Consumer Under Fire: The Military Consumer and the Vietnam War

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CONSUMER UNDER FIRE
The Military Consumer and the Vietnam War

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the American Studies Program
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Evan Cordulack
2005
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Evan Cordulack

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ABSTRACT

During the Vietnam War a network of military owned and operated retail stores called post exchanges imported and sold American brand name goods to Americans and their allies working and fighting in Vietnam. The agency running the VRE, Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES), operated the exchanges to raise money for recreational programs to boost morale. By importing versions of American shopping and consumption habits to Vietnam, the PX served as space in which to contrast the American way of life and its accompanying affluence to a war torn Vietnam.

For many service members the post exchange provided a reminder of home. This reminder came in the form of commodities and the shopping experience itself. For some, the goods at the PX reminded them positively of home, for others the exchange’s shelves reflected the inequalities of America. African-American and female service members often did not have access to essential products. The items procured by AAFES catered to the wants and needs of white male consumers. The PX cast consumption as an acceptable behavior in which white men could participate. Through the items they offered, design of the store and sales promotions, AAFES created a space in which male consumers could spend their money while constructing and maintaining a sanctioned version of masculinity.

The American military helped make men feel comfortable consuming, however, military officials did not act alone. Corporations jumped at the chance to market their goods to American service members. Advertisers pushed their goods to troops to build brand loyalty and to create a patriotic image for their respective companies that would result in both immediate and future profits at home and abroad.
CONSUMER UNDER FIRE
INTRODUCTION

This project is my first attempt at understanding the relationship between the state, corporations and people. Here, I have chosen to focus on how a consumer culture mediated these relationships in Southeast Asia, mostly among Americans, during the Vietnam Conflict. The main institution in this project is the post exchange (PX)—a military owned and operated department store. During the Vietnam War a network of these retail stores, imported and sold American brand name goods to Americans and their allies working and fighting in Vietnam. The agency running the VRE, Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES), operated the exchanges to raise money for recreational programs to boost morale. By importing versions of American shopping and consumption habits to Vietnam, the PX served as space in which to contrast the American way of life and its accompanying affluence to a war torn Vietnam.

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In order to discuss how commodities functioned in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Conflict, we must first turn our attention to World War I. This war saw the American Military establish the infrastructure necessary to distribute goods to troops. World War II marked the emergence of advertisers who directed their attention to the military consumer. The structure (distribution and advertising methods) that would guide the Vietnam-era military market was mostly in place by the end of the Second World War.
CHAPTER 1. COMMERCIALIZING THE WAR ZONE

While in Burma during World War II, a young private’s thoughts drifted to his Aunt. Deciding to write her a letter, the soldier grappled with his memories as he put his thoughts on paper. Despite his frustrations—calling the war a “damn mess”—this soldier articulated one of the reasons why he, and others like him, fought. Rather than citing a broad-sweeping reason, such as defending democracy, this nephew posited a more nuanced mission for the American presence in the Pacific. To him, GIs fought to preserve freedom and the American way of life, symbolized in his words, in “the custom of drinking Coke.”

The relationship between the state and American corporations cultivated in wartime influenced the lives of many service members. Whether serving in the Pacific in World War II or in Southeast Asia in the late 1960s, American troops, while they could not participate in the American marketplace in the same way as civilians, never ceased to be consumers.

The tradition of distributing commodities to troops predates the United States, yet the patterns of consumption taking place in Vietnam did not take shape until the 20th century. Service organizations, like the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), began to provide goods to military personnel beginning in World War I in hopes of advancing their own agendas—such as temperance. More importantly, these organizations recognized and aided the U.S. military in structuring

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2 David M. Delo, Peddlers and Post Traders (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), 1, 2, 48, 51.
the troops' "right" to consume American products. The massive military mobilization of World War II, drawing from all segments of the population, inducted many advertising and marketing professionals into the Armed Forces. Once in the military, these men and women realized that their co-workers in the military wanted to purchase American goods and informed the business community of these potential consumers through a series of articles in advertising and marketing trade journals. At this moment, the confluence of existing distribution mechanisms established in WWI and the recognition of military personnel as consumers by the business and advertising communities permanently welded consumption to the lives of the men and women of the Armed Forces.³

Unlike previous wars, civilians and military personnel during World War I attempted to shape American fighting forces into a body politic free of vice and moral transgressions. Concerned mothers found a sympathetic ear in President Woodrow Wilson⁴ as they wrote him letters expressing their willingness to lose their son's lives to battle, but not to the bottle.⁵ Progressive reformers⁶ had support from some the

⁴ Wilson felt the same way, hoping that troops would return home "with no scars expect those won in honorable conflict." Quoted in Weldon B. Durham, "'Big Brother' and the 'Seven Sisters': Camp Life Reforms in World War I," Military Affairs (April, 1978), 58.
⁶ I am using "progressive" to describe the beliefs of reformers who wished to use the power of the government to fight the effects of increased industrialization and urbanization, while embracing capitalism, from the 1890s through the late nineteen-teens (Bristow 8-9). Progressives often felt that the best way to counter the new social conditions of the late 19th and early 20th century was through "moralist" means. In other words, if the government restricted alcohol consumption and immigration, the United States could reclaim its status as a "moral leader in the world" (Bristow, 10). By the time the US entered WWI, progressives included a number of pro-war reformers. These reformers—such as Secretary of War Newton Baker and President Woodrow Wilson—were involved with military policy (Bristow 6). A number of pacifist progressives begrudgingly supported the war as they feared war
most influential military policy makers. Newton D. Baker, the Secretary of War with a progressive political record, created the Commission on Training Camp Activities shortly after the United States declared war on Germany. The Commission promoted "wholesome" activities in hopes to replace pastimes rooted in the bar and brothel.\(^7\)

The War Department, under the influence of Baker and the CTCA, institutionalized a "Progressive" agenda\(^9\) by controlling how service members engaged in the exchange of commodities. The General Staff of the War Department drafted the Selective Service Act, which Congress passed on May 18, 1917,\(^10\) to include a ban on liquor and prostitution (commodified bodies) in and near military encampments.\(^11\) To replace these "items," troops could turn to other commodities. For instance, the Young Men Christian's Association (YMCA) gave service members overseas free sports equipment\(^12\) to dissuade them from purchasing banned commodities and engaging in discouraged activities like sex. Troops also had access to another popular, and addictive, commodity—tobacco.\(^13\) Courtesy of the War Department, troops found cigarettes in their food rations in addition to cheap (subsidized) smokes in exchanges. The War Department's zealous embrace of

\(^7\) Bristow, 4-8.
\(^8\) Cassandra Tate, *Cigarette Wars: The Triumph of "The Little White Slaver"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 66. The War Department also instituted a campaign that provide chemical prophylaxis to military personnel. Bristow, 8. For more on the CTCA and venereal disease during WWI, see Chapter 2 in Allan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
\(^9\) Davis, 530.
\(^11\) Brandt, 71.
\(^12\) "$97,817,005 Spent By Y.M.C.A. in War" *New York Times*, July 28, 1919, 10.
\(^13\) Tate, 66.
tobacco as a moral alternative to liquor and sex made the US government the “largest single purchaser of cigarettes in the world.”\textsuperscript{14} The federal government spent $80 million on tobacco from April 7, 1917 to May 1, 1919,\textsuperscript{15} and sold upwards of 70 million cigarettes a month at overseas PX’s and canteens.\textsuperscript{16}

