. On-base assaults that resulted from the rapid and immediate escalation of disputes are also considered separately from fraggings due to their "hot blooded" nature. Incidents involving firearms were easier to prosecute than

fraggings due to greater availability of physical evidence such as fingerprints and serial numbers on weapons.

Fraggings are distinct from these incidents for several reasons. Fraggings were notoriously difficult to investigate and prosecute, and the majority of cases went unsolved or were not pursued due to weak evidence. Even so, fraggings were much easier to solve, and are far easier to study historically, than battlefield incidents. Also, fraggings generally require some degree of premeditation, and an interval of time would be required for the perpetrator to obtain the weapon when soldiers were not in the field. Fraggings typically provide a greater chance for the perpetrator to avoid detection because of the inherent destruction of evidence and the small delay between the activation and detonation of a grenade, during which the perpetrator could remove himself from the immediate scene. Furthermore, fraggings were frequently perpetrated by rigging a grenade to be activated by the intended victim, i.e., a booby trap. Many fraggings resulted in the death or injury of victims other than those intended by the fragger. Both the use of booby traps and the surreptitious, blind nature of rolling a grenade into a tent created unintended victims. Fraggings usually, though not always, involved an enlisted man assaulting a superior. American officers and NCOs were aware of the threat, so “dummy fraggings” (using smoke grenades or dud grenades) were sometimes perpetrated for purposes of intimidation. Although some other kinds of incidents that resemble fraggings will be discussed, this study will define fragging according to these parameters: murders and assaults via explosives, on base, usually targeting an officer or NCO.

Murder of superior officers during wartime has existed throughout history. But the Vietnam War saw a significant increase in such activity, at least according to data. Further, evidence suggests that fragging emerged as a noteworthy phenomenon only in the latter stage of American involvement. After the Tet Offensive of 1968 American aims changed from the goal of an independent, noncommunist Vietnam to the goals of Vietnamization, drawdown of troop strength, and “withdrawal with honor.” This process was lengthy, and casualties persisted. Thus the fragging phenomenon coincided with changes in the American public’s attitudes about the war and higher levels of protest both on the home front and within the military. Fragging has thus often been linked with antiwar protest, but any direct link is tenuous.

Fraggings before 1968 appear to have been isolated events, although there is little relevant data. What is clear is that the military first recognized the problem in 1969. Nearly eight hundred fragging incidents were reported between 1969 and 1973, when the rate of such assaults was 1.8 per 1000 servicemen in theater.<sup>2</sup> Confirmed fragging-related fatalities count forty-two in the Army and fifteen within the Marine Corps, with many additional injuries.<sup>3</sup> Thus, considering the size and duration of the American presence in Vietnam, fragging was not an everyday occurrence. Still, it was a problem of enough magnitude to cause concern within the military during the war.

Fragging has not provoked significant study since the war. Prior to the release of *Fragging: Why U.S. Soldiers Assaulted Their Officers in Vietnam* by George Lepre in 2011, no book-length study of the topic existed. Various forms of media have referenced fragging, from the time of the war to this writing. This study is largely historiographical in nature, and the majority of the text necessarily deals with historiographical references

and cultural representations. Part I is a thorough review of the manner in which scholarly and popular media have portrayed fragging. A fairly consistent characterization of the phenomenon emerges, according to which these crimes were committed against over-aggressive or incompetent combat leaders who unnecessarily risked the lives of their subordinates. Some presentations also suggest political motives for the fraggers, or that fraggings were simply a natural and inevitable reaction to the horrors of war. This accounting of fragging makes up what will be called the *classic paradigm*.

Part II examines data about fragging. Though limited, data reveal a different image of fragging. Fraggings almost always occurred in rear areas, in support units, far away from the dangers of combat. National politics seem to have played no direct role. Personal grudges, boredom, drug and alcohol use, and emotional troubles were the most common contributing factors. This data-based understanding of fragging will be called the *alternate version*.

Finally, the Epilogue will briefly discuss some questions raised by this investigation.

## PART I

### PRESENTATION AND THE CLASSIC PARADIGM

What follows is a thorough review of the manner in which the American media has characterized fragging from the time of the events to the present. It is important to note that this study does not purport to precisely establish the ways in which fragging has been *perceived*--by the public, the academic world, or the military. It seems difficult to determine the nature of the actual perception of any phenomenon. What is available for observation is the ways in which fragging has been *presented*. One might assume a certain amount of correlation between presentation and perception, but only the former will be established here. It appears that fragging does not hold a significant place in the public consciousness regarding the Vietnam War. In the author's experience, most students and individuals born after the war are unaware of the term or the phenomenon, and people who remember or have studied the war usually have only a vague notion of fragging.

Perhaps the primary reason that fragging is so little known and misunderstood is the dearth of information on the topic. The following review of academic, journalistic,



and cultural items that reference fragging is not exhaustive, but it does represent a very thorough search for material related to the matter. Surprisingly little information exists for such a dramatic and troubling phenomenon. Fragging is referenced far more often than it is analyzed or explained. These references typically subsume fragging into a litany of discipline problems of the Vietnamization period of the war. Often these references are contained in works that appropriate fragging into a political narrative about the war.

The treatments of fragging that are revealed within a cross-section of historiographical sources about Vietnam are remarkably similar. Minor differences exist, but a definite pattern emerges. The bulk of these references describe fragging as an act of self-preservation by troops, against career-minded officers who endangered soldiers through battlefield incompetence or by needlessly exposing them to combat. This emerges as the standard explanation of fragging in Vietnam: acts of defense of self or unit, by front-line combat troops, perpetrated against officers who risked their men's lives. Some of the following sources mention other factors, such as drug abuse, racial tension, and general rear-area indiscipline. Nearly all mention the self-defense explanation.

Two additional explanations for fragging appear in various media associated with this standard explanation. These can be considered corollaries to the classic paradigm. One corollary posits that fraggers were motivated by political principle. The second corollary suggests that fragging is essentially inexplicable, other than as a natural, almost predictable response to the atmosphere of chaos and horror in an insane, immoral war. These two corollaries can be associated with the self-defense explanation as part of the classic paradigm for three reasons. First, these three explanations are sometimes offered

in combination. Second, each of these explanations tends to exculpate the perpetrators. Finally, there is insufficient evidence to support any of these explanations. (As to the “atmosphere of war” idea, while context and environment certainly matter in attempting to explain any historical phenomenon, offering this generalized explanation without deeper scrutiny into the specifics of individual cases is unsatisfactory, both scientifically and ethically). Taken together, these three exculpatory explanations of fragging form what will hereafter be referred to in this study as the *classic paradigm*.

The types of source material that will be reviewed are: 1) *historiography*---scholarly monographs on the Vietnam War or related matters such as soldier experience and dissent; 2) *journalism*---articles about fragging that appear in popular, scholarly, or military periodicals; 3) *Congressional record*---direct Congressional references to fragging; 4) *soldier accounts*---oral history and long-form memoirs of Vietnam veterans; 5) *fiction*---short stories and novels about soldier experience in Vietnam; 6) *film and television*---narrative portrayals of the war for broadcast or theatrical release.

## HISTORIOGRAPHY

The most noteworthy aspect of fragging in Vietnam historiography is the marked absence of in-depth study devoted to the topic, especially considering the immense amount of secondary literature that exists on the war and soldier experience.<sup>4</sup> George Lepre’s *Fragging*, the only book on the subject, will be examined more closely in Part II, as it stands apart from all other fragging historiography in its depth and in its use of primary sources.

Most references to fragging in the general historical literature on Vietnam are brief and generalized. In a well-known early post-war study (1978), Guenter Lewy addresses fragging in a chapter about the U.S. military's disengagement period after the Tet offensive of 1968. The chapter discusses drug abuse by Vietnam soldiers, racial tension in the military forces, and acts of combat refusal or desertion. According to Pentagon figures cited by Lewy and others, 126 actual and possible incidents of fragging occurred in 1969, resulting in 37 deaths. In 1970, 271 actual and possible incidents were recorded, accounting for 34 deaths, and 1971 saw 333 actual and possible incidents, resulting in 12 deaths.<sup>5</sup> Lewy characterizes these DOD statistics as reliable, pointing out that the government documents he cites were not meant for public consumption and are frequently critical of the war, facts which enhance their credibility.<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that these figures are beyond question. The descriptions that accompany the figures ("actual" and "possible") reveal that fragging investigations are inherently uncertain propositions. The very nature of the event makes it difficult to establish the facts. Still, Lewy's fragging statistics are a rare example of actual data in these monographs.

Lewy's statements on fragging are more in keeping with the classic paradigm. He cites race as an occasional motive but stresses that fraggings targeted authority figures in general. He claims that soldiers sought to establish a policy of combat avoidance, and that fragging was the method by which this policy was enforced on officers.<sup>7</sup> Lewy also contributes to the political corollary of the classic paradigm. He observes that fraggings might have been incited by antiwar militants, but concedes that no direct evidence of actual subversion exists.<sup>8</sup>

Gabriel Kolko's *Anatomy of a War* is a major work of Vietnam history from the mid-1980s. Kolko's comments on fragging are brief. He presents a multi-causal explanation, again highlighting the role of drugs and race in fragging. Regarding the role of drugs, he identifies both drug-induced behavior and the need to enforce security for the drug trade as causal factors for fraggings. Kolko also mentions a general breakdown in discipline, and the contemptuous attitude of troops toward officers during the withdrawal from Vietnam. But ultimately he conforms to the classic paradigm by allowing that fraggings were frequently committed in response to an officer's efforts to "squeeze more combat from his unit."<sup>9</sup>

Some widely read comprehensive histories of the war address fragging very briefly or not at all. Pulitzer Prize-winner Stanley Karnow's *Vietnam: A History* does not mention fragging, though in fairness, Karnow does not really focus on military operations or soldier issues. In *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, George Herring states that after war aims became unclear in 1969, soldiers were less willing to risk death in combat. He argues that this attitude resulted in combat refusals and fraggings.<sup>10</sup>

Even studies that focus on the experience of the American soldier in Vietnam fail to investigate the fragging phenomenon deeply. In *Achilles in Vietnam*, psychiatrist Jonathan Shay presents some interesting thoughts about fragging, but no data. Shay utilizes a motif whereby he views the Vietnam soldier experience through the lens of Homeric epic. Thus, Shay tells of Achilles' burning desire to assassinate the ignoble and dangerously ineffective Agamemnon, his own king and military commander. He also quotes British military historian Richard Holmes's assertion that fragging was only a new

word for a familiar phenomenon.<sup>11</sup> Shay is attempting to equate fragging with what he claims is a universal impulse in the history of armed forces, i.e., the frequent desire of soldiers to murder their commanding officers. He claims to see an increase of this impulse and behavior during Vietnam, and asks the reader to consider how many U.S. troops might have dreamed of murdering Johnson, Nixon, McNamara, or Westmoreland. Most importantly, Shay asserts that the motive for this impulse was concern or vengeance for comrades. Shay describes fragging as a “universal reality of war.”<sup>12</sup> The desire to murder a superior may or may not be widespread in military history; it is easy enough to believe that it is. However, Shay has lumped all battlefield murder in with fragging, which is a specifically defined subset, as described in the introduction. The surreptitious and deliberate nature of murdering an individual on base with a grenade makes the phenomenon distinct from the act of shooting an officer in the back during the chaos of a firefight. Also, a battlefield shooting provides even more difficulties to the criminal investigator or the historian than does a fragging, so conclusions on the matter are even more difficult to reach. Most scholars do limit their discussion of fragging to the same parameters—on base, with an explosive device, with some measure of premeditation. Ultimately, Shay echoes the classic paradigm. He does not mention drugs, race, or a breakdown in discipline. Instead, he cites a widespread desire to murder superiors based on concern for self or comrades.

In *American Soldier*, U.S. Army historian Peter S. Kindsvatter cites stewardship over men's lives as a characteristic of good military leadership. Within this discussion, Kindsvatter confirms the standard analysis of fragging. He explains, “group survival, not some futile mission in a senseless war, came first. If a leader did not back off, then his

men might kill him outright, or ‘frag’ him.” Kindsvatter cites as evidence an anonymous, anecdotal example excerpted from testimony offered to a psychotherapist. Kindsvatter does concede that drugs, race, and vendetta played a role in some fraggings, but the implication is that these were the exceptions.<sup>13</sup>

Several scholarly works about the sociological issues of the war and its effect on the domestic antiwar movement mention fragging. Robert Buzzanco refers to fragging in the context of organized antiwar activities and once again claims that fraggings were directed at enthusiastic combat officers.<sup>14</sup> Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, writing about the war and U.S. society, posits that fraggings were considered “when an enlisted man saw no reason to risk his life to satisfy the combat ambitions of a promotion hungry commander.”<sup>15</sup> In *Patriots*, an oral history collection on the war, Christian G. Appy presents officers who forced their men to enter dangerous tunnels or traverse easily ambushed trails as prime candidates for fragging.<sup>16</sup> (Some of the fictional works that center on fragging use the same “tunnel scouting” motif).