In the early twentieth century, the military increased its control over how service members could purchase goods. At the same time, to free up resources to serve other military priorities, military officials increasingly subcontracted the selling of goods to organizations that they felt they could trust. During World War I, the War Department contracted the YMCA to run all exchanges and canteens abroad.\textsuperscript{17} The YMCA, as believed by the War Department, could distribute commodities to troops without taking advantage of them as consumers or compromising their ability to fight.\textsuperscript{18} The YMCA not only ran exchanges, but also distributed millions of cigarettes to troops, including those injured in hospitals, in Europe.\textsuperscript{19}

Private citizens also supported the war effort by sending commodities to troops. As soon as American forces arrived in Europe, newspapers across the United States ran articles, often including letters from the troops themselves, calling for civilians to participate in the war effort by sending cigarettes to American military personnel.\textsuperscript{20} The Red Cross organized a similar drive that asked Virginians to leave

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\textsuperscript{14} Tate, 66.
\textsuperscript{15} Tate, 75.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 76-77.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 76.
\textsuperscript{18} However, John R. Mott, General Secretary of the War Work Council called for an investigation by the Inspector General to determine if the YMCA overcharged troops—an allegation that a number of returning service members levied against the YMCA. “Y.M.C.A. Oversea had Record Year,” \textit{New York Times} (January, 5, 1919), 14.
\textsuperscript{19} Tate, 77.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 82.
packs of cigarettes in drop boxes scattered throughout Richmond to be distributed to non-deployed soldiers at a nearby Army camp.  

But, if we view consumption by American military personnel as a result of War Department social control the display of patriotic gratitude by American civilians we neglect the commercial aspect of consumption. The sale of cigarettes and other commodities benefited the corporations that produced them and the service proved a lucrative market. By World War II, corporate executives recognized the potential of the market segment represented by service members at home and abroad. Troops could still obtain commodities without paying for them, but now they gave their potential value as consumers to corporations in exchange for goods. Troops did not have to spend a lot of money while overseas to satisfy marketers. Marketers knew when the troops returned home, they would return ready to spend and purchase those items introduced, or made available, to them while serving overseas.

During the war, writers for industry journals like Printer's Ink told readers in the advertising industry how to influence the consumption habits of military personnel while deployed and upon their return to the States. However, this is not to say that all business pundits agreed on how to do this. Writers debated the efficacy and desirability of advertising to military consumers on the pages of industry journals. The more dominant side argued that troops enjoyed advertisements and marketing efforts directly raised the morale of GIs. They also suggested that, because

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21 Ibid, 80.
22 Lt. Col. Raymond C. Dreher "It’s Time to Answer the Critics of Wartime Advertising" in Printers’ Ink (23 March 1945), 24-26. This article addresses the number “young advertising men” who served in the military and because of their service were “confident that they would have knowledge not shared by their readers.” Dreher was also an Advertising Manager at Boston Insurance Company (Dreher 24).
of the high visibility of brand names, corporations and advertising sold a lot of products to troops while deployed in Europe and the Pacific and upon their return home.23

One article in the salvo that touted the benefits of advertising to troops ran in *Printer’s Ink* in January 1945.24 By including the testimonials of a number of male service members, both enlisted and commissioned, the article revealed the role consumption played in the lives of troops, or at least how these advertising executives imagined it did. In 1944, the *New Yorker* described a proposed “pony edition” of its magazine to troops overseas that would exclude all advertising to decrease the costs of shipping and sales price.25 The circulation manager from the *New Yorker* informed all military subscribers and received nearly four thousand replies.26

According to the sample of letters provided by the article, advertisements allowed service members to daydream about life in America even if they did not have access to the products sold in the advertisements they viewed. One Sergeant27 wrote how he could “look at an ad of Saks and imagine how wonderful it must be to walk up Fifth Avenue this time of year.”28 Instead of remembering the joyful, stressful, or ambivalent emotions that shopping might have created, this Sergeant recalled his fond

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23 Sgt. Vincent Lane, “Advertising—and the South Pacific Market.” *Printers’ Ink* (10 August 1945), 27. Lane, a Marine Sergeant serving in the South Pacific, refers to the debate in *Printer’s Ink*, coming from the advertising community. Dreher, 25.; Lane, 27. Both Lane and Dreher argue that troops spend a lot of their time reading magazines and the ads are important to the troops. Dreher says that troops “study” the ads and Lane says that service members will read even the smallest advertisements in magazines and newspapers. Possible reasons troops might have had for spending time looking at advertisements are included in Eldridge Peterson’s article “Leave Out the Ads? “Hell, No!” Say Men in Service.”


25 Ibid., 32.

26 Ibid., 32, 36.

27 Officers and enlisted service members did not necessarily engage with commodities in the same way, and whenever possible I try to discuss these differences.

28 Peterson does not identify the service members he quotes beyond their rank. Ibid., 34.
memories of the environment in which shopping occurred. He recalled the atmosphere that created the desire for goods, which included the "the first touches of autumn in the air." He remarked that after a quick "glance at an ad of W. & J. Sloane's" he recalled pleasantly the "wonderful" experience of entering "a room furnished in good taste" and relaxing "in a comfortable easy chair." Unfortunately, such experiences were unattainable in the war zone, and the Sergeant concluded his letter by lamenting "Mr. Chippendale, I'm afraid, does not know my present address."31

For a number of service members, like the Chippendale-admiring Sergeant, the presence of actual goods was not as important as the idea of what these goods represented. By reading advertisements, they remembered how they felt when they were at home. An Army Captain viewed advertisements as symbols "of the old gracious life—which one misses in the Southwest Pacific where life is not gracious."32 For these consumers, images of abundance might have served as a foil to the horrors of war. By contrasting the living conditions of troops to the abundance of their "homes," marketers, at least if they believed the testimonies against the New Yorker pony edition, could not help but succeed in breeding good will among the troops towards the brands they advertised. In the words of another service member, advertisements brought "back memories of home and evoke the most pleasant thoughts of what used to be."33

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29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
Several of the responses incorporated women in their examples of how advertisements reminded them of home ways. One Lieutenant wrote that he did not “read advertisements as escape fiction, but every once in a while I see something in Saks Fifth Avenue of Altman ads that I fancy my wife might like. She usually does, and it gives me a small kick to be able to send [the ads] to her.”\(^3\) Seemingly uncomfortable with the enjoyment he derived from consumption and through “window shopping” in advertisements, the Lieutenant justified his pleasurable consumption by saying he was looking for his wife. Moreover, for this couple, advertisements sent back from the war zone linked them through goods. The soldier connected with home by indulging in a desire for goods shared with his wife and other Americans. A different Lieutenant responding to the *New Yorker’s* inquiry also spoke of his wife. “I will not be deprived of the ads. All the women look like my wife. Her own faint scent rises from the pictured furs, frocks and Tabu bottles.”\(^3\) For this officer and others like him, characters in advertisements stood in for loved ones and products spurred military consumers’ imaginations to remember the lifestyle and people who awaited his or her return.

Still other respondents referred to advertising in general as gendered. One Sergeant informed the *New Yorker* staff “without the advertisements your little publication would be sadly emasculated. I might even forget what a perfume bottle looks like. By perfume I refer, of course, to Vat 69 [a blended scotch whiskey].”\(^3\) In this statement, the Sergeant rewrote consumption as a masculine pursuit instead of its stereotype as an activity engaged in primarily by women. He refers to women’s

\(^3\) Ibid., 32.
\(^3\) Ibid., 32.
\(^3\) Ibid, 34.
theoretical pining for consumer goods (perfume) and reconfigures this feminine symbol as scotch (a drink typically enjoyed by men) making it acceptable for him to engage in fantasies of consumption. The possible removal of advertisements struck a sour chord with another service member who compares the ad-free magazine to “a girl without make-up.” To these servicemen, consumption was clearly feminine, like a painted face, but at the same time, it was something in which men engage.

The testimonies of the servicemen who responded to the *New Yorker*’s call do not necessarily reflect a pleasure derived from consuming *goods*, but a reveling in the consumption of *desire*. On one level, these men did consume a commodity—the magazine itself—and being able to interact with that commodity by offering their opinion made this act of consumption more meaningful to these readers. However, these testimonies reveal another type of engagement with consumer culture. Due to the environment in which they lived while in the Armed Forces, these men had limited access to goods—at least compared to the selection and quantity present in pre-war America. By reading advertisements in magazines, these men enjoyed the idea of consuming and act of *desiring* goods and the act of shopping, even if that desire could not be fully acted upon until after the war.

An article in *Sales Management* further explored how men became increasingly comfortable as consumers while in the military. Published in July 1945, “How Army Life is Transforming Men’s Tastes and Buying Habits” cites the use of deodorant as one of the major changes in consumption habits among men in the military. The author, S.H. Knowlton who was affiliated “with the American Red Cross in the Pacific”, believed “the average officer, before living in BOQ (Bachelor

37 Peterson does not provide a rank for this respondent. Ibid.
Officer’s Quarters) considers the use of modern underarm deodorants as effeminate." 38 But once men moved into close quarters, demand for men’s toiletries 39 rose so quickly that post exchanges could hardly keep up. 40 As Knowlton saw it, this demand signaled a change in taste and consumption patterns that service members would maintain once they re-integrated into their respective communities after the war’s close. 41 Companies like Barbasol noticed the changing consumption patterns of men while in the military as well, capitalizing on the military consumer by producing things like “brushless” shaving cream in larger, more affordable bottles designed to cater to the newly minted desires of male service members. 42

Like the comments of the Sergeant who cherished Vat 69, Knowlton implied that men could only become comfortable with consuming toiletries once they entered a hyper-masculine military context that disassociated pleasing odors from women and the feminine—men could now tend to their bodies for utilitarian purposes, and

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39 I use the term “toiletries” to describe products like shaving cream, toothpaste and perfumes for both men and women. Other terms that could also be applied include “toilet articles” and “toilet goods.” “Toiletries” seems to be a gender-neutral term. “Cosmetics” however seems to be gendered as it only appears when describing women’s hygiene—at least in the few examples I have found. “Cosmetics” is used to describe the same items as toiletries in addition to make-up, like lipstick. “Stores Ready for Christmas Rush; Gifts will Start Overseas Sept. 15” *New York Times* (September 3, 1943), 16. Martha Parker, “Women Overseas to Get Cosmetics” *New York Times* (September 11, 1944). 20. Jon Hudson Moore, “Men’s Toiletry Line Exploits American Love of Sports,” *Sales Management* (September 1, 1944), 31-33. “War Trend Booms Men’s Toiletries,” *New York Times* (December 10, 1945), 32.

40 Knowlton, 106. S. L. Mayham, director of Toilet Goods Association, claimed that the increase in the amount of toiletries used by men was caused by the acceptance of toiletries by servicemen. (“War Trend Booms Men’s Toiletries,” 32). Another organization, the Fashion Group, Inc., Cosmetic group, confirmed Knowlton’s ideas as they identified male service members as a huge market for toiletries once they returned stateside. Interestingly, one of the members of the panel that made this statement, Paul Carey of Tussy Cosmetics, served as a Marine Captain for sixteen months in the southwest Pacific (“Scents for Men Asked,” 21.)

41 Knowlton, 106.

42 Ibid.
therefore have no fear of emasculation. The military environment allowed men to justify their consumption of toiletries as in service of sanitation and hygiene instead of as a marker of sexual appeal as they saw fit. For instance, if a service member was nervous about the implication of smelling good in the company of other men, the use of toiletries could be justified as a sanitary precaution. Knowlton acknowledged that men could shift rationalizations too, deeming it acceptable to rationalize the use of toiletries if it was in the service of seeking local women off-post, or, in the words of Knowlton, “to impress the dusky beauties who habit the pacific atolls.”

Toiletries, and their regulation of bodily functions, helped erect boundaries between militarized bodies as martial housing practices, forcing service members into a confined living space, constantly collapsed these boundaries. The use of toiletries allowed the construction of a domesticated and regulated space that functioned as a relief from the battlefield. In contrast to the chaotic exchange of biological matter on the front lines where bodily fluids uncontrollably flowed, toiletries allowed service members, marketers, and military officials a means to exert control over the bodies subjected to the war apparatus all while contributing to the corporate apparatus that enlivened it.

43 The cosmetic/toiletry industry (different industry organizations use one term or the other in their names) recognized that men did not want to smell like women—this is to say, what men expected women to smell like. The Fashion Group, Inc. panel “advised manufactures to ‘keep scents manly, clean, fresh and antiseptic and stay away from the floral and sweet.’” “Scents for Men Asked,” 21.
44 This idea was backed by the language of the time. In a New York Times article discussing pre-made gift boxes that people in the United States could send service members overseas, toiletries are disassociated from any connotation of luxury. The article states, “Because serviceable gifts rate high with both uniformed men and women, the most utilitarian of objects are appreciated. Gift boxes popular with service men hold such necessities as shaving cream, razor blades, soap and cigarettes” [emphasis mine]. (“Stores Ready for Christmas Rush; Gifts Will Start Overseas Sept. 15,” 16.)
46 Knowlton describes these housing conditions: “When I say close contract, I mean close, since it is not uncommon for 16 or 18 officers to share the same bathroom” (106).
The American corporations benefiting from sales to military consumers came in all sizes. Government contracts awarded to companies, large and small, to place their products in military exchanges allowed smaller companies to carve a niche in the marketplace.\(^{47}\) For instance, the small cigarette brand Chelsea met the unique packaging demands of the military by vacuum-packing cigarettes\(^{48}\) in tin cans (procured by the Quartermaster’s Office from Planter’s Peanuts\(^{49}\)) that would keep the humidity of the Pacific away from the tobacco. Consequently, for a short time in 1943, Chelsea had a monopoly on tobacco consumption in the Pacific theater and a higher percentage of soldiers smoked Chelseas than their civilian counterparts.\(^{50}\)

Besides increasing profits, targeting military consumers allowed companies to shape the image of a product through the accumulation of goodwill towards their products in both military and civilian markets. To military personnel, companies that made products available to GIs appeared to care for the troops. For civilians, companies that took care of troops appeared patriotic; companies took care of America. One of the most significant examples of this process occurred during World War II. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, bullets riddled four Coca-Cola vending machines at Hickman Field, an airstrip attacked near Pearl Harbor. After the attack, Robert Woodruff, then CEO of Coca-Cola, guaranteed that his company would provide American soldiers, regardless of their location, with bottles of Coke for five cents each, the price the soft drink sold for in the United States. With this announcement, he secured the military market for his company and