Other examples of Vietnam historical works that frequently reference fragging are found in the particular subgenre of soldier dissent studies. These works examine all facets of soldier dissent in the era, including combat refusal, mutiny, organized protest on the home front, and the emergence of a widespread and active underground GI press. GI press newsletters, published independently by soldiers, harshly criticized the war, the military, and U.S. policy. Richard Moser’s *The New Winter Soldiers* describes soldier dissent in heroic terms: “These soldiers and veterans collectively reconstructed and transformed the heroic tradition of the American citizen-soldier into a new model of citizen activism for peace, empowerment, and justice.”<sup>17</sup> Moser estimates that

approximately 20 percent of Vietnam-era soldiers actively opposed the war in some fashion.<sup>18</sup> The war in Vietnam was clearly divisive, controversial, and fraught with moral and ethical dilemmas. There is nothing inherently objectionable about the idea of soldiers, as citizens of a free democracy, opposing a war or elements of its prosecution. But Moser and other authors lump fragging in with this dissent. Evidence does not support the idea that fragging was politically motivated. But even if fraggings were so motivated, the murder of a superior is surely an act of a quite different moral and ethical quality than peaceful protest, journalism, or combat refusals. Moser insightfully acknowledges that motives for fragging were varied and complex, but ultimately concurs with the classic paradigm that fragging was aimed at overzealous officers who were guilty of “cowardice, incompetence, or other forms of dangerous behavior.”<sup>19</sup> An officer who would risk his soldiers on an unworthy mission was seen as the enemy.<sup>20</sup> Exactly how soldiers determined the validity of missions remains unclear, as it does in all classic paradigm literature.

In *Winter Soldiers*, Richard Stacewicz quotes Marine veteran Mike McCain, who provides a definitive statement of the classic paradigm. McCain encapsulates the attitude and supposed mindset of fraggers:

You don't let ignorance rule just because it's wearing a bar. You don't allow yourself to be killed just because some asshole says go do something... When push came to shove, if your only choice was to die yourself or getting rid of this dude who was going to put you in a position where you were going to be killed, the choice was reasonably simple.<sup>21</sup>

In *Spoils of War*, Charles Levy provides some of the only specific references in all the literature that actually support the classic paradigm. He gives two examples. Marine Corps Private Clyde J. Smith Jr. stated in an interview that he had been unfairly

assigned the dangerous duty of walking the flank on patrol. He pleaded guilty to attempting to frag the lieutenant he blamed for this. (A different officer than the intended was actually wounded in the attack, a common outcome in fraggings). Reginald Smith testified in his court-martial that the marines in his unit killed their lieutenant by fragging partially because the lieutenant's delay in setting up a listening post had caused the deaths of two men.<sup>22</sup> The accuracy of this testimony is unknown. What is notable is that these are two of the only recorded cases wherein the classic self-defense paradigm was even offered in a soldier's defense.

Perhaps the most famous work on soldier dissent in Vietnam is *Soldiers in Revolt*, written in 1975 by Army veteran and peace movement analyst David Cortright. Cortright refers to the emergence in Vietnam of "battlefield democracy," a term which had been introduced into the lexicon in an article by John Saar in the October 23, 1970 issue of *Life*.<sup>23</sup> The idea was, that during the drawdown period of the war, soldiers intent on surviving found ways to influence their officers into avoiding actual high-risk combat. Typically this took the form of so-called "search-and-avoid" missions or outright refusals, actions supported widely among the enlisted men of combat units.

As with fragging, much of the evidence of these events is anecdotal. But, Cortright presents far more documentary evidence of combat refusal than our previous authors do for the classic paradigm. One example he provides is the Fire Base Pace incident, a well-known mutiny of October 9, 1971.<sup>24</sup> The existence of combat refusal casts doubt on the classic paradigm. Many statements of the classic paradigm indicate that the soldiers driven to fragging were desperate men who had *no other choice* but to commit these deeds to ensure their survival. The fact that these combat refusals occurred,



were effective, and that some are documented, indicates that there were other avenues available to the soldier who felt his life was in danger. Thus, a primary element of the classic paradigm---desperation---is challenged. Vietnam veteran and author Karl Marlantes addresses this:

An individual in the military service of a Western democracy has considerable freedom to disobey orders. This is certainly true in the American military. Nonmilitary people will be surprised at how often, particularly in combat, you can work things around. You can not understand... You can even tell the idiot he's a stupid ass, you won't obey his order...<sup>25</sup>

It appears that, at least during the late stages of the war, remedies short of murder were indeed available to soldiers unwilling to risk their lives for missions they deemed unworthy. (Again, precisely how the worth of these missions was determined by soldiers remains unstated. Presumably they would object to any life-threatening mission). Cortright and other authors (Moser, Stacewicz) have documented that these combat avoidance methods were frequently effective. When contrasted with the lack of documentary evidence for the self-defense aspect of the classic fragging paradigm, it seems likely that these methods, not fraggings, were the typical response to overzealous combat commanders.

Cortright also offers a decent amount of documentary evidence regarding fragging. His description of the phenomenon echoes the classic paradigm, but also hints that another cause for fragging might have been perceived injustices in disciplinary policies. "Fragging was the GI's ultimate means of resistance, a deadly and effective weapon against military authority and dangerous or oppressive policies."<sup>26</sup> All of Cortright's

examples relate to on-base disciplinary issues, typically a crack-down on drug abuse that was met with a fragging. Yet he still echoes the combat danger concern of the classic paradigm when he states, “few were willing to risk their lives for a hopeless cause.”<sup>27</sup>

Cortright provides the first real hint of an alternative to the classic paradigm by referring to on-base discipline. Two other works add to this emerging perspective. *Dirty Little Secrets of the Vietnam War*, as the title might indicate, is a work of popular history, published in 1999. Authors James F. Dunnigan and Albert A. Nofi are not academics and the work contains neither scholarly notes nor bibliography. Yet their brief discussion of fragging contains a line that stands apart from other sources: “It’s worth noting that fraggings seem to have been more a phenomenon of the rear echelon troops than the guys out in the bush.”<sup>28</sup> This distinction is vital to a more accurate understanding of the conditions in which most fraggings actually occurred.

Finally, Ronald Milam’s recent *Not a Gentlemen’s War* is a work focused primarily on correcting the image of junior officers in Vietnam as “bumbling idiots,” an image that, for Milam, derives from Vietnam soldier memoirs and films about the war.<sup>29</sup> On fragging, Milam initially hews to the classic paradigm, quoting at length from a memoir by Army physician Ronald J. Glasser, stationed in Japan during the war. The story, related secondhand in Glasser’s book, tells of an effective battlefield officer who cleared an area of NVA by suffering extremely high casualties and who was subsequently fragged in his sleep by angry troops, via the classic “grenade in hooch” technique. This is the archetype of the classic paradigm of fragging, in motive and method.

But Milam presents this incident as an exception, stating, “seldom was a victim blamed for the death of soldiers in combat, the previous incident notwithstanding.”

Milam names other causes of fragging including drug use, rear area boredom, and a feeling by some perpetrators that they had been unfairly treated by NCOs or junior officers regarding work details or discipline.<sup>30</sup> Thus, although Milam includes an anecdote that confirms the standard version of fragging, he describes that incident as atypical. Milam's description of fragging, and that of Dunnigan and Nofi, stands out as exceptional in Vietnam-era historiography. Their explicit claim is that fragging almost always took place in rear areas, and their implicit claim is that fraggings were not usually motivated by fear of death in combat. This claim defies the classic paradigm, as established and repeated throughout Vietnam War historiography.<sup>31</sup> This claim introduces an emerging alternative, a counter-narrative that describes fragging as typically a tragic but mundane event that occurred in rear areas, and generally involved personal grudges over non-combat matters. Hereafter, this study will refer to this explanation as the *alternate version*.

## JOURNALISM

Database searches reveal that fragging has never been a frequent topic in American journals or newspapers. A few examples of news coverage exist, and two well-known journal articles on the subject are frequently cited. It is important to remember that different forms of media reach audiences of different sizes and character. Journalism has a potential for connecting with numbers of people that falls somewhere between the massive reach of Hollywood film and the finite target audience of scholarly history. Newspapers have of course historically cut a wide swath in public consciousness.

One early reference to fragging appeared in a 1971 *New York Times* editorial by the influential columnist and publishing scion C. L. Sulzberger. Sulzberger's message was near reactionary, as he decried the state of morale and discipline in the armed forces at war and the society that spawned them, personified by experimentation with drugs, sex, and haircuts. Sulzberger claimed that fragging could be explained as a collapse of morale and discipline, a collapse that had been abetted by bad news from the home front and a collective national doubt about the war mission. Sulzberger suggested the abolition of the draft was a potential cure for the morale problem.<sup>32</sup>

In April 1971, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-MT) addressed the Senate about a particular fragging incident. His comments provided the impetus for newspapers around the nation to address fragging. The Associated Press reported on April 21, 1971, that fraggings had doubled in 1970 as compared to 1969, according to Pentagon figures cited by Mansfield. (The figures differ slightly from those cited by Guenter Lewy, which came from a later, amended report). This article defined fragging for the reading public, and it limited the definition to grenade attacks but did not characterize the acts further.<sup>33</sup> Syndicated columnists Robert Allen and John Goldsmith addressed the issue after Senator Mansfield's remarks. Again, they described the act for a public presumably unaware of the term or its meaning. The authors offered little opinion as to what motivated the attacks, but they quoted extensively from the Congressional testimony of U.S. Army Lieutenant General Walker T. Kerwin, Jr. Kerwin's testimony regarding fragging was focused almost exclusively on the manner in which the Army was addressing the problem, which at that point consisted of encouraging vigilance and

limiting access to explosive weaponry. Kerwin also echoed Sulzberger in assertions that the state of military morale and discipline only reflected that of American society.<sup>34</sup>

The same week that Allen and Goldsmith's column appeared, Jack Foisie of the *Los Angeles Times* filed a very insightful story on fragging from Saigon. Foisie proffered numerous different possible causal factors for fragging incidents, including the generation gap between conscripts and career soldiers ("lifers"), drug use, racial unrest, and the unpopularity of the war. Interestingly, Foisie also reported that a minority view existed which blamed increased reports of fragging on an attempt to avoid cover-ups in the wake of the My Lai atrocities. Foisie suggested that fragging, while real, was being exaggerated and that possible accidents or idle threats were being vastly over-reported as fraggings in a new air of openness after My Lai. Foisie offered up evidence to support this claim, citing the same numbers as the AP article (96 incidents in 1969 resulting in 37 deaths; 209 incidents in 1970 resulting in 34 deaths). These numbers differ slightly from Lewy's numbers, but the pattern from year to year is the same: incidents reported increased dramatically, while deaths reported decreased slightly. The later Pentagon numbers cited by Lewy continue the trend for 1971 (333 reported incidents and 12 deaths).<sup>35</sup> Foisie concluded that this disparity indicated that fraggings were probably being over-reported.

Foisie's article included another noteworthy observation. He reported that while fraggings typically happened in rear areas, they were sometimes committed by combat soldiers temporarily located in rear areas. He suggested that in this environment the combat soldier dealt with impulses that he suppressed on the battlefield where survival was paramount. Foisie's 1971 article is a combination of on-site reporting and outright

conjecture, but it is also more thoughtful and multi-faceted in its approach to understanding fragging than is the classic paradigm.<sup>36</sup>

In a 1971 story from the *Independent Press Telegram* of Long Beach, California, Ron Williams, a local disabled veteran, disputed comments by Texas Congressman Richard White. Representative White had recently returned from a Congressional trip to the front and stated that he believed drug use to be a principal cause of fragging. Williams countered, "Pot isn't what's making the fraggings. It is the 45 year-old sergeant who fights this war like World War II was fought." Williams did not deny that marijuana was used. In fact, he claimed as many as 90 percent of the men in his unit smoked it. But he claimed, as have many other soldiers in memoirs, that they never used drugs in the field, as there was hardly time for it and that to do so would have inhibited motor functions to a degree of near-suicidal risk.<sup>37</sup> These comments about "old school" sergeants are somewhat enigmatic in terms of what they might reveal about motives for fraggings. It is unclear whether Williams meant that Vietnam-era soldiers would not tolerate the combat expectations of "lifer" NCOs (classic paradigm) or that they would not tolerate the on-base discipline of these WWII holdovers (alternate version).