\(^{48}\) Ibid., 74.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 72.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 74.
“identified [Coca-Cola] with America and Americanism.” The War Department quickly struck up a relationship with Coca-Cola since soft drinks provided an alternative to alcohol. General Dwight D. Eisenhower even ordered Coca-Cola to build bottling plants behind the front lines in order to keep troops supplied. By providing their product to soldiers, sailors and officers, Coca-Cola constructed their corporate image around civic duty—a company for the people.51

The military community wanted to believe in a synergy between troops and corporations. One such voice originated from Yank, the weekly newspaper published by the Army and written “by and for” enlisted service members.52 The article, “Advertising Has Gone to War,”53 claimed that troops felt advertising executives and the corporations that hired them looked out for the best interests of the Armed Forces.54 Author Sgt. Al Hine believed “GI Joe’s best friend is the typewriter tycoon of the advertising agency.” Feeling that advertisers “not only know what we are fighting for” but they also “know exactly, down to the last uplift bra, what we want when we come home,” Hine saw the commercialized war zone as a positive phenomenon. He indirectly credited advertisers with insuring a steady stream of goods to the troops that made the war “a luxury cruise.”55 To soldiers like Hine, commodities provided an escape from war. American service members attempted to mitigate the horrors of war with the desires incited by ad agencies.

52 Yank’s global circulation peaked at 2.6 million copies per week. The paper started from a loan from the Army Exchange Service [the governing body of the Post Exchange.] Col. Franklin L. Forsberg, the commanding officer of the paper, claimed the Army and the War Department did not greatly influence the content of the paper. “Last Issue of Yank Rolls off the Press,” New York Times (December 14, 1945), 15.
53 Al Hine, “Advertising Has Gone To War,” Yank (December 1, 1944), 15.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
Yank’s commentary not only focused on how the marketer watched out for the soldier, but also how troops constructed their rationale for fighting through the language of abundance—a language constructed both by marketers and President Franklin Roosevelt himself. Hine believed that readers should “pity” the soldier that did not realize “that he is fighting for blueberry pie and the right (no doubt written into the Four Freedoms) to boo the Dodgers.” Here, patriotism blended with consumption—troops are “pitied” if they do not believe in consumption (remember, one of the “Four Freedoms” FDR mentioned was “Freedom from Want”). Hine suggested to readers that the Axis powers did not simply threaten American peace, but also attacked American consumption.

“Advertising Has Gone to War” makes explicit the political obligation the military stressed through mouthpieces like Yank to encourage service members to fight. Hine’s rhetoric of consumption also included women in specific ways. Upon returning home, Hine believed “our girls, guided by scintillant copy, will have become paragons of charm...They will bulge alarmingly in the proper places and will have removed all unsightly body hair with Whizzo, the safe, odorless, colorless, laughing-eyed depilatory.” This statement makes clear what Hine meant earlier in his article when he revealed that troops wanted “uplift bras” when they returned home. Not using this product figuratively, Hine wants women to look like the pin-up models he might have seen in various magazines, instead of the women who joined the workforce in order to help the war effort. The argument implicit in “Advertising

56 Ibid.
57 Hine’s article includes several other passages that are equally explicit in the connection of abundance to the war effort. I chose this one because it mentioned the “Four Freedoms” and did not use fictitious brand names—a characteristic of other passages of his article.
58 Hine, 15.
Has Gone to War” is that women on the home front can help the war the most by becoming something to be consumed.

Hine’s explanation of why a member of the Armed Forces might, or should, sign up provides an interesting complication to the flaws of liberalism highlighted in the work of Robert Westbrook. In his book, *Why We Fought*, and an earlier article, Westbrook examines why Americans felt obligated to defend their country. The United States, a liberal state, encouraged individualism and a sense of nationalism that allowed people to consider their own personal interests above other concerns. Westbrook shows how the United States government convinced its citizens to fight for private instead of political obligation. To do this, the federal government deployed a number of symbols, most importantly, those relating to private obligation such as the family.

Westbrook tests the hypothesis of other political theorists that liberalism lacks the ability as a political system to convincingly obligate people to die for their country. A liberal state has a reciprocal relationship with its citizens. Citizens remain loyal to the state and in return the state grants citizens individual gains and security (both of property and person). However during war, the liberal state can no longer make this guarantee. As soon a citizen risks his or her life, the system breaks down. The state cannot offer anything to the fighting citizen as death would result in no more individual gains, or for that matter, no more individual. Westbrook argues

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60 “‘I Want a Girl...’” 588.; *Why We Fought*, 41-43.
61 “‘I Want a Girl...’” 589-591.
that this critical flaw in liberalism requires the liberal state to find other methods to motivate people to fight in wars. So, to build an army, “representatives of the state and other American propagandists” during WWII turned to two moral arguments. First, they used overarching moral arguments like FDR’s Four Freedoms: citizens felt obligated not to the liberal state, but to the concept of freedom. Second, propagandists convinced people to go to war to “defend private interests and discharge private obligations.” People fought for their family and friends, not for the absent state and were told not to worry about the private obligations upon which they would default should they die in battle—the state would take care of these for them.62

According to Westbrook, one of the most effective symbols circulating during WWII at constructing personal obligation among potential service members was the pin-up.63 Although many depictions of women appeared in “rape propaganda” that portrayed them as the “spoils of war,”64 pin-ups, according to Westbrook, did not function exclusively in this way. The government and Hollywood cooperated to make and distribute millions of pin-up photographs to servicemen stationed all over the world. These pictures of women like Betty Grable encouraged heterosexuality and reminded troops of, and gave sexual access to, the private interests (their wives, sweethearts, mothers and sisters) for whom they fought.65 Troops also installed pictures of pin-up girls on tanks and other war machinery that were so large that they visually overpowered the insignia of the United States—they fought not for country,

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62 Ibid, 588.
63 In Why We Fought, Westbrook uses both pin-ups and Norman Rockwell’s paintings of FDR’s Four Freedoms to make his case for the privatization of obligation. Ibid, 41-46.
64 Ibid, 589.
65 Ibid, 595, 599-600.
but for women, family and private interests. The pin-up girl also inspired women on the home front to join the war effort—many American women emulated the models in the pictures and sent personalized pin-ups to their loved ones fighting overseas.

As Hollywood and state-sanctioned propagandists produced pin-ups for service members to motivate troops to fight for a nation that could no longer protect the individual bodies of its citizens, advertisers utilized these same themes in order to sell commodities. A large part of WWII advertising that targeted the military market focused on returning service members. While overseas, many GIs had a fair amount of disposable income and liked to spend it when they had a chance. When coming back to the US, advertisers hoped these spending habits would continue. In his article “Advertising—and the South Pacific Market,” Sgt. Vincent Lane, a Marine serving in the Pacific, wrote that GIs faced “boredom and loneliness” when deployed and day dreaming could alleviate these isolating emotions. “Dreams of when the war will end, what they’ll do when it does, first, second and third, what they will buy.” Lane mentioned that returning troops wanted new homes when they returned, but “sex shouldn’t be far down the list.” Consequently, Lane advised advertisers to place “illustrations of girdles, brassieres” because these images “always cause the casual page turner to hesitate and read what goes on underneath.” Advertisers sold sex for immediate consumption (the picture of a curvy model) and for future consumption (the purchase of a bra for a wife who will then, presumably, perform

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66 Ibid, 601.
67 Ibid, 603, 605.
68 Egbert White, “12,000,000 Returning Servicemen Customers,” Printer’s Ink (31 August 1945), 38.
70 Lane, 27.; Hine also mentions the desire for new homes and the accouterments that would properly outfit it (15).
71 Lane, 27.
sexually for a returning man in uniform). By inundating troops with images of consumption, advertisers created desire among GIs for consumer items. This desire functioned not only to help symbols of what the troops were fighting for, but also to clarify what was owed to service members upon their return. Lingerie advertisements, while perhaps sexually exciting to some GIs, told troops that they deserved to consume when they returned Stateside. By browsing the advertisements selling products for women, male troops also felt they were entitled to the loyalty of “their” women back home. The push-up bra talked about by Hine could deliver this loyalty in a package of hyper-femininity that would also increase profits of American corporations. Consumption was patriotic, as were the gendered duties of citizenship and the molding of women into images of hypersexual beings.

When read with one another, articles like “Advertising Has Gone to War” and “Leave Out the Ads? “Hell, No!” make clear that World War II-era sellers helped create and tapped into the military market. However, some industry pundits believed that the military market had more to offer. While at least one business writer felt that deployed troops might pick up the habits of locals and decrease the market for American goods (for example, by drinking British tea instead of American brands of coffee), others hoped that enthusiastic military consumers could transform the tastes of local populations and expand the market for U.S. goods in the theaters of war.

If American corporations could place their products in the hands of the overseas military consumer, they could transform these consumers into a conduit capable of introducing American products to a foreign audience. “G.I. Joe--Super-Advertiser and Salesman?” appeared in *Foreign Commerce Weekly* in August 1944

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72 White, 90.
exploring this possibility. Author Sarah Saunder recognized that the service members often carried American commodities on his or her person—cigarettes and chewing gum tucked in between “bullets and hand grenades”—and “is likely to share [the products] with any friendly person whom he encounters on his way.”

Also, Saunder argues that the products sold by overseas PXs for female service members (such as makeup) also appealed to male troops to give to local girlfriends. Admittedly, what concerned the authors “is whether the girls are going to like the American-made products after the war is over...[and] if the desire can be developed into a demand.”

Military officials also recognized the potential for post exchange sales to create a foreign market for American goods. According to Brig. Gen. Joseph W. Byron, Commanding Officer of the Special Services Division, United States Army, the distribution of American goods by troops “is going to develop new likes and wants. It will probably mean and increase in export trade after the war in supplies...In many cases the exchange service is blazing new trails for world trade.”

Ultimately, Saunder called for fewer trade restrictions after the war in order to make sure that these new markets were realized, but her article highlights how the business community cast service members in a dual role as consumers of goods and producers of desires.

Through advertising in magazines sent to deployed military personnel and distribution of products through charitable organizations and post exchanges

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74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Quoted in Saunder, 4.
77 Saunder, 21.
overseas, American corporations helped to commercialize theaters of war. However, marketers were not alone in their efforts to make the war zone a place conducive to consumption. Starting in the 1940s, military officials instituted a number of logistical changes to how the military managed exchanges, and their newly formed counter parts, clubs and commissaries.

In 1941, the War Department took a series of steps to streamline the exchange system. To do this, War Department officials acquired the help of the retail industry. To control all the functions of post exchanges, the War Department created the Army Exchange Service and requested Will. I. Levy, assistant to the president of Allied Stores Corporation to run it. The War Department also created a committee of civilian merchandising specialists to oversee post exchange operations in addition to a “central purchasing department” that would negotiate on the behalf of individual exchanges to get the best price from manufacturers. To run the purchasing department, the War Department assigned a military officer, Colonel Frank

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78 Levy was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army Reserve. “To Head Army Stores” *New York Times* (July 8, 1941).
79 The War Department wanted the committee to “seek uniformity in housing, fiscal policy, merchandising, purchasing accounting and auditing.” The committee consisted of “Chairman, Karl D. Gardner, chairman of the executive committee, W.T. Grant Company, New York City; David Ovens, vice president and general manager, J.B. Ivy & Co., Charlotte, N.C.; Paul C. Kelly, vice president, American Retail Federation, Washington; L.C. Caldwell, president, the Interstate Company, Chicago; F.O. Britton, director of sales training, R.H. Macy & Co., Inc., New York City, and M.R. Ketz, controller, W.T. Grant Company, New York City.” “Army Will Trim Its Sales,” *New York Times* (May 14, 1941), 14. It is unclear if these men were strictly advisors, or if they held a military rank. However, at least one, F.O. Britton was commissioned as a Major when he took a job as the “head of the personnel section of the Army Exchange Service.” “Leaves Macy’s to Take Army Exchange Post” *New York Times* (July 22, 1941), 32.
Mansfield, two assistants who had experience (judging by their Captain rank, they were executives) in the retail industry.\footnote{The two assistants were “Captain John B. Furay, formerly connected with the S.S. Kresge Company, and Captain Robert E. Cooper, formerly with Montgomery Ward.” “Army Exchanges Centralize Buying,” \textit{New York Times} (August 16, 1941), 25.}

In 1948, the Air Force joined the Army to create the Army and Air Force Exchange System (AAFES)—a managing outfit that oversaw exchanges in both services. AAFES officials continued the relationship the military had with the retail industry when they introduced the “executive management program.” This initiative introduced civilian executives into the military structure in hope that they could run the Exchange system better than previous managers who were military officers.\footnote{AAFES is the department that would oversee exchanges in the Vietnam-era military as well. House, General George McCord speaking to U.S. House Committee on Armed Services, Review Of The Military Exchanges And Commissaries And Related Activities: Hearings By The Special Subcommittee On Exchanges and Commissaries. 91st Cong., 1st sess., 1970.:13223-13224.}

As the military brought civilians into its ranks in order to better sell goods to troops, corporations hired executives who had military experience. In the late 1950s and 1960s many large corporations, particularly those dealing in alcohol and toiletries like Seagram and Lever Brothers, had created “military marketing divisions.” While some companies chose to keep military marketing in house, a host of brokers emerged during this period to cater to companies who wished to outsource their military marketing needs. Led by companies such as Wilson Harrell and Co., Overseas Service Corporation, and Sarvis-Webco Inc., brokers helped companies gain access to the then four billion dollar military market.\footnote{“Whaddaya Read, GI,” \textit{Media Decisions} (January 1968): 51.; “Companies Scramble for Space at the PX,” \textit{Business Week} (14 May 1966): 183. “Sarvis-Webo is Formed to Sell to Military Market,” \textit{Advertising Age} (19 June 1967): 32.}

Special marketing departments arose from the logistics of dealing with the military. Former military personnel often staffed these departments instead of their...
strictly civilian counterparts for several reasons. First, they “spoke the language” of
the military and knew military culture. This helped them close deals and better
understand the problems that might occur in selling to the military consumer, such as
lag times in supply. Also, military marketing departments often had to stay up-to-
date on things such as troop movements and other activities unique to the military—
information former service members might have understood better than marketers
who had no experience in military life.⁸⁴ Most importantly, the skill sets held by
these military marketing departments increased the profits—the bottom line—of
advertising agencies and corporations.