The court-martial of Billy Dean Smith garnered the most attention and media coverage of any fragging-related event of the war. Senator Mike Mansfield had not revealed the identity of the victims in the fragging to which he alluded on April 20, 1971. They were U.S. Army Lieutenants Thomas A. Dellwo and Richard E. Harlan. The suspect charged and tried by court-martial for this incident was Private Billy Dean Smith. Smith was the first fragging suspect to be tried in the United States, and his African-American heritage ratcheted up the political and social attention on the case. News stories

were published about the racial makeup of the judge panel and about the travails of the victim's mother. The organization Vietnam Veterans Against the War protested on Smith's behalf, and he became a cause célèbre for opponents of the war. Militant African-American political leader Angela Y. Davis spoke out on Smith's behalf, and Hollywood actor Burt Lancaster contributed \$3000 to Smith's legal defense, headed by noted Los Angeles attorney Luke McKissack.<sup>38</sup> While Smith's case may have been co-opted for political reasons, there were genuine doubts about his guilt, as the crime itself had destroyed any direct, forensic evidence. Prosecuted with circumstantial evidence, Smith was ultimately acquitted.<sup>39</sup> This case, in which actual testimony and evidence were presented, did not conform to the classic paradigm. The prosecution asserted a personal vendetta, not combat avoidance. This is typical of legal proceedings in fragging cases. The classic paradigm was almost never raised in a fragger's court-martial. Mitigation or actual innocence was argued by the defense. Thus, the classic paradigm seems to have developed *ex post facto*.

Recent journalistic references to fragging can also be illuminating. American engagement in sustained foreign wars in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century has prompted references to Vietnam-era topics and how they might affect contemporary military efforts. Thus, the extremely rare instances in which troops murdered their officers during the American war in Iraq have invited comparison to fraggings. As of October 2007, only two U.S. service-members had been charged with murder in cases that could potentially be described as fraggings. Army Sergeant Hasan Akbar was convicted and sentenced to death for attacking fellow troops with a rifle and grenades at a base in Kuwait in 2003. Akbar's victims were not his superior officers, and his motives were described by prosecutors as

religious fervor (protection of fellow Muslims, as Akbar was an American Muslim convert), and by defense attorneys as mental illness. As of this writing, Akbar awaits execution.

In a more typical fragging scenario, Staff Sergeant Alberto B. Martinez was charged in 2005 with the murder of his superior officer, company commander Captain Philip Esposito, and First Lieutenant Louis Allen. Martinez was accused of setting off several grenades and a mine in a billeting area in Tikrit. Martinez's prosecution was, again, limited to circumstantial evidence and witness testimony about prior statements of intent. Martinez was found not guilty in 2009.<sup>40</sup> Testimony about verbalized intent to commit the crime was problematic for prosecutors because such talk can be common, a fact also emphasized by Billy Dean Smith's defense.

A 2007 Associated Press article about the Akbar and Martinez cases contains some interesting references to fragging in Vietnam. Writer Estes Thompson quoted two different major university-affiliated historians on the topic of Vietnam fragging. Their comments fall lockstep into the classic historiographical paradigm. One of the professors referred to the fraggers as having been aware that they were destined for sacrifice. "They just wanted to get out of Vietnam," he added. Once again, the implication is clear: fraggers were defending themselves from risk of their lives in combat situations. The most revealing aspect of Thompson's article comes from one of his own statements. Thompson suggested that Martinez's attack might not qualify as a fragging because there were questions about his motive.<sup>41</sup> Thompson stated that fragging has multiple definitions that range from the murder of any superior to the "murder of a soldier's direct commander [in order] to avoid combat." In other words, since witness testimony had only



indicated that Martinez hated Captain Esposito, not that he feared combat, perhaps the incident was *not a fragging at all*. This study has established the standard view of fragging from historiography and implied that it is flawed; the case against the classic paradigm will be made fully in Part II. Remarkably though, in this AP article, the classic paradigm appears to have evolved from an explanation of fragging to an exclusive definition! This speaks to the enduring power of misinformation, and its tendency to grow and spread, gaining validity simply via repetition.<sup>42</sup>

Other modern news outlets have echoed the classic paradigm. A piece by Rabbi Arthur Waskow on the Washington Post website characterized fragging as “enlisted men throwing fragmentation bombs at the officers who were ordering them into hopeless, senseless battle.”<sup>43</sup>

A 2005 Denver Post article about controversial comments made by University of Colorado professor Ward Churchill revealed another way in which fragging is sometimes portrayed. Churchill, an outspoken opponent of the Iraq war and critic of American policy, had given a speech designed to encourage conscientious objection and counteract armed forces recruiting. In it, he asked the audience if, in addition to supporting conscientious objectors, they would also support someone who “instead rolled a grenade under their line officer in order to neutralize the combat capacity of their unit. Conscientious objection removes a given piece of cannon fodder from the fray. Fragging an officer has a much more impactful effect.” This comment references the corollary of the classic paradigm that suggests that fraggings were politically motivated acts of dissent or sabotage committed by principled opponents of the war. This angle is not much evident in the general historiography, though it does find more traction in works written

specifically about soldier dissent.<sup>44</sup> Though Churchill's comments did not specifically reference Vietnam, the connection is clear. The term "fraggings" and the way it was described are specific to Vietnam. As the statements were reported, controversy erupted over whether or not Churchill's statements amounted to an endorsement of fragging. Churchill and his attorney denied this to the *Denver Post*. Whether or not Churchill did indeed advocate these acts is immaterial to this study. His comments, though, reflect another facet of the classic paradigm, specifically the implication that fragging was in some instances an act of political dissent.<sup>45</sup>

Authors frequently cite two long-form articles from the war era that discussed fragging: Col. Robert D. Heinl, Jr.'s "The Collapse of the Armed Forces," and Eugene Linden's "Fragging and Other Withdrawal Symptoms."<sup>46 47</sup> Heinl bemoaned in strong terms the state of the Army at the time of his writing: "By every conceivable indicator, our army that now 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." Heinl's take on fragging was mixed. He described the victims as officers and NCOs who were aggressive or unpopular, thus echoing both the classic paradigm and the emerging alternate version. Heinl also discussed the impact of racial tension and drug use, and foreshadowed Ward Churchill's suggestion that fraggings could have political motives. Heinl cited examples in the GI press where overt calls to subversion were made and bounties were offered on certain officers. Heinl mourned the death of traditional discipline and obedience, and like the aforementioned Lt. Gen. Kerwin, he blamed American society. When reading his article it is difficult to discern whether Heinl was merely a "dinosaur" who was

combat, these men turned to acts like fragging to deal with the stress created by the environment and the military system. Linden went to great lengths to develop social and psychological explanations for fragging. In so doing, he came quite close to a blanket exculpation of the fraggers, not based on the self-defense scenario, but based on the psychological environment. "Murder was not in his heart" he claimed of one fragger, "it was in the air."

Journalism paints a much more heterogeneous portrait of fragging than does historiography. The self-defense explanation has received much support in the press. But different, perhaps more extreme, viewpoints emerge. Sulzberger and Heintz offered a hard-line reaction to fragging that sought mainly to condemn society for a breakdown. Churchill and Heintz suggested that fraggings were acts of political dissent. Finally, Eugene Linden implied that fragging was a consequence of the nature of the war itself.

### CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

Senator Mike Mansfield's April 20, 1971 comments in the Senate were a landmark in the history of public references to fragging. The press reported his comments and introduced the nation and the government to fragging as a term and a phenomenon. Mansfield, the Senate Majority Leader, was nearing the end of a long Congressional career. Prior to his political life, he had served in the U.S. Navy and the Marine Corps, and had been a professor of history and political science at Montana State University.<sup>48</sup> Thus, there was a certain gravitas to his position as a vocal opponent of American involvement in Vietnam.

Mansfield took to the Senate floor to mourn a constituent, Lieutenant Thomas A. Dellwo of Montana, although he did not identify Dellwo by name. Dellwo and Lieutenant Richard A. Harlan had been killed in a fragging at Bien Hoa Army base in Vietnam on March 15, 1971. (Private Billy Dean Smith was later charged with their murders, tried, and acquitted). Mansfield detailed the exemplary life and military service of Dellwo, a West Point graduate. Mansfield's fellow Montana Senator Lee Metcalf added that his understanding of the case left him certain that Dellwo was not the intended target of the crime, and details of the case support this. (This is another example of one of the most tragic elements of the fragging phenomenon: due to the nature of the crime, unintended targets were frequently victimized).

Mansfield's characterization of the phenomenon did not make any references that support the self-defense element of the classic paradigm. He acknowledged that a variety of motives might have existed for fragging. In extending condolences to Dellwo's widow and family, he exhibited faith that the military justice system would mete out appropriate punishment, but declared this to be manifestly insufficient comfort to the bereaved. Mansfield made no effort to excuse the perpetrator, referring to him as an "assassin" and referring to the act as "a craven act of violence".

Mansfield did, however, use the issue to frame a larger conceptual argument about the war. He essentially concurred with Eugene Linden's later argument, that the war itself--- by its immoral and unjust nature---was responsible for fragging, claiming "the atmosphere that drives an American GI to kill his fellow GI or superior is the real problem." The term "atmosphere" coincides with Linden's suggestion that "murder was

in the air.” Mansfield suggested that fragging “is just another outgrowth of this mistaken and tragic conflict.”

Senator Metcalf added that the “senseless act” was perpetrated by a serviceman who resented his commanding officers. This characterization is too general to fit the classic paradigm. The resentment he mentions could apply either to the classic paradigm or to the alternate version. But Metcalf expanded Mansfield’s argument that fragging was a symptom of a greater disease, that being the war itself. In fact, he assigned guilt to “all of us,” though it is unclear if he was referring to the Congress or to the people of the United States. Metcalf predicted a continuation of “symptoms of senseless activity because we are perpetuating and continuing a senseless war.”

Senator Charles Mathias (R-MD) dramatically echoed his colleagues by asserting “resolve and determination to see this evil, and all the other evils that blight the spirit of man that have sprung from the miasmic swamps and bogs of Vietnam, be terminated with an end to this tragic war.” Mansfield concluded the comments by associating fragging with number of other items---corruption, drugs, disease, casualties---which reflected the widespread tragedy of the war, “an ill-starred adventure if ever there was one.”<sup>49</sup>

The Congressional remarks about fragging support the classic paradigm, but only its abstract, “atmosphere of war” corollary. Mansfield indicated that motives might vary, and Iowa Senator Harold Hughes also noted that the events were on base, rather than the battlefield.<sup>50</sup> There is no suggestion in this record that fraggings were acts of self-defense or political dissent. However, the remarks of these Senators were perhaps the first suggestion from political opponents of the war that the war itself---America’s immoral and unjustified involvement in Vietnam---was responsible for the phenomenon of

fragging. Fragging was a phenomenon of the Vietnam War specifically. According to available data, never before had such incidents occurred at the same rate. Fragging is inextricably linked with many sociological and political issues of the war. But these Senators glibly confused correlation and causation. Without delving into the specifics of individual cases of fragging, or the specifics of the Dellwo case, they each stated unequivocally that fragging was a clear byproduct of an immoral war. They made no attempt to explain the connection, accepting it as obvious. Further, Metcalf's assertion that "all of us" are guilty contains an implicit suggestion of absolution for those directly responsible.

These men were politicians, and certainly the tone of their rhetoric can be understood as a natural part of political discourse. Politicians are not constrained by the same boundaries as historians. They all vehemently opposed the ongoing war in Vietnam, and no judgment is made here as to the sincerity or wisdom of that opposition. But their shallow analysis of fragging as an inevitable byproduct of a tragic, ill-conceived war does not add to actual understanding of the phenomenon. It does, however, reflect the familiar tendency to use tragedy for political purposes.

### SOLDIER ACCOUNTS

There is a dichotomy related to the presentation of fragging by soldiers in that the classic paradigm seems to have been based largely on oral history and anecdote, yet the best-known collections of oral Vietnam history contain few actual references to fragging. The works of Kindsvatter, Stacewicz, Milam, Appy, and Linden all make use of oral anecdote to support the classic paradigm. Since many other historiographical sources

present the classic paradigm without any documentary citation, those sources presumably base their assertion on some sort of anecdotal evidence.

There is an obvious and established problem when oral accounts are used to establish historical accuracy. Firsthand oral testimony must be given wide latitude in terms of its evidentiary value. Imperfect memory can lead to erroneous accounts. Deliberate falsehoods can be offered due to self-serving motives on the part of witnesses. The Epilogue will discuss this issue more thoroughly.

The scarcity of references to fragging in oral history may not be so surprising given the actual scarcity of the event. Fifty-seven men died as a result of known fragging incidents, out of more than two million that served in Vietnam. Despite the significance applied to the phenomenon by Eugene Linden, Senator Mansfield, and even by this study, the fact remains that fragging was not an everyday occurrence. However, numerous authors point out that *talk* of fragging was far more common than the actual event, providing disgruntled soldiers with a chilling power of intimidation. In that sense, perhaps it is surprising that more soldier accounts do not reference fragging, or at least “talk of fragging.”