CHAPTER 2. QUAGMIRE OF CONSUMPTION

In 1967, Army Colonel Jack C. Potter, commander of the Vietnam Regional Exchange (VRE), related to the readers of Business Week that “sometimes I think we try to bring in too much.” Business Week reminded readers exactly what too much might in fact mean. In the past 17 months, the post exchanges in Vietnam had sold more than 58,000 television sets, one type of the more than 2,100 different items Vietnam Regional Exchanges carried. Troops could choose between Pepsi and Coca-Cola, not to mention numerous brands of alcohol to quench their thirst and select a Kodak or Polaroid camera to capture on film the lasting bonds many forged with their fellow service members.

However, Potter did not leave his statement unqualified. During the moments when he spoke of importing too many commodities, he recalled the times when “I go out into the field and see what these guys are doing, and I think maybe we’re not doing enough.” If a can of cola or a fur coat to send home helped a soldier cope with life under fire, then Potter, and many others in similar positions, felt duty-bound to help service members have a wide variety of goods from which to choose. Potter’s comments characterized military practices for selling retail goods during the Vietnam era.¹

Military retail stores in South Vietnam continued a long tradition of accommodating the material wants and needs of troops, and other Americans abroad,

¹ “A Touch of Home for GIs in Vietnam,” Business Week, 4 November 1967, 147. This introductory paragraph is a paraphrase of the following quotation by Potter: “Sometimes I think we try to bring in too much. Then I go out into the field and see what these guys are doing, and I think maybe we’re not doing enough.”
in hopes of boosting morale through consumption. In the midst of its efforts to recreate an American shopping experience overseas, however, the exchange system simultaneously limited its patrons. The Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES), for instance, actively pursued a monopoly to control the consumption habits of all Americans in Vietnam. AAFES sold products to a captive market, which piqued the interest of marketers, led to corrupt business practices and resulted in negligence, if not outright discrimination, towards all female and African American male troops. Low PX prices had the potential to blur class lines drawn according to consumption habits, but the AAFES monopoly, only partially challenged by a thriving black market, prevented military retail stores from functioning in this capacity.

By the time the US sent troops to Vietnam, AAFES institutionalized the displays of masculinity found in articles about the military consumer that graced the pages of advertising industry trade journals during World War II. AAFES inserted shopping, an activity stereotypically associated with women, into a hyper-masculine military context which could jeopardize the masculinity of the troops. Through the goods they sold and their sales methods, the military exchange created a shopping space that would not place the troops’ masculinity in harm’s way. War zone consumption preserved the gender hierarchy established in the United States. By purchasing items for women at home, and reading advertisements for those commodities, deployed male service members could play the constructed role of protector that initiated and recollected the parameters of a gendered exchange that
constructed them as “owed” the loyalty of women back home, and by implication their sexual service.  

On Christmas Day 1965, the Vietnam Regional Exchange, a division of AAFES, began to operate the exchanges in South Vietnam. Prior to that point, the Navy Ship’s Store Office had run the four exchanges present in South Vietnam since 1959. These four exchanges together with 44 smaller outposts served 200,000 customers in Vietnam and grossed two million dollars per month. From August 1966 to August 1967, as troops and other Americans poured into Vietnam, the number of customers increased from approximately a quarter of a million to half a million and VRE sales jumped accordingly—from $12.7 million to $28.2 million. By 1968 this growth in customers and regional sales led to an increase in worldwide exchange sales that totaled more than three billion dollars per year.

As American involvement in Vietnam escalated, the 357 retail stores and 189 “service activities such as cafeterias [and] snack bars” operated by the Vietnam Region Exchange expanded the military exchange system to such an extent that by 1969, its size was comparable to that of the largest retailers in the United States.

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2 Here I am using Judith Hicks Stiehm idea of the “protector.” She argues that the role of the military as “protectors” is a myth. Thinking of the military as a protector of civilians from a third-party enemy draws attention from the harm the “protectors” do to the civilians. In this case, men could shop for women to make it seem as though they were providing for them and protecting them from communism (both with their wallets and their guns). Stiehm’s idea of protectorship complicates the exchange, as the exchange is creating a gender system that reinscribes the expectations men have of women. Judith Hicks Stiehm, Arms and The Enlisted Woman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 227-229.


5 Ibid., 48.


7 Testimony of Honorable Roger T. Kelley, Assistant Secretary for Defense, Manpower, and Reserve Affairs, U.S. Government Printing Office. Hearings Before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations United States Senate Ninety-First Congress First Session, September 30; October 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 1969. Fraud and Corruption in
an effort to draw advertisers to their publication, Army Times Publishing Company, the publisher of a number of periodicals aimed at service members and their families, released a list of the top five American retailers. Following Sears, Roebuck Co., who grossed 9.6 billion dollars, and J.C. Penny Co., 3.6 billion dollars, the military exchange system grossed 3.5 billion dollars, a figure that would inflate to approximately 4 billion dollars if post exchanges sold their goods at normal instead of discounted prices.8

While many features differentiated AAFES-operated stores from the other retailers on Army Times’ list, AAFES commitment to its customers, while highly conflicted, set it apart. On the walls of every exchange in Vietnam, customers found a plaque that proudly displayed AAFES’ promise to its patrons—“Our mission is to provide service and value. Satisfaction guaranteed or your purchase price cheerfully refunded.”9 But AAFES did more than provide customer service, it served as an important source of funding for recreational activities for service members. From its inception, the military retail system set aside part of its profits to pay for activities intended to boost the morale of troops.10 From July 1960 to July 1965, AAFES provided over 280 million dollars to the Army, Air Force Central Welfare Fund.11

The exchange system contributed anywhere from 60-75%\(^\text{12}\) of the annual budget for troop recreational activities, such as sports leagues or music concerts—the balance had to be distributed by Congress.\(^\text{13}\)

While the recreational activities paid for by exchange profits benefited troops, the exchange system’s major contribution to the boosting of morale came through its provision of troops with American consumer goods.\(^\text{14}\) According to military officials and the popular press, troops felt better when they could consume goods, and when those goods were American, they felt more at home.\(^\text{15}\) The faith the military showed in the exchange system presented itself in a 1969 article in the *New York Times*. At that time, according to “official statistics” cited by author B. Drummond Ayers Jr., of the 550,000 “United States servicemen in the war zone...fewer that 100 are treated each year for the mental state that results from too much exposure to combat.”\(^\text{16}\)

Attributing his information to military medical officers, Ayers argued that “today’s American soldier is fighting under conditions much less wearing—mentally—than

\(^{12}\) Another source places this percentage from 75-90% (“‘Profits’ of Exchange Boost Welfare Fund,” 29.)

\(^{13}\) John J. Ryan, *Selling Armed Forces Exchanges & Commissaries: The $5 Billion Market* (New York: Enterprise Books, 1968), 137-138. John Ryan was a staff advisor to AAFES (“The PX: Marketing’s $3 Billion Stepchild,” 38.). Until 1941, profits from each exchange stayed on the post on which they were made. In 1941, the profits of the exchange system became centralized and were distributed to troops in all locations (House, General George McCord speaking to U.S. House Committee on Armed Services, *Review Of The Military Exchanges And Commissaries And Related Activities: Hearings By The Special Subcommittee On Exchanges and Commissaries*. 91st Cong., 1st sess., 1970.:13223.)

\(^{14}\) Benade quoted in Baumgarner, 11.