Nevertheless, oral histories and memoirs can shed some light on both the presentation and the realities of fragging. Mark Baker’s *Nam* is a collection of oral interviews with Vietnam veterans first published in 1982. These transcribed interviews are presented anonymously; authorship is not cited or referenced in any way. Baker concedes that much of the narrative contained therein is thus potentially mistaken or false, but he defends the exercise as getting at a deeper, more abstract kind of truth.<sup>51</sup> The stories Baker shares are full of violence, atrocities against civilians, drug use, and severe

mental anguish on the part of soldiers. None of the stories specifically references fragging, but some associated concepts are present. Baker echoes Eugene Linden, and perhaps the Senators, when he ruminates about the way that the war brought out evil in men, by design. "War runs best on evil" he writes. "Evil was encouraged with rewards of medals, time off from the horror, a hot meal. How else can you persuade boys to kill one another day after day?"<sup>52</sup> Baker refers to evil inculcated by the military and exhibited both by battlefield exploits and atrocities against civilians. Linden and others have extended the concept to fragging, which takes place, for them, in an atmosphere of murder. There is a direct reference in *Nam* to a code about enlisted men dealing with superiors:

We didn't have to salute nobody. We dressed how we wanted to dress ...Nobody fucked with nobody in the field. An officer knows if he messed with you in the field, in a fire fight you could shoot him in the head. This was standard procedure in any infantry unit.<sup>53</sup>

Although this quote is vague, anonymous, and uncorroborated, and although it refers to battlefield murder, it adds anecdotal weight to the alternate version of fragging which stands in contrast to the classic paradigm of self-defense. The alternate version is that fraggers acted from a variety of motives, but that most commonly they were acting out of some sort of personal vendetta, usually against a superior, often regarding disagreements about mundane matters such as salutes and dress codes.

Mark Lane's *Conversations with Americans* is a notoriously grisly collection of oral accounts replete with numerous tales of atrocities. Unlike Baker, Lane identifies his witnesses. Like Baker, he does not corroborate their accounts. Thus, the veracity of the



stories, as a whole, is questionable. Some of these accounts assert that nightmarish atrocities were committed by U.S. troops against enemy combatants and civilians on an everyday basis. That events of that nature occurred and went unreported is widely accepted as fact. But Lane's tales describe these outrages as having occurred with a frequency and ferocity that strains credulity.

Lane's accounts do not mention fragging specifically, but he quotes U.S. Marine James D. Nell as saying of troublesome officers, "sometimes they get on your nerves or mess with you too much...(a) grunt will put a price on his head...the first one to kill him got that much money." Nell described the typical execution as taking place in the field, during a firefight, by gunshot. When asked if such actions produced an attitude change among the officers, Nell responded, "Oh yes. They started using their heads right quick. They would stop messing with the troops."<sup>54</sup> George Lepre has essentially proven that Nell's claims that he had witnessed this numerous times are pure fantasy. An investigation of the records of Nell's unit, C Company, 9th Engineer Battalion, reveals that no Marine in that unit died of any cause during Nell's entire tour of duty.<sup>55</sup>

Nell's story is a great lesson in the unreliability of oral accounts. It is more important in this case to note that oral accounts, whether truthful or not, do not generally support the classic paradigm. When given the opportunity (in 1970, in this case) to claim that officers were singled out for murder because they were endangering men's lives, soldiers instead typically described these officers as being annoying or assertive about discipline. This seems to indicate that the self-defense angle of the classic paradigm developed over time, after the events.

But, Lane's accounts echo Baker's notion that the evil acts of certain troops were the responsibility of the government that sent them and the military that trained and commanded them. Eugene Linden and others extend this reasoning to fragging. Thus, though Lane and Baker's subjects do not support the classic paradigm about the self-defense motive, they are quick to appeal to that part of the classic paradigm that blames the crime on the circumstances. Lane quotes Army soldier Allan Wright, in reference to famous U.S. war criminal Lieutenant William Calley:

It's not the Lieutenant Calleys that cause the massacres. The people who should go on trial for that are Nixon and Laird and Johnson...It's like the war crimes in the Nuremberg trials. Who got punished for them? Eichmann never turned on the gas lever, he never let the trap door. He had somebody do it for him.<sup>56</sup>

The implication here is that massacres such as My Lai were intended, or at least tolerated, by the U.S. government. While that accusation can not reasonably be extended to fragging, Linden and Mansfield have suggested that the atmosphere created by the war and by the manner of its prosecution are responsible for fragging. Wright was not the only soldier to express this sentiment. By implication then, policy makers, military leaders, and the democratic society of the United States itself could all be held responsible for fragging.

Randall Terry's *Bloods* is a famous collection of oral accounts from African-American veterans of Vietnam. Some of these accounts support the alternate version that fraggings were motivated by personal causes. In the cases Terry cites, that cause was

racial strife. Specialist 4 Richard J. Ford III recalled that “in the rear sometimes” blacks soldiers would disable grenades and then toss them into “little bourgeois clubs” in order to scare white troops and amuse themselves.<sup>57</sup> Specialist 4 Haywood T. Kirkland recounted that when black troops felt they were being tasked with less-desirable work details than their white counterparts, “the ones like me from the field would tell the brothers in base camp, ‘Look, man, you know how to use grenades. If you run into any problems, throw a grenade in their hooch.’”<sup>58</sup>

Uncovering truth in oral history can be vexing. The earlier discussion of studies of soldier dissent included examples wherein soldiers supported the classic paradigm in oral history, with exceptions noted by David Cortright. The foregoing examples reveal two common themes. First, generalized soldier accounts do not always support the classic fragging paradigm of the self-defense motive, sometimes tending instead toward the narrative wherein murders were motivated by personal grudges of various nature (the alternate version). Second, soldiers and authors of the period often express the idea that policy makers and military leaders were mostly or even solely responsible for acts of violence that exceeded combat norms, be they atrocities upon civilians or assaults within units.

## FICTION

Numerous short stories and novels about American soldier experience in Vietnam have been written since the end of American involvement. Many of these were produced by veterans, and overwhelmingly they are bleak portraits of the horrors of combat and the miseries of deployment. It is not controversial to suggest that most of these works were

designed as statements against the Vietnam War and war in general. These works often employ surrealism or an abstract artistic sensibility to express the external and internal chaos that confronted soldiers. A handful of these works mention the fragging phenomenon.

Larry Heinemann, a U.S. Army infantry veteran, wrote several novels and short stories about Vietnam. In 1997 *The Atlantic* published his short story "The Fragging." Heinemann's story supports the aspect of the classic paradigm that characterizes lower-level military leadership as dangerously incompetent. When asked by *The Atlantic Online* how that portrayal matched his own experience, Heinemann stated, "it was nothing so blunt or dramatic or clear cut" as in his story, "but from my point of view the whole enterprise was incompetent (and arrogant and stupid to boot)."<sup>59</sup>

Heinemann's short story is quintessential classic paradigm. He describes fictional Second Lieutenant McQuade as a "lifer" and "fucking new guy," a third-in-class graduate of the Citadel from a multi-generation Army family, sent to a rifle company in 1966. ("Lifer" referred to career military personnel, as opposed to draftees or short-time volunteers, whereas "new guy" referred both to inexperience in combat and a lack of history with the particular unit, thus explaining that apparent paradox in terminology). In the story, McQuade replaces a recently killed short-timer lieutenant who had been known for his battlefield acumen and adored by his troops. Heinemann portrays McQuade as arrogant, incompetent, and unreasonably demanding. McQuade takes charge of an ambush patrol and sloppily, noisily orders the emplacement of Claymore mines and a machine gun. The ambush is thus easily spotted by Viet Cong, and three of his troops are killed. The unit NCOs attempt to aid the lieutenant, imploring, "Be cool. What are you

trying to prove?" But their efforts are futile, as "McQuade came from the Citadel and could not be convinced of anything." Later, McQuade clumsily bumps PFC Humberto Reyes out the door of a helicopter while lecturing the gunner. Reyes curses McQuade as he falls to his death.

The company collectively decides that McQuade is a menace and that his death is the only solution. Private Giacoppo volunteers to rig a grenade-based booby-trap in McQuade's tent while the lieutenant is at a cookout with other officers. McQuade returns drunk and well-fed, triggers the trap, and dies. When the incident is investigated, all members of the unit deny any knowledge. This short story then, is a perfect illustration of the classic paradigm's self-defense explanation, as it describes a fragging perpetrated on a victim who was both careerist and incompetent, to such an extent that he was causing the deaths of his men.<sup>60</sup>

It is noteworthy that this narrative is set in 1966, which was long before fragging became widely known as a phenomenon. Almost all available data on the topic comes from 1969 and later. Fraggings thus has been associated with the post-Tet, Vietnamization period of the war. It is unclear whether this indicates a flaw in Heinemann's understanding of the phenomenon or an assertion that fragging indeed occurred widely during the earlier, combat-intensive, more hopeful years of the war. Most data indicate that fragging was a "symptom of withdrawal" as Eugene Linden indicated, but to what degree and under what circumstances it occurred prior to 1969 remains largely unknown. In his seminal study on military justice on the Marine Corps in Vietnam, Gary Solis indicates that fraggings were essentially non-existent in 1965 and 1966.<sup>61</sup> George Lepre contends that the first actual fragging took place in 1966, but that incidents were very

isolated until 1968.<sup>62</sup> Even so, is certainly possible that a better understanding of fragging in this earlier period might lend greater credence to the classic paradigm.

Tim O'Brien is a Vietnam veteran and novelist whose works have enjoyed a stellar reputation among literary critics. Most of his works, including *If I Die in a Combat Zone* and *The Things They Carried*, involve the war. 1978's *Going After Cacciato* tells a non-linear tale, marked by hallucinatory imagery. The principal narrative centers on a strange odyssey that takes a squad from Vietnam through Burma, India, Iran, and France in pursuit of an AWOL colleague, the eponymous Cacciato. But flashbacks by the protagonist, Paul Berlin, reveal that a fragging had taken place earlier, wherein Lieutenant Sidney Martin was murdered. These recurring flashbacks are the secondary narrative of the tale. Where Heinemann's McQuade was almost a caricature, Martin is a much more complex character. Martin is not portrayed as incompetent, but he is described as dutiful, old-fashioned, overly aggressive, and too committed to the mission for his soldiers' taste. Martin was "a believer in mission, a believer in searching tunnels and bunkers. Too disciplined. Too clearheaded for such a lousy war."<sup>63</sup> The tunnels and bunkers were the big issue in the tale of Sidney Martin, recalling Christian Appy's description of fragging. Military protocol demanded a search, but the soldiers were quite hesitant to engage in this perilous task. Martin insisted on protocol, and on one occasion that insistence had resulted in the death of Private Frenchie Tucker.

Later, the issue is revisited as Martin argues that it is standard operating procedure to search holes and tunnels for intelligence before blowing them, despite the death of Tucker. This time however, Martin searches the hole himself after finding no volunteers. Even so, the unit fears he will insist they all take a turn in the future. The issue is

summarized by Private Oscar Johnson: “I tol’ you, the man just don’ *grasp* facts. All he grasps is SOPs.” Johnson then alludes to the rationale for fragging, a term that is never used directly, explaining, “It’s preservation. That’s all it is---it’s self-fuckin-preservation.”<sup>64</sup> O’Brien does not portray the fragging, but the narrative makes it clear that it occurred. O’Brien’s tale, while much longer and more nuanced than Heinemann’s, also essentially hews to the classic paradigm of self-defense.

Karl Marlantes released the novel *Matterhorn* in 2010 to tremendous critical acclaim. Marlantes is a highly decorated Marine, a veteran of Vietnam, and a former Rhodes scholar. In an article from *The Times* (London) from August 20, 2010, Marlantes is portrayed by Anthony Loyd as a proud Marine and “no pacifist” who was nonetheless troubled by the ongoing U.S war in Afghanistan. Though he recounts horrifying combat, debilitating stress, and gruesome death and injury, Marlantes does not fit neatly with earlier, pointedly antiwar veteran novelists. His novel and subsequent memoir, the aforementioned *What It Is Like to Go to War*, stand out due to their thoughtfulness and complexity. While the memoir makes some erudite literary references, the fictional *Matterhorn* eschews the literary flourishes of many other Vietnam novels in favor of realism.

Marlantes makes fragging a significant plot point in *Matterhorn*, and though his presentation is more multi-faceted than others, he still reinforces the classic paradigm. (It is interesting that, although two fraggings and two intra-unit gun incidents appear in *Matterhorn*, fragging is not referenced in Marlantes’s memoir). One fragging victim is Lieutenant Colonel Simpson, one of the prime antagonists of the narrative. He is presented as being totally devoted to the advancement of his career and to pleasing his

superiors. This leads him to force his lieutenants to hump their men on long, grueling treks far beyond their capability simply so Simpson can show off to his superiors. A large portion of the book is given to describing this brutal "Trail of Tears Op." Simpson repeatedly accuses his men of laziness when they are clearly performing beyond any reasonable expectation. His thoughts on the matter: "By God, all they needed was a good fucking jacking up. A little leadership."<sup>65</sup> This perfectly befits fits the image of the classic paradigm officer.

Later, Simpson's orders progress from those that endanger Bravo Company by exertion to those that endanger the unit by unnecessary exposure to combat. An order is given to take the titular hill, Matterhorn, by an action that turns out to be very destructive to the company in terms of casualties. This deadly assault is the climax of the novel. Marlantes's protagonist, Lieutenant Mellas, considers shooting Simpson at one point, because "these guys have come through too much shit to be killed by a fucking madman."<sup>66</sup> Later, Simpson is awakened when a disabled grenade is tossed into his hooch, along with a note blaming him for all the fallen of the company.

Marlantes, as O'Brien and Heinemann before him, eloquently portrays the classic paradigm in dramatic narrative. Marlantes, however, varies the presentation. Another subplot involving a fragging based on racial animus is far more in keeping with the alternate version. The frequency with which race was a factor in fraggings is unclear, but Marlantes's second fragging portrayal is an example of the kind of interpersonal conflict included in the alternate version. African-American Marines Henry and China have a longstanding feud with Staff Sergeant Cassidy, who has given them ample confirmation that he is a malicious racist. *Matterhorn* ends with unidentified soldiers attempting to frag



Cassidy but tragically killing second Lieutenant Hawke, one of the heroes of the book, instead. The tragically unintended victim and the personal vendetta unrelated to combat make this depiction of fragging a good example of the alternate version.<sup>67</sup>

### FILM AND TELEVISION

Perhaps no medium has more impact on how history is perceived by the average person than the dramatic narratives of film and television. Millions of people have viewed *Apocalypse Now* or *Platoon* while relatively few have ever read Marlantes or O'Brien, let alone Herring, Karnow, or Lewy. Thus, this medium has had tremendous influence on public perception of the Vietnam War. Films on the war have occasionally referenced fragging.

The first wave of Vietnam films---*Apocalypse Now*, *Coming Home*, *The Deer Hunter*---do not mention fragging. These films hardly reference combat in any real sense, though, focusing instead on soldier experience at the home front or on surreal allegories. Many 1980s action films gloried in mythology and revisionist patriotism, but more serious works sought to realistically portray the war and all of its horrors as experienced by soldiers or Vietnamese civilians. Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*, based on Gustav Hansford's *The Short-Timers*, does not mention fragging but does portray Marine boot camp training as an experience that can dehumanize young men to the point of murder and suicide. This recalls the facet of the classic paradigm that views the war, its authors, and the men who determine how it is to be fought, as the responsible parties

Oliver's Stone's famous, Oscar-winning, antiwar epic *Platoon* references fragging. For all his association with extremism and conspiracy, Stone, an Army infantryman in 1967 and 1968, commented in 1989 in a way that reflects an understanding of fragging more consonant with the alternate version. Reflecting on the four years after Tet and the decision to withdraw, Stone wrote, "Dissension and mutiny grew in the ranks...Fraggings on a scale never seen in modern war occurred, and black/white relations grew worse...Marijuana, and eventually heroin, usage engulfed a portion of the troops."<sup>71</sup> Stone's observation is not a thorough explanation of fragging, but his association of fragging with drugs, race, and general dissatisfaction is more aligned with the alternate version. He does not mention heroic self-defense.

Fragging is mentioned twice in *Platoon* as well, and much as in *Casualties*, it is in reference to personal power struggles. The scenario is unlike either historiographical version of fragging that we have considered. Fragging is referenced as a solution to the separate problems believed caused by Sergeants Barnes (Tom Berenger) and Elias (Willem Dafoe). Barnes is a fierce warrior, and a sadist. His leadership is turning soldiers to their darker impulses and he presides over a reign of terror against local villagers. Elias is the principled hero who reins in Barnes and gives the protagonist (Charlie Sheen's young volunteer Taylor) a more idealized role model. Fragging is suggested for both men by different parts of the platoon---for Elias, lest he report on Barnes's atrocities; and for Barnes, when Taylor suspects he has killed Elias. No fraggings occur, but both men are ultimately killed by their comrades. Elias is shot by Barnes, and Barnes, in turn, by Taylor.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, the most direct treatment of fragging in a filmed narrative is “The Fragging,” an episode of an anthology entitled *Vietnam War Story* that aired on the HBO premium cable network in 1987 and 1988. While not as large a part of public consciousness as *Platoon* or *Full Metal Jacket*, the short film is the only dramatic narrative to focus on the phenomenon. “The Fragging,” just like the short story of the same name, is archetypal classic paradigm. Troops are holding Captain Phelan responsible for their unit’s high casualties. Phelan is presented more sympathetically than the officers in the aforementioned novels. He is portrayed as earnest, not arrogant, but still dangerously incompetent. “That man freaks me out more than the VC, the NVA, and the whole goddamn Chinese Army,” comments one soldier. The story follows the men as they deliberate whether fragging is murder, revenge, or self-preservation, and whether it will be effective in the long run (as a replacement might be just as bad). They also ponder who will perform the deed and how it should be done. The story takes an interesting turn when Captain Phelan suffers an emotional breakdown over the deaths of his troops and is removed from duty. Thus the fragging never takes place and the captain is revealed in very sympathetic light for both the troops and the viewer.<sup>73</sup>

One aspect of fragging that the film and fiction sources convey accurately is the group dynamic. There was more “talk of fragging” than actual fragging in Vietnam. Whether this talk was serious or simply soldiers venting about their frustrations varies from case to case. The evidence of actual fraggings reveals that in many cases the events were discussed, planned, and/or carried out by groups. Other cases seem to reveal a “lone wolf” perpetrator. While the classic paradigm presents groups discussing threats to their

safety, the alternate version indicates the conspiracies were addressing concerns of a totally different character. The difference is in motive.

The preceding pages reflect the result of a very thorough examination of the ways in which various media have presented fragging. It may seem from this review that there has been good deal of reference to fragging. Considering that this represents most of the information one can find on the topic, it really is not very much. Thus, it is apparent that the issue has not been fully and properly investigated. Still, an image emerges of "what fragging was," according to these sources. The overwhelming majority of these sources indicate that fraggings were acts of self-defense, deliberated upon in groups and then performed by troops who felt that their collective lives were in danger due to the unnecessary aggressiveness and/or the incompetence of their officers on the battlefield. Two corollaries to this classic paradigm also appear, with much less frequency, suggesting that fraggings were expressions of principled political opposition to the war or that fraggings were simply a symptom of an unjust, chaotic, immoral war and the responsibility of those who created that war.

An alternate version does appear in a decided minority of these media. Some authors, some soldier accounts, and some articles, suggest that fraggings were typically rear-area events, unrelated to combat, that had more to do with discipline and interpersonal struggles, often involving drug use. Historical data—studies based on criminal investigations, studies based on survey information, and primary documents related to known fragging cases—reveal the alternate version to be the more accurate analysis.

## PART II

### DATA AND THE ALTERNATE VERSION

In the ensuing pages, this study will examine sources that present data regarding specific incidents of fragging in Vietnam. This data is limited. Psychiatrist Thomas C. Bond's survey of convicted fraggers at Fort Leavenworth is one of the best sources for data on fraggers, but it is constrained by the fact that the survey only included twenty-eight subjects.<sup>74</sup> George Lepre's book *Fragging* is thorough and scientific, and based on records of numerous criminal investigations. This study also directly examines the court-martial records of several convicted fraggers, but criminal records fail to paint the entire picture because so many incidents were not solved.

Even with these limitations, the data-based approach has greater probative value relative to the truth about fragging than does the anecdotal approach of the classic paradigm. Bond's data represent direct testimony of known perpetrators. The criminal records were produced by the military, but they generally include testimony by the

accused or on behalf of the accused. Many of these individuals pleaded guilty or sought redress other than on the grounds of actual innocence. It must also be remembered that these records reveal facts about fragging irrespective of the guilt or innocence of the accused. For example, facts such as the location of the event or the type of unit involved are not in dispute, and these facts go directly to the question of accuracy of the classic paradigm. Often the defense offered was an alternate theory of the crime that presented another potential perpetrator, based on that individual's personal disputes with the victim. Billy Dean Smith's defense followed this pattern, with Smith portrayed as the "fall guy" for a group of men who had discussed an attack. In other words, these records frequently support the alternate version of fragging, regardless of whether the accused was actually guilty or innocent.

The alternate version is by definition a refutation of the classic paradigm. The classic paradigm defines fragging narrowly, as self-defense, and possibly political dissent. The alternate version presents fragging as a multifaceted phenomenon, with various causes. The data reveal that rear-area support units were the primary locus of fraggings, with boredom, personal grudges, drugs, alcohol, and the emotional or mental troubles of perpetrators as the most frequent causes. Self-preservation is only very rarely mentioned in the data, and politics is not mentioned at all. Factors that will be examined in Part II are: 1) *rear-area support units*---the location of most fraggings; 2) *grudges and disputes*---by far the most common motive; 3) *personal problems*---mental health or family issues affecting perpetrators; 4) *drugs and alcohol*---an almost universal factor in fraggings; 5) *politics*---the role, or lack thereof, of politics as motivation for fraggings; 6) *group dynamic*---though generally carried out by an individual, fraggings were often

devised by groups; 7) *the wrong man*---the nature of the crime meant the victims were frequently not the targets; 8) *Project 100,000*---this personnel policy may have played a role in fragging and other issues of criminality among enlisted men during the Vietnam War.

### REAR-AREA SUPPORT UNITS

The most fundamental way in which the classic paradigm and the alternate version differ regards the location of typical fraggings and the occupations of individuals who committed them. The classic paradigm presents fraggings as performed by combat troops over combat-related issues. Popular culture leaves an image in the mind of the general public of war as combat. Veterans and students of military history know better. The logistical "tooth to tail ratio" of American armies at war is very significant. The ratio was typically 1:10 in Vietnam. Far more troops operated in logistical, support capacities---as cooks, mechanics, bureaucrats, trainers, engineers, communications specialists---than served as combat soldiers. These support tasks are necessary, even vital, but the dangers are much less, and the stresses much different, than those of combat.

Neither version of fragging claims that these events took place during combat. The definition used in this study excludes combat incidents. Thus, all fraggings took place in some kind of garrison environment, where soldiers lived and slept. But there are different kinds of garrison environments. Smaller, temporary establishments existed close to areas where the North Vietnamese Army or Viet Cong insurgents were known (or

hoped) to be operating. These were close enough to the action to send out combat units via helicopter or on foot patrols. The Khe Sanh combat base near the Demilitarized Zone, constantly beset by the NVA, is an example. Other bases, larger and generally more secure, were located much further to the south, in friendlier territories, and were the location of logistical tasks. These areas certainly housed combat troops when they were not engaged in operations, and in an insurgency war like Vietnam, no location is ever truly far from enemy activity. But many U.S. military personnel deployed to Vietnam performed tasks other than combat and were not exposed to the same dangers as infantry companies. The data reveal that fragging was typically a phenomenon of the rear area, involving troops assigned to support units.

In his landmark study of military justice in the Marine Corps during Vietnam, Gary D. Solis concluded that fragging in the Marines was usually a rear-area event.<sup>75</sup> Marine PFC Israel Barrios, convicted of fragging, worked at Maintenance Squadron of Marine Aircraft Group 12 at Chu Lai. He was convicted of assaulting Master Gunnery Sergeant Fred L. Schaper behind the mess hall.<sup>76</sup> Fragger Lamont Spears worked in the motor pool of the 588<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion at Thien Ngon.<sup>77</sup> Other occupations of known perpetrators included Land Mine Warfare school instructor, radar monitor, and engineer. Fraggings occurred in the 64<sup>th</sup> Finance Section, the 647<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Company, and the 27<sup>th</sup> Surgical Hospital. Fewer than thirty percent of Army fraggings in 1969 took place in infantry companies, and these rarely had anything directly to do with combat.<sup>78</sup> This belies the classic paradigm.

All of the factors that correlate with fragging---boredom, racial militancy, drug use, idleness, feuds---were realities of the rear almost exclusively. These conditions were



pervasive for permanent rear-area support troops. For combat soldiers, these conditions were generally nonexistent in the field; there was simply no time or energy for drugs, boredom, or petty disputes. But in the rear, combat soldiers and functionaries alike turned to these endeavors. In Part I, Eugene Linden and Jack Foisie were cited as suggesting that fragging can occur precisely because enlisted men have been trained and equipped for combat but, in the rear, are not met with its demands. George Lepre offers a similar argument, asserting that “esprit de corps waned in rear areas” while boredom and “busy work” led soldiers into mischief. He cites the case of Private Gilberto Hernandez, a well-regarded machine gunner who exhibited no disciplinary problems until his rear area posting at the very end of his tour. While confined to the rear, Hernandez had altercations with three superiors, one of whom he assaulted with a Claymore mine.<sup>79</sup>

Whether combat soldiers or support personnel, the majority of fraggers perpetrated their crimes in secure rear areas. They almost never cited the combat issues of the classic paradigm as their motive.