\(^{15}\) According to Helen Keayes, an Australian “‘information specialist [whose job it was] to promote the image of the Vietnam Regional Exchange’ through local radio, television, and two in-house newspapers, the *VRE Voice* and the *VRE Talk*, which kept army personnel informed of staff activities, and goods and services available at the PX,” the American PX had a very specific function: “to provide health and morale items to all the Free World Servicemen...to make life in a war zone more bearable.” Siobhan McHugh, *Minefields and Miniskirts: Australian Women and the Vietnam War*, Sydney, Australia: Doubleday, 1993, 38.

those that faced his predecessors in other wars.”\textsuperscript{17} To this contemporary \textit{New York Times} contributor, short missions and sporadic fighting made combat in Vietnam less taxing than in previous wars. A soldier could relax further when he “returns to his base camp [and] he has access to hot showers, movies and post exchanges.”\textsuperscript{18} The military placed enough importance on providing the consumer experience to troops that they found ways to make goods available to service members in the most remote of locations. The exchange located at Bac Lieu provided a helicopter service that flew goods to troops in the field and transport vehicles provided commodities to troops in locations accessible by ground.\textsuperscript{19} Ayers clearly underestimated the stress of war and overestimated the potential of the post exchange to help troops cope with the stress of battle. Nevertheless, Ayer’s article illustrates the power people attributed to consumption—people could not overcome their own deaths by consuming commodities, but consumption could help them cope with the death of others.

The willingness of the military to provide troops with commodities combined with the troops desire to purchase goods at post-exchanges caught the attention of American marketers. Just because they joined the military did not mean they wanted to decrease their access to commodities. According to General George McCord, Chief of the Army and Air Force Exchange System (AAFES),\textsuperscript{20} troops wanted “an endless choice of the latest merchandise…[and] something newer and better tomorrow.” Because service members had money and access to goods they could satisfy their desire to shop and maintain a sense of continuity between their past

\textsuperscript{17} Ayers, 7.
\textsuperscript{18} Ayers, 7.
\textsuperscript{19} Army and Air Force Exchange Service, \textit{A History}, 68.
\textsuperscript{20} AAFES was the governing body of all exchanges.
civilians lives and their current military ones all the while feeling connected to
“home.”

Even though corporations could profit from placing their products in exchanges, several companies, as evidenced by their marketing strategies, viewed the building of brand loyalty as the most important benefit of selling to the military consumer. With an average age of 22.7 years, many service members were at what marketers called a “brand-formative age.” If companies could get their products to these young consumers, they hoped service members would adopt the products for life, even after the soldier left the military and entered the “secondary market” of civilian life. According to a broker who sold goods of various manufactures to the AAFES in the mid-1960s, 50% of military personnel returned to the civilian population every two years. In this way, corporations sold to the military market in order to sell to civilians. For instance, a spokesperson from Kenwood Electronics believed “the PX system serve[d] to stimulate the audio market for years after the boys return[ed] to civilian life.” Corporations that dealt in “semi-addictive items such as whisky and cigarettes” also had great successes in creating lifelong customers

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22 Ibid, 13227.
23 In addition to the military acknowledging the potential of its workers as consumers, the advertising industry explicitly wanted to court young troops. Speaking to Printer’s Ink in 1960, W.B. Bradbury Sr., “president of his own special publishers’ representative company” and a specialist in selling the “military market through civilian-owned newspapers,” explained the desire to advertise to military consumers: “Most servicemen are young draftees who are just out of high school, who are making their first consumer dollars since leaving home. The lads have been using the toothpaste their mother bought; the shaving cream their dad used. Now they do their own shopping for the first time, usually in a PX. They have some money to spend, as evidenced by used-car sales in military areas. Advertising serves a real purpose for them, since it guides them in making their purchases.” “How Civilian-run Newspapers Reach the Military Market Printer’s Ink 272 (2 September 1960): 34-35.
out of military personnel. Other popular products to which former troops stayed loyal included Zippo lighters and Parker fountain pens.\(^{26}\)

McIlhenny Co., through its marketing strategies both during the Vietnam conflict and long after veterans returned home achieved a great deal of success in building loyalty to its Tabasco brand pepper sauce among military personnel. McIlhenny’s advertising campaign revolved around the distribution of thousands of copies of its \textit{Charlie Ration Cookbook} that wrapped bottles of Tabasco sealed in watertight containers to troops in Vietnam.\(^{27}\) The \textit{Charlie Ration Cookbook} provided troops with recipes that utilized military-issued rations and free bottles of Tabasco distributed by the company.\(^{28}\)

McIlhenny Co. designed their 11-page cookbook with military personnel in mind.\(^{29}\) The \textit{Cookbook} carefully reminds readers that it sprung from an “original idea by Brigadier General W.S. McIlhenny as a result of letters from G.I.’s in Vietnam asking for tasty recipe ideas” (Figure 1.9).\(^{30}\) Not only does the pamphlet reference McIlhenny’s military service it also provides similar credentials for the author of the book—“Christopher Blake, well-known gourmet/playwright and [World] War II G.I”


\(^{27}\) Stephanie Shapiro, “Troops Pack Their Own Chemical Agent: Tabasco,” \textit{Houston Chronicle} (23 April 2003), 6.

\(^{28}\) C-Rations contained “one canned meat item, one canned fruit or dessert item... [and] crackers.” An “accessory pack” also came with C-rations that included “cigarettes, matches, chewing gum, toilet paper, instant coffee, cream substitute, sugar and salt.” Shelby Stanton, \textit{U.S. Army Uniforms of the Vietnam War}, Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1989.


\(^{30}\) Ibid.
The Charlie Ration Cookbook creates brand loyalty, in part by creating a type of military populism. According to the cookbook, Tabasco comes from the military’s own—it is of the “people” (Figure 1.9).

McIlhenny saturated every page of the Charlie Ration Cookbook with references to the stereotypical, and perhaps idealized, life of a deployed service member. To illustrate the cookbook, McIlhenny hired comic strip artist Frank Rhoads whose artwork many GIs recognized from his strips in periodicals published for Marines. His pictures provided troops with an illustrative style with which many were familiar and presented a cartoon version of the Vietnam conflict while painting GIs as happy consumers. The Charlie Ration Cookbook relied on themes of all-American ingenuity and individualism in spite of the potentially homogenizing force of the military in order to expand the market for Tabasco. The Cookbook also attempted to create a bond with enlisted men through its depiction of military rank. Throughout The Charlie Ration Cookbook, McIlhenny constructed an experience of consumption around the eating of a uniform meal intended to do little more than to provide calories for service members to ingest.