### GRUDGES AND DISPUTES

The classic paradigm sometimes connotes a sense of heroism or high principle on the part of fraggers. Details of motive in actual cases tend to be more tragically banal. Captains and sergeants were the most common targets. Sergeants were most responsible for discipline and work details, and captains were the highest-ranking officers with whom these men generally had contact. Thus disgruntled soldiers usually viewed these two types of authority figures as the sources of perceived injustices.<sup>80</sup> Private David W. Bost apparently fragged a staff sergeant over a dispute involving cigarettes. PFC George M.

murder a third party, PFC Paul E. Nadeau. Marine Corporals Thomas W. Fowler and William A. Sprouse were both instructors at the Land Mine Warfare School at Da Nang. They were known to have had a longstanding quarrel, but the attempted murder of Sprouse by Fowler via six pounds of explosives was apparently precipitated by a dispute over an electric fan.<sup>88</sup>

These motives have been established primarily by the statements of the accused. In some cases the accused may have been scapegoated by a group who planned and executed a fragging. In any event, the nature of these fraggings is clear, even in the occasional case where the guilt of a specific individual may be in doubt. In no way does the classic paradigm apply in any of these cases.

Racial animus was another factor that may have contributed to some fraggings. Thomas C. Bond concludes that race was not a factor, but he allows that only four of his subjects were African-American, and that two of them indeed expressed that race was a factor.<sup>89</sup> Wallace Terry's *Bloods* contains anecdotal tales of black soldiers using smoke grenades to intimidate white soldiers.<sup>90</sup> A fragging occurred at Dau Tieng on April 5, 1968, the day after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Two separate explosions occurred amidst a night of several gatherings of black soldiers drinking and expressing outrage over King's murder.<sup>91</sup>

The apparent intended victim in the famous Billy Dean Smith case was accused at Smith's trial of exclaiming, "those niggers did it," at the time of the incident, a charge he denied.<sup>92</sup> Race was a central factor in the widespread support Smith received during his trial. Smith's defense claimed racism was at the root of his framing by the Army and his unjust pretrial confinement. (His supporters pointed out that Lt. William Calley, who was

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white, was walking around freely as he awaited trial). African-American Private Bruce Perry confessed to having detonated a Claymore mine next to the billet of Staff Sergeant Clarence D. Hodges, whom he accused of referring to him as "boy."<sup>93</sup> At least one fragging incident involved testimony about a racial motive involving a white subordinate and a black superior. Specialist John W. Wheat was alleged to have said, "I'm going to kill a damn nigger," before an attempt on the life of Staff Sergeant William H. Marley.<sup>94</sup>

George Lepre compared many traits of fraggers convicted of murder against a random control sample of 470 Army enlisted men in Vietnam in 1971. Many fraggers avoided detection, which is clearly an important variable when forming conclusions. Still, Lepre found that African-Americans were over-represented among fraggers. The convicted fraggers were 56 percent white, 36 percent black, and 8 percent Hispanic, while the control group was 80 percent white, 13 percent black, and 5 percent Hispanic.<sup>95</sup> Lepre ultimately concludes that race was an important but not central factor in fragging. Many fraggings involved perpetrators and victims of the same race, and in most cases that involved different races, there is no evidence that race was a factor.<sup>96</sup> Clearly, race was at least an occasional motivating factor in fraggings, but the most common factor appears to be grudges over discipline or disputes over the most trivial of matters.

### PERSONAL PROBLEMS

Most fraggers suffered from personal problems, such as the lingering effects of rough upbringings, mental or emotional health issues, or poor social skills. Some of the evidence of this is taken directly from testimony by accused or convicted fraggers offered at court-martial or in response to Thomas Bond's survey. Since this information may

have been originally intended to exculpate the accused or to mitigate punishment, it should be taken with a grain of salt. Still, the fraggers as a group seem to have been a troubled lot, and this may be why so many trivial disagreements escalated to murder.

Bond's survey of fraggers revealed a group of men who uniformly came from troubled background involving parental separation or domestic abuse, poor school performance, and some minor criminal troubles. Only five of Bond's twenty-eight subjects had graduated from high school. These men expressed general disappointment in their lives and a low tolerance for frustration. They tended to isolate themselves socially, reported feelings of inadequacy, and exhibited signs of acute anxiety. Many expressed that they had hoped enlisting in the Army would improve their lives, help them demonstrate their worth, or allow them to escape troubled circumstances. Bond, a psychiatrist, posits that the particular crime of fragging manifested many of these emotional issues. Many of these men struggled with authority figures precisely because of their backgrounds and their self-esteem issues. They often identified a single superior as a nemesis who was the source of all of their problems in enlisted life. Bond suggests that the surreptitious act of fragging, performed at night (as virtually all fraggings were), without contact with the intended victim, indicates a sense of inadequacy in the face of the perceived nemesis. He adds that the annihilating force of the weapon would appeal to a man whose self-image is one of insufficiency and weakness. Finally, Bond notes that two-thirds of his subjects took no action to avoid detection, as if they thought their problems would disappear with the demise of the nemesis.<sup>97</sup>

Many of the fraggers offered mental disability and/or tough childhoods as a defense at trial, at the appellate level, or as mitigation for sentencing. William Schott's

mother testified that William had been damaged by his father's death when William was fourteen, by paranoid delusions and suicidal thoughts, and that he had dropped out of high school.<sup>98</sup> David Locklin testified that he came from a broken home, that he lived with relatives as a child and with the family of a girlfriend, that he ran away from that home after an argument, and that he ultimately was arrested for narcotics possession and given the option of jail or enlistment. Locklin's defense offered testimony as to psychotic and neurotic disorders. The Division Psychiatrist disputed these claims, but allowed that Locklin did display characteristic of antisocial and sociopathic behavior disorders.<sup>99</sup>

Typically fraggers were young and of low rank, which coincides with the underdeveloped coping skills noted among them. The average fragger was twenty years of age.<sup>100</sup> Three sergeants were convicted of fragging. All others convicted were specialists, corporals, or privates.<sup>101</sup> Testimony reveals that these men sometimes had personal problems at the time of the event. John Wheat was apparently distraught over a "Dear John" letter from his wife at the time of his crime.<sup>102</sup>

### DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Drugs are known to have been a major problem among the enlisted ranks of the Army and Marines in Vietnam. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, conceded the enormous scope of the problem in 1968.<sup>103</sup> Drugs and alcohol were nearly universal components in fragging cases. Almost 90 percent of Bond's subjects reported being intoxicated at the time of the incident.<sup>104</sup> Again, intoxication was sometimes offered by the accused as mitigation, but testimony corroborates most of these claims, and they are

easy to believe given the level of drug and alcohol abuse in rear areas during the last years of the war.

John Wheat testified that he became addicted to tranquilizers after the "Dear John" letter from his wife, and that he had been drinking beer and taking pills when he decided to devise a booby trap for Sergeant Marley.<sup>105</sup> David Locklin was revealed at trial to have been a drug user before Vietnam, and to have smoked marijuana and opium and used large amounts of the amphetamine Obesital while deployed.<sup>106</sup> William Schott's co-conspirator James Bumgarner testified that he used heroin the day of the attempted fragging of Billy Shaw and that he had been addicted for three years.<sup>107</sup> Witnesses testified that Thomas Fowler consumed seven to ten cans of beer before the murder of Lance Corporal Rodger Jones.<sup>108</sup> These are but a few of many examples.

This is not to suggest that the use of drugs or alcohol made these men homicidal, only that these substances were a frequent factor in the loss of inhibition required to devise and perform the crime. Also, drug and alcohol use were characteristic of the rear area, not the bush. Men on combat patrol generally lacked the time and access to these items, and their effect on motor skills in the bush made them very dangerous. Some fraggings were motivated indirectly by drug use because the discipline which the fragger resented related to drug use or the drug trade. Such was the case for Ignacio Garcia, whose friends were searched for marijuana. In another case, Staff Sergeant Robert A. Whitted was killed by a grenade hidden under a sandbag after marijuana users in the 173d Assault Helicopter Company grew weary of his drug searches.<sup>109</sup>

## POLITICS

The classic paradigm focuses mainly on the idea that fraggers acted out of self-defense, but some classic paradigm authors include the corollary that fraggers acted out of political principle. An idea implicit in the political component of the classic paradigm is the common assumption that fraggers were draftees, who would presumably tend toward antiwar sentiment more strongly than would volunteers. The data do not support this. Most fraggers were in fact volunteers, and none of the known perpetrators claimed to be motivated by national policy issues or opposition to the war. Most of Bond's subjects actually expressed general support of the war effort. In keeping with the image of typical fraggers that has been constructed in the previous three sections of Part II, Bond described his subjects as apolitical and "not given to participating in idealistic causes."<sup>110</sup> A much higher percentage of convicted fraggers were volunteers than were the soldiers of Lepre's control sample.<sup>111</sup> Volunteers can certainly change their minds about their support for a war, and the phenomenon of "reluctant volunteerism," where young men volunteer so that they can better influence the type of duty they will receive, should not be discounted as a factor. Some of the fraggers may have enlisted for this reason, but it seems that most of the fraggers volunteered for personal reasons such as escape, adventure, troubles at home, or a desire to search for self-worth. They expressed neither strong patriotism nor dissent. One fragger was even a "lifer". Staff Sergeant Alan G. Cornett was a decorated six-year Army veteran from a military family who had completed high school and two years of college.<sup>112</sup>



Another, Specialist Thomas Benoit, was highly regarded by his superior officers and had no prior disciplinary problems. Benoit was also an infantryman, one of the only combat soldiers discovered by this study. He also was alleged to have been drinking, smoking marijuana, and ingesting Binocet tranquilizer tablets the entire day of his crime. Cornett and Benoit stand as evidence that fraggers were not universally poor soldiers or malcontents. Benoit's case is also indicative that perhaps the single most pervasive characteristic of fraggings was the presence of drug or alcohol abuse.<sup>113</sup>

Even small-scale unit politics seems to have played little part in fraggings. It might be assumed that the types of officers and NCOs who motivated fraggings were universally disliked. Some certainly were. Captain Terrance W. Hoffman testified at the court-martial of Alan Cornett that LTC Donald Bongers, the intended victim, was "a very well-meaning individual but his handling of personnel leaves something to be desired."<sup>114</sup> But some fragging victims were quite popular. In the Billy Dean Smith case, authorities protected Smith for his own sake after his arrest due to outrage on base over the deaths of Lieutenants Dellwo and Harlan. Bruce Perry was "counterfragged" with a grenade after the death of Sergeant Clyde J. Ball. Walter Chambers feared for his life after his acquittal on charges of having murdered First Sergeant Warren Furse.<sup>115</sup> Not all fragging victims were universally unpopular.

George Lepre suggests that the political environment may have indirectly affected fraggers, and this argument holds up better than any direct connection with organized political dissent. Part of the explanation Lepre offers for the fragging phenomenon as specific to Vietnam is the idea of "enlisted culture." Enlisted culture in the later years of Vietnam featured the racial unrest and drug problems previously mentioned. Enlisted

culture was also characterized by a sense of frustration about the mission during the Vietnamization phase, and a stronger sense of anti-authoritarianism than ever before witnessed in American military forces. These sentiments were enforced by peer groups and empowered by many elements on the home front. Thus, while no evidence exists that fraggers specifically acted out of political principle, the socio-political environment may have encouraged their attitudes and facilitated their deeds.<sup>116</sup>

### GROUP DYNAMIC

Enlisted culture was also characterized by lots of griping sessions, and *ad hoc* conspiracies that led to fraggings. Many fraggers were loners, and many acted alone. But some acted either at the behest of a group or after a group had discussed the reasons that a potential victim ought to be fragged. This was a frequent defense at court-martial: if several individuals were known to have discussed the act, how could investigators be certain the individual the group offered up as the single guilty party was not just the “fall guy?” Still, these group discussions centered on the same mundane issues of rear area discipline, not the life-or-death matters so dramatically portrayed in the writing of Larry Heinenmann or onscreen in “The Fragging.” Some fraggers may have been unfairly accused by their peers. Lamont Spears acted in response to the Article 15s handed out to an entire group of men who had gone AWOL. Testimony in the case revealed an informal conspiracy in the case, wherein extensive talk of “what should be done” about Captain Peterson and Sergeant Cepiel occurred.<sup>117</sup> Ignacio Garcia’s intended victim actually testified in Garcia’s behalf, portraying Garcia as a very passive, sheepish individual who only committed the deed at the urging of his comrades.<sup>118</sup>

### THE WRONG MAN

One of the most tragic elements of the fragging phenomenon is that an unintended victim was so often killed or maimed. The nature of the act contributed to this, as booby traps or blindly tossed grenades can easily harm the wrong man. Intoxication on the part of the fraggers was certainly a factor as well. Also, Bond suggests that the typical fragger was the type of individual eager to avoid direct confrontation with his perceived nemesis, leading to furtive, sometimes mistaken, attacks. It can be debated whether any fragging victim deserved his fate, but the tragedy of these “wrong man” deaths is unambiguous, as is the reckless disregard for human life on the part of the perpetrators, regardless of their intent or later remorse. Thomas Fowler’s grievance with Corporal Sprouse over the electric fan resulted in the death of Lance Corporal Rodger L. Jones and the alleged declaration from Fowler that he “got the wrong one.”<sup>119</sup> John Wheat reportedly cried the morning after his attempt to frag Sergeant Marley resulted instead in the death of Captain John Seel.<sup>120</sup> The cases of Marvin Baldwin, William Schott, and Billy Dean Smith all involved unintended victims.

### PROJECT 100,000

In attempting to understand the origins of a widespread morale crisis and increasing criminal activity by soldiers in the late Vietnam War period, several authors have pointed to Project 100,000. The project was the brainchild of Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, who in 1966 decided that military entrance standards should be adjusted downward. Mental aptitude standards were significantly reduced. The stated

purposes of this were twofold: to give these unfortunate men from the lowest levels of society the vocational training and self-respect necessary for success in American society after their service, and to ease pressures on the military for replenishing its forces with an unpopular draft. Thus, the program had both social and military rationales.<sup>121</sup> Under the aegis of the project, nearly 350,000 previously unqualified men joined the United States military between October 1966 and June 1971.<sup>122</sup>

The program has always been controversial. McNamara insisted these men could be trained in ways that would both make competent soldiers of them and prepare them for life after service. The armed services were not keen on this influx of low-aptitude individuals. The program has always been accused of recruiting poor African-Americans and lower-class whites to serve as sacrificial lambs in McNamara and President Johnson's war. One author charges McNamara with dreaming up Project 100,000 after Johnson had declared the war unwinnable, because manning the Army with these men would garner less protest than would ending student deferments.<sup>123</sup> Another observer commented on the event of McNamara's death that his well-known late life confessions to grievous errors during the war should have included a reference to Project 100,000. The Category IVs, as these men were called, hailed primarily from inner city ghettos or the valleys of Appalachia, and reportedly had to be taught to tie their boots. They were typically so illiterate that graphic presentations---comic books---had to be used in their training in lieu of written materials.<sup>124</sup> It appears that these men were disproportionately represented in combat.

Some of the most troubling data about the project is revealed in an article from 1969 by its director, I.M. Greenberg. While enthusiastically defending the program,

Greenberg concedes that 40 percent of the project's recruits were black and that 47 percent hailed from the South. Greenberg revealed that the average percentile score for project recruits on the Armed Forces Qualification Test was 14. Nearly half had failed or repeated grades in school, and a similar number failed to complete high school. Approximately 15 percent read at a fourth grade level. Greenberg acknowledged that Project 100,000 men had "greater difficulty coping with personal problems" but claimed the armed forces had adequate systems in place to assist them.<sup>125</sup>

Whether Project 100,000 was good for its recruits remains debatable. Evidence suggests it was not particularly good for the military. One part of the concept was a plan not to inform these men's commanding officers of their status as Category IVs, in order to prevent their being treated differently. In other words, it was social experimentation. Technical school standards within the services remained unchanged, so Category IVs ended up in combat or as rear area unskilled functionaries. One study reveals that Project men were two and a half times more likely to die in combat as regular aptitude men, that they required four times as much training, were reassigned eleven times more often, and were arrested at higher rates.<sup>126</sup>

Category IVs experienced much higher rates of social and criminal troubles. A study presented to Congress indicates that they were convicted at court-martial twice as often as other troops. They were referred for psychiatric evaluation ten times as frequently and found to have very low tolerance for stress and frustration.<sup>127</sup>

It should be stressed that the direct relationship between Project 100,000 and fragging is not clear. The relevant data do not appear to be currently available. A study that ascertains the statistical correlation between the two would be very useful. There is

nonetheless a strong inductive case to suggest that Project 100,000 brought the type of individual most likely to commit such an act into the armed services in greater numbers. We already know that most fraggers were not high achievers and were known to have insufficient socialization skills, difficulty handling stress, and poor impulse control. There is a well-documented relationship between overall intellectual ability (IQ) and behavioral inhibition. As IQ decreases so does the ability to inhibit or control maladaptive or unacceptable behaviors.<sup>128 129</sup> Thus, though the data are incomplete, it appears likely that Project 100,000 was a factor in the fragging phenomenon.

Historical data such as Thomas Bond's survey, sources within George Lepre's *Fragging*, and Navy and Army court-martial proceedings reviewed for this study reveal a variety of causes for the fragging phenomenon. This data is admittedly incomplete, but is sufficient to begin to formulate an accurate image of the phenomenon. No singular picture emerges, but several factors are very common. Most fraggings occurred in rear-areas, were motivated by inter-personal conflict, and involved drug or alcohol use. Some fraggers had extensive personal problems. A group dynamic was frequently at play in the formulation of the idea to commit the crime. Politics seems to have played only an indirect role in fraggings, and most fraggers were volunteers, not draftees. The death or maiming of an unintended victim was a frequent, tragic occurrence. Some fraggings may have occurred in the circumstances suggested by the classic paradigm, but the data overwhelmingly indicates that the vast majority of fraggings took place according to the criteria that form the alternate version.

## **EPILOGUE**

### **LINGERING QUESTIONS**

The phenomenon of fragging has not been fully investigated. This study is not exhaustive. The data remain incomplete. Certain facets of the phenomenon call for further study. For instance, one could investigate the military response in terms of fragging prevention. The fate of fraggers in the military justice system is also fascinating. The length of terms served by fraggers convicted of murder is surprising. Although lengthy sentences were imposed, none of the fraggers served anywhere near the full term. When Reginald Smith was murdered in prison in 1982, only one other fragger convicted of murder remained behind bars. That fragger, W.E. Sutton, was released in 1999. No

fraggers received the death penalty. A study of why these terms were cut short and how that action compares to the treatment of other military criminals would be valuable. Another potential pursuit could be a more definitive analysis of the actual nature of fragging in Vietnam as compared to similar assaults in other wars. The data are not completely clear on this matter. Fragging seems to be particular to Vietnam, but a more thorough investigation into similar phenomena in other wars is needed.

This study passes no judgment on the American war in Vietnam as policy, nor is it meant to suggest that the typical "Vietnam soldier" was a troubled, drug-addicted criminal. On the contrary, this study confirms that neither the Vietnam soldier nor even the Vietnam fragger can be reduced to a singular description. Fragging was rare, and the fraggers do not represent Vietnam soldiers. Similarly, this study is not meant to absolve American officers; surely there were those who were unjust, incompetent, or even dangerous.

This study rejects the "atmosphere of war" argument, because it fails to fully address individual circumstances, and because it broadly exculpates offenders based on unknowable assumptions about their mindset. But that of course does not mean that war is not hell, or that the horrible circumstances some soldiers were forced to endure did not affect them in horrible ways.

This study raises three interesting questions. Definitive answers are not offered here, but some potential explanations that call for further investigation are presented.

1) Why was the fragging phenomenon specific to the latter part of the Vietnam War? The primary explanation for this might be that fragging was a phenomenon of the era more than it was a phenomenon of the war. Colonel Robert D. Heinl and George



Lepre both argue this. The late 1960s and early 1970s were a time of social upheaval in the United States. Anti-authoritarian attitudes, vociferous protest, distrust of older cultural institutions, rock and roll music, sexual revolution, the first widespread use of illicit drugs, the Civil Rights movement---these attitudes and events defined the period. And although fragging was not connected to organized political dissent, the milieu created by these radical changes and dramatic occurrences may certainly have helped foster a mindset wherein fragging could be considered a rational act. It is important to note here that while fragging might have been unique to the Vietnam War era, it was definitely not unique to the nation of Vietnam. During the war, fraggings took place at U.S. military facilities in Nevada, West Germany, and South Korea.<sup>130</sup>

Other reasons why fragging developed in Vietnam might include that the war was much longer than previous American wars, and by the late stages involved less combat and more rear-area boredom. Though it remains unproven, Project 100,000 may also have been a factor.

In his classic sociological study on enlisted men in Vietnam, Charles Moskos suggests that the primary group relationships that bound units together for mutual sustenance in previous American wars ceased to exist in Vietnam. Moskos found the primary group relationships that did exist to be largely pragmatic in nature, that is, subconsciously designed to aid in the individual soldier's own efforts at survival or personal wellbeing.<sup>131</sup> This self-interest was only heightened by the military's new policies on tour rotation in Vietnam. Twelve-month tours were instituted, according to the Johnson administration, so that the risks of service would be spread among a wide number of individuals and to give the men a goal to look forward to. Officers in

command positions were limited to six months with a unit. This policy was criticized at the time for not allowing units and officers the necessary time to properly learn the lessons of counterinsurgency warfare and build relationships with locals. (Former military advisor John Paul Vann noted: "the United States has not been in Vietnam for nine years, but for one year nine times).<sup>132</sup> But the policy was just as detrimental to unit cohesion and respect for the chain of command. In a 1976 survey at the Army's Command and General Staff College, a majority of officers felt that the frequent changes were detrimental to morale.<sup>132</sup> One historian has even suggested that fraggings occurred because in modern armies officers neither lead by example nor share the same risks as enlisted men. In other words, not enough officers died in duty in Vietnam, and fragging was some sort of subconscious corrective measure.<sup>133</sup>

2) *If the classic paradigm does not match the data, why did it come to be so widely accepted?* There is no evidence that the authors of the classic paradigm willfully distorted the truth. To be sure, there is *some* truth to the classic paradigm in that the self-defense explanation is known to have been raised in a few cases.<sup>134</sup> Many fraggings went unsolved, so it is certainly possible that the classic paradigm applied in some of those cases. Based on the available data, however, the vast majority of cases do not conform to the classic paradigm.

Also, many of the authors cited herein referenced fragging without the benefit of actual data available to historians of later years. The court-martial records reviewed for this study were only declassified in the early 1990s.<sup>135</sup> Information about fraggings prior to 1968, during the heavier combat phase of the war, is also murky. Fraggings only slowly became known as a peculiar phenomenon for which data should be recorded.

Some past proponents of the classic paradigm may have had political agendas. Clearly some authors and activists characterized fragging a certain way because it fit their conception of the war and aided their case for protest. Modern activists, like Ward Churchill, have echoed the classic paradigm for their own contemporary political purposes.

Another consideration is that the classic paradigm may have partially resulted from an earnest, well-meaning attempt to avoid demonizing the soldiers that fought in Vietnam. Many war critics have made great effort to blame political leaders and the military brass for any injustices in Vietnam. This could lead to a tendency to favor the explanation for fragging that exculpates soldiers (even as it accuses lower level officers). Jerry Lembke deconstructed the myth that Vietnam veterans were routinely spat on by hippies or other antiwar Americans in *The Spitting Image*. Lembke's work reveals that veterans and peace activists actually tended to view each other sympathetically. This sympathy then, could extend to a view of fragging which tends to generally exonerate soldiers.

When social sciences and national culture overlap, paradigms can be formulated from which deviation becomes very difficult. Bernard Brodie writes in *War and Politics*, "people wedded to dogmas will often continue to cherish them undiminished despite ongoing experience that to any detached observer would prove these dogmas wrong."<sup>136</sup> The classic paradigm, like many paradigms, has become entrenched by repetition, and those who have accepted it may be reluctant to re-evaluate. Further, the classic paradigm is both more dramatic and simpler than the alternate version, which lends it greater appeal. The classic paradigm promotes a heroic notion of a warrior in an impossible

situation. The alternate version is mundane; it essentially claims that fragging, despite the tragedy, occurred for a variety of commonplace reasons, not unlike most domestic crime.

Finally, to the extent that the classic paradigm developed because of oral history, the danger of relying on apocryphal tales must be considered. Recall the tale of James D. Nell, who claimed to have witnessed multiple fraggings, but whose unit in reality suffered no deaths by any cause. Christopher Browning has written in reference to his study of German Police Battalion 101 during the Holocaust, "not only repression and distortion but conscious mendacity shaped the accounts of the witnesses."<sup>137</sup> The same recognition should accompany any study of Vietnam oral histories. Mark Lane and Mark Baker readily admit that the stories they relate may not be true, but defend their process as valuable even so. In *Soldier Talk*, authors Paul Budra and Michael Zeitlin state that they "proceed from the axiom that everything said by the historical witness conveys a form of 'the truth' even when the speaker is consciously or unconsciously lying."<sup>138</sup> Perhaps there is literary, spiritual, even scientific value in such an approach, but surely such disregard for literal truth can result in the perpetuation of misinformation such as the classic paradigm.