The Cookbook uses illustrations to help create, and draw upon, a romanticized notion of life “in country” in order to connect with service members. One theme that supports this interpretation of military life in Vietnam is the Cookbook’s use of

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31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
violence. The second illustration in the *Cookbook* shows five service members at mealtime (Figure 1.2).\(^3\) Two rush in from the right side of the frame, apparently coming from some sort of combat activity—one has a rifle, the other a hand grenade—to the security of a warm meal. Readers are to assume that the troops are now in a secure area as the GIs do not wear helmets, and in fact, they have so little need for protective gear that one service member happily sacrifices his helmet to serve as a pot in which to cook the meal (this behavior also appears on the cover of the *Cookbook*, see Figure 1.1).\(^3\) The *Cookbook* associates meals with safety and then links this respite from violence to Tabasco pepper sauce by placing its distinctive bottle in the hands of relaxing GIs both on the pages of the *Cookbook* (Figure 1.1 and 1.2)\(^3\) and in real-life product placement when troops use Tabasco in the field. Here, consumption becomes synonymous with safety.\(^3\)

The coming together of the idea of safety with consumption continues in other illustrations in the *Charlie Ration Cookbook*. The third illustration (Figure 1.3)\(^3\) shows two troops in a foxhole, comfortably preparing a meal, again in a helmet, while smoking cigarettes. A third, running from racist depictions of the Viet Cong, dives headfirst into the foxhole and into the safety of meal preparation, again using an unused helmet. One of the smoking GIs expresses a look of surprise, possibly shocked that their safety may be in jeopardy. But, the reader need only to look to his companion who seems unconcerned by the soldier seeking shelter and the three Viet

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\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Ibid.
Cong following closely behind to see that these troops are not in harm's way. In the
security of the foxhole, these men can consume freely, prepare a meal and smoke a
seemingly well-deserved cigarette. For the troops in this cartoon, Tabasco is a sign of
good times, or at least restful times. Through its illustrations and recipes, the
*Cookbook* does more than simply instruct troops how to prepare their C-rations. The
*Charlie Ration Cookbook* equates Tabasco and consumption in general—as shown by
the cigarettes—with safety. Reading the *Cookbook*, one gets instructed to consume in
order to escape the horrors of war, such as a machete-brandishing Viet Cong (Figure
1.3). Consumption is something to be savored, like the vinegary bum of Tabasco.

The *Charlie Ration Cookbook* walks a fine line in constructing a safe-zone
for, and created by, consumption. In his recipes, Christopher Blake is careful not to
imply that all of war consists of relaxation. To do this, recipes, like the weapons
carried by troops in the second illustration, include references to violence, but these
references are void of a threat of bodily harm. One such recipe, “Breast of Chicken
Under Bullets” (Figure 1.4), inserts a reference to violence in order to mark the
military experience as exceptional (as opposed to cooking in a kitchen in, say,
Kansas). The recipe starts, “breast of chicken under glass was never intended for
areas where glass and shrapnel fly.” In other words, Blake means to relate to the
reader that this recipe is just as good as the original recipe “breast of chicken under
glass” but the war zone, “where glass and shrapnel fly,” deserves respect, just like the
GIs, and so he changed the name. Furthermore, the new name acknowledges that the
normalcy of life outside of the war zone cannot exist while on the battlefield.

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39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
Frank Rhodes’s illustrations also walked the fine line between depicting combat life in South Vietnam as safe and showing it as part of the rough-and-tumble world of war. Rhodes draws both clean-shaven, trim, borderline “dandy” (Figure 1.5) and rugged, stubble-faced troops (Figure 1.1). On one hand, without a beard, the cartoons represent the peace Tabasco can bring troops in the war zone. A tasty meal makes military life easier and because, in the words of the cookbook, “no food is too good for the man up front,” Tabasco provides troops with a moment of civility while under fire. On the other hand, the rugged troops show that just because they might appreciate this civility they are still “men.”

When Blake’s recipes show troops in safe areas, they do not credit the protection of American lives solely to the presence of consumption; he also attributes the existence of safe areas to the ingenuity of American troops. In the recipe for Pork Mandarin, Blake shows how troops can provide for their own safety by using “a generous dash of Tabasco” with their C-Rations. According to Blake, “the original for this recipe took a lot of time; if you followed it, the VC would be sitting in your lap. Here’s a real quick way to cheat Charlie and have something different.” Blake wanted readers to believe that this recipe could be prepared on short order thereby allowing the GI on the move to have plenty of time for a nutritious and relaxing meal without compromising his or her effectiveness as a soldier. By whipping up a hearty serving of Pork Mandarin, troops could “cheat Charlie” (the Viet Cong) by refusing to settle for unsatisfying meals and instead eating food that would fuel and relax their

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
bodies in preparation for battle. The enemy might think that American troops are malnourished, but Blake, and the consumers of Tabasco, knew better.

The idea that troops, with a little creativity (and help from McIlhenny Company), could improve their living conditions and as result become better soldiers continues in Rhoads’s illustrations. His second illustration (Figure 1.2) places the impromptu chefs and their friends beckoned by the aroma of stewing Tabasco, in opposition to a disgruntled cook whose food has no such pleasing odor or eager diners. The shunned cook, complete with chef’s hat and apron, represents how the military provides for service members—bland food that supplies calories, but does not excite the palate. The troops who follow the instructions of the *Charlie Ration Cookbook*, on the other hand, can break free of the uniform monotony of military life and win a small amount of individual freedom by the food they prepare and enjoy. The chef in the stained shirt also stands in for a domestic presence. He is aligned negatively with non-fighting military personnel. Unlike the soldiers who are making their own food in preparation for the next firefight, the chef remains in the rear cooking poorly. In a war zone, cooking makes the chef impotent—he has a spoon and an apron instead of a gun and a uniform. The *Cookbook* tells troops that they can provide for themselves even when thousands of miles away from home and phrases this in a way that helps them maintain their particular identity as combatants instead of support personnel.

The impotence of the chef highlighted in the *Charlie Ration Cookbook* helped create an alternative attitude towards consumption and cooking. Reading the *Cookbook*, troops could remind themselves that they could engage in cooking and

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43 Ibid.
shopping without equating themselves with these stereotypically feminized and
domestic realms—a fate the food-slinging chef could not escape. The recipe for “Tin
Can Casserole” (Figure 1.5)\textsuperscript{44} even goes as far as to imply that men are superior
cooks to women and the work of women is beneath a career in the military. “The
casserole \textit{can} be elegant, but as most men know, women often use it as a camouflage
for a hasty meal after a long bridge game. Here’s a recipe to put the Old Lady’s
Bridge Casserole to shame.” With this statement, the \textit{Cookbook} again refers to the
ingenuity of the GI as if to say that women have tricked the enlisted man for a long
time, but in fact, he knows better. If the GI can wield a bottle of Tabasco he is
capable of making the “elegant” casserole that he deserves instead of the product of
negligence that is casserole made by “the Old Lady.” Like the chef and the military,
women, as expressed in the \textit{Cookbook}, are incapable of providing for the needs of the
troops as well as ingenious troops can provide for themselves.

Rhodes’s illustrations, in addition to highlighting the self-reliant soldier
instead of non-combatant service personnel and women back home in the United
States, champions enlisted troops over officers. In another illustration featuring a
slightly less-stained military cook (Figure 1.7),\textsuperscript{45} Rhoades introduces an officer, as
indicated by a single star on his shoulder—the insignia of a Brigadier General.\textsuperscript{46} In
the foreground, readers see a fit and happy GI enjoying fish and Tabasco, while the
officer in the background, overweight, and therefore not a fighter, like the cook, sadly

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{46} I am not necessarily comfortable making this connection, however, we can enjoy the coincidence
that W.S. McIlhenny held this rank. Is this a possible comment from Rhoads about how the
relationship between Tabasco, or McIlhenny, and service members? Unfortunately, I have not done
this research, but I personally enjoy the coincidence.
\end{itemize}
looks on. The officer is disconnected from the life of the enlisted soldier who actively makes his own life better instead of ordering someone to do it for him. Put another way, the GI enjoying a fresh