3) Why does the truth about fragging matter? For the historian the answer should be obvious. We have an obligation to get the story right. Since the time of the great German military historians Carl von Clausewitz and Hans Delbrück, scholars of military history have recognized that for the study of history to have any positive effect on policy it must rid itself of myth and lore. But with fragging the issue is deeper. The classic paradigm, by suggesting that fraggers had some measure of justification for their acts, implies that the victims may have deserved their fates. Numerous fragging victims were

not even the intended targets, but among those that were, there is no evidence that they deserved their fates. They should be remembered accordingly.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 92<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1971, part 9: 10872.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas C. Bond, "The Why of Fragging", *American Journal of Psychiatry* 131 (11 November 1976), 1329.

<sup>3</sup> George Lepre, *Fragging: Why U.S. Soldiers Assaulted Their Officers in Vietnam* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2011), 228.

<sup>4</sup> Lepre, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 156, Table 4-2. Lewy cites: U.S. House, Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Department of Defense, *DOD Appropriations for 1972*, Hearings, 92<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> sess., part 9, 17 May-23 September 1971, p. 585 (updated later).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>9</sup> Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 364.

<sup>10</sup> George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* Fourth ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 301.

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Scribner, 1994), 126.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>13</sup> Peter S. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers: Ground Combat in the World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 150.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Buzzanco, *Vietnam and the Transformation of American Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 93-94.

<sup>15</sup> Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now: American Society and the Ending of the Vietnam War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 18.

<sup>16</sup> Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* (New York: Viking, 2003), 394.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Moser, *The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Stacewicz, *Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 1997), 146.

<sup>22</sup> Charles J. Levy, *Spoils of War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 46.

<sup>23</sup> David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt* (Chicago: Haymarket Books: 2005), 35.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>25</sup> Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like to Go to War* (New York: Grove/Atlantic, 2011), 140.

<sup>26</sup> Cortright 44.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>28</sup> James F. Dunnigan and Albert A. Nofi, *Dirty Little Secrets of the Vietnam War* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 1999), 222.

<sup>29</sup> Ronald Milam, *Not a Gentleman's War: An Inside View of Junior Officers in the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 158-160.

<sup>31</sup> Milam bases his claim primarily on the work of psychiatrist Thomas C. Bond, who studied and surveyed fraggers in the early 1970s. (See Part II). It is unclear on what information Dunnigan and Nofi base their similar claim.

<sup>32</sup> C.L. Sulzberger, "The Army and the People," *New York Times*, March 17, 1971.

<sup>33</sup> "Pentagon Reveals Rise in Fraggings" (AP) *New York Times*, April 20, 1971.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Allen and John Goldsmith, "Fragging under probe," *Inside Washington, Scottsdale Daily Progress*, April 26, 1971. (Syndicated column).

<sup>35</sup> See note 2.

<sup>36</sup> Jack Foisie, "Fragging incidents laid to generation gap, race, drugs, Vietnam War," *Los Angeles Times Service*, in *Arizona Republic*, April 25, 1971.

<sup>37</sup> John Lungren Jr., "Wounded Viet Vet Denies Drug Abuse Can Be Linked to 'Fragging,'" *Independent, Press-Telegram*, Long Beach, California, February 7, 1971.

<sup>38</sup> Lepre 56.

<sup>39</sup> Information in this paragraph was obtained from the following articles:

"Soldier to be tried for killing officers," (AP), *The Montana Standard*, September 9, 1972.

"First 'Fragging' Trail [sic] Jury Settled," (AP), *Florence Morning News*, November 5, 1972.

"Agony Behind Fraggings Trial," Patsi Aucoin, *Grand Prairie Daily News*, (Dallas), October 1, 1972. " 'Fragging' case verdict is innocent," (UPI), *The Albuquerque Tribune*, November 15, 1972.

<sup>40</sup> Paul von Zielbauer, "After Guilty Plea Offer, G.I. Cleared of Iraq Deaths," *New York Times*, February 20, 2009,

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/21/nyregion/21frag.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=Q](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/21/nyregion/21frag.html?pagewanted=all&_r=Q) (accessed March 25, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> The article was written prior to the acquittal and, in this matter anyway, is operating from the assumption of Martinez's guilt.

<sup>42</sup> Estes Thompson, " 'Fragging' attacks rare now: Few soldiers charged with killing commanders," (AP), *The Capital Times*, October 19, 2007.

<sup>43</sup> Arthur Waskow, "Fort Hood shooting a flashback to 'fraggings,'" in "On Faith Panelists Blog", [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com), November 6, 2009, [http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/arthur\\_waskow/2009/11/ft\\_hood\\_shooting\\_a\\_flashback\\_to\\_fragging.html](http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/arthur_waskow/2009/11/ft_hood_shooting_a_flashback_to_fragging.html) (accessed March 13, 2013).

<sup>44</sup> See the following sub-section, "Soldier Accounts."

<sup>45</sup> Amy Herdy, "Opinions split over CU prof's war comments; The 'fraggings' remark angers some, but Churchill's lawyer says he was stating fact; other criticize the media," July 1, 2005, [http://www.denverpost.com/ci\\_2834196?ADID=Search-www.denverpost.com-www.denverpost.com](http://www.denverpost.com/ci_2834196?ADID=Search-www.denverpost.com-www.denverpost.com) (accessed March 13, 2013). Guenter Lewy had mentioned political activism as a possible fragging motive, but conceded there was no evidence; see note 5.

<sup>46</sup> *Armed Forces Journal*, June 7, 1971.

<sup>47</sup> *Saturday Review*, January 8, 1972. *Saturday Review* was an American weekly magazine of wide circulation which focused on literary reviews and general interest articles and was published from 1924 to 1982.

<sup>48</sup> <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=m000113>

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 92<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1971, part 9: 10871-10872.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Mark Baker, *Nam: The Vietnam War in the Words of the Men and Women Who Fought There* (London: Abacus, 1987), xiii.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>54</sup> Mark Lane, *Conversations with Americans* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 242.

<sup>55</sup> Lepre, 34.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>57</sup> Wallace Terry, *Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War: An Oral History*, (New York: Presidio, 2006), 38.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>59</sup> "A Conversation with Larry Heinemann", [theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/unbound/factfict/heinint.htm), June 25, 1997, <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/unbound/factfict/heinint.htm> (accessed March 13, 2013).

<sup>60</sup> Larry Heinemann, "The fragging" *The Atlantic*. 279.n6 (June 1997): 68-69. *General OneFile*. Gale.St. Johnsbury Academy-Grace Stuart Or. 30 July 2009, <http://find.galegroup.com/ips/start.do?prodId=IPS> (accessed March 13, 2013).

<sup>61</sup> Gary D. Solis, *Marines and Military Law in Vietnam: Trial by Fire* (Washington D.C.: History and Museums division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1989), 34, 57.

<sup>62</sup> Lepre, 20.

<sup>63</sup> Tim O'Brien, *Going After Cacciato* (New York: Broadway Books, 1999), 105.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>65</sup> Karl Marlantes, *Matterhorn: A Novel of the Vietnam War* (New York: Grove Atlantic, 2010), 204.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 460.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 561-563.

<sup>68</sup> *Full Metal Jacket*, directed by Stanley Kubrick, Warner Bros., 1987.

<sup>69</sup> Eugene Linden, "Fragging and Other Withdrawal Symptoms," *Saturday Review*, January 8, 1972,

[http://eugenelinden.com/Fragging\\_and\\_other-Withdrawal\\_Symptoms.html](http://eugenelinden.com/Fragging_and_other-Withdrawal_Symptoms.html)  
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<sup>70</sup> *Casualties of War*, directed by Brian De Palma, Columbia Pictures, 1989.

<sup>71</sup> Bill McCloud, ed., *What Should We Tell Our Children about Vietnam?* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 122.

<sup>72</sup> *Platoon*, directed by Oliver Stone, Orion Pictures, 1986.

<sup>73</sup> *Vietnam War Story*, "The Fraggings", Home Box Office, 1988. The series is perhaps most notable for early appearances by eventual Hollywood stars Wesley Snipes and



Eriq La Salle. They did not appear in "The Fragging," but it did feature Courtney Gains, a recognizable actor from *Children of the Corn* and *The 'Burbs*.

<sup>74</sup> Bond's 1976 report on his study, in the American Journal of Psychiatry, is also limited by the fact that he summarized his findings in very brief article. The information is still of great value, but it lacks the weight of the specific details included in George Lepre's book.

<sup>75</sup> Solis, 111.

<sup>76</sup> *United States v. Barrios* (NCM 70-1408)

<sup>77</sup> *United States v. Spears* (CM 425344)

<sup>78</sup> Lepre 31.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>80</sup> Bond., 1329.

<sup>81</sup> Leper 99.

<sup>82</sup> *United States v. Schott* (CM 427113)

<sup>83</sup> *United States v. Wheat* (CM 425700)

<sup>84</sup> *United States v. Locklin* (CM 424813)

<sup>85</sup> *United States v. Spears* (CM 425344)

<sup>86</sup> *United States v. Garcia* (CM 426969)

<sup>87</sup> *United States v. Benoit* (CM 422738)

<sup>88</sup> *United States v. Fowler* (NCM 70-3599)

<sup>89</sup> Bond, 1329.

<sup>90</sup> Terry, 38.

<sup>91</sup> Lepre, 21-22.

<sup>92</sup> *United States v. Smith* (CM 429555)

<sup>93</sup> *United States v. Perry* (CM 424936)

<sup>94</sup> *United States v. Wheat* (CM 425700)

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-68.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>97</sup> Bond, 1329-1330.

<sup>98</sup> *United States v. Schott* (CM 427113)

<sup>99</sup> *United States v. Locklin* (CM 424813)

<sup>100</sup> Lepre, 67.

<sup>101</sup> Lepre, 76-77.

<sup>102</sup> *United States v. Wheat* (CM 425700)

<sup>103</sup> Lepre 112.

<sup>104</sup> Bond 1329.

<sup>105</sup> *United States v. Wheat* (CM 425700)

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<sup>107</sup> *United States v. Schott* (CM 427113)

<sup>108</sup> *United States v. Fowler* (NCM 70-3599)

<sup>109</sup> Lepre 114.

<sup>110</sup> Bond, 1329.

<sup>111</sup> Lepre, 76.

<sup>112</sup> *United States v. Cornett* (CM 429339)

<sup>113</sup> *United States v. Benoit* (CM422738)

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<sup>114</sup> *United States v. Cornett* (CM 429339)

<sup>115</sup> Lepre 155.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>117</sup> *United States v. Spears* (CM 425344)

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<sup>121</sup> <http://vietnam.ttu.edu/resources/mcnamara>

<sup>122</sup> Lepre, 63.

<sup>123</sup> Myra McPherson, "McNamara's 'Moron Corps'" *Salon.com* May 29, 2002, [http://www.salon.com/2002/05/30/mcnamara\\_3/](http://www.salon.com/2002/05/30/mcnamara_3/) (accessed April 15, 2013).

<sup>124</sup> Joseph L. Galloway, "100,000 reasons to shed no tears for McNamara," *McClatchy Newspapers: Commentary*, July 7, 2009, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2009/07/07/71430/commentary-100000-reasons-to-shed.html> (accessed April 16, 2013).

<sup>125</sup> I.M. Greenberg, "Project 100,000: The Training of Former Rejectees," *The Phi Delta Kappan* Vol. 50, No.10 (June 1969), pp.570-574, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20372476> (accessed April 16, 2013).

<sup>126</sup> Kelly M. Greenhill, "Don't Dumb Down the Army," *New York Times*, February 17, 2006, [http://live.belfercenter.org/publication/1519/don't\\_dumb\\_down\\_the\\_army](http://live.belfercenter.org/publication/1519/don't_dumb_down_the_army) (accessed April 16, 2013).

<sup>127</sup> Lepre, 63-64.

<sup>128</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15512928>

<sup>129</sup> [http://www.amazon.com/Neuropsychological-assessment-Muriel-Deutsch-Lezak/dp/019539552/ref=sr1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1366261951&sr=8-1&keywords=neuropsychological+assessment+lezak+5th+edition](http://www.amazon.com/Neuropsychological-assessment-Muriel-Deutsch-Lezak/dp/019539552/ref=sr1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1366261951&sr=8-1&keywords=neuropsychological+assessment+lezak+5th+edition)

<sup>130</sup> Lepre, 118-119.

<sup>131</sup> Charles C. Moskos, Jr. *The American Enlisted Man: The Rank and File in Today's Military* (Hartford, CT: The Russell Sage Foundation, 1970), 130.

<sup>132</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 205-206.

<sup>133</sup> Victor Davis Hanson, *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2009), 110.

<sup>134</sup> The cases of Marines Clyde J. Smith, Jr. and Reginald Smith are among these. See pp.13-14.

<sup>135</sup> Authors personal correspondence with George Lepre.

<sup>136</sup> Krepinevich, 7.

<sup>137</sup> Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper, 1998), xviii.

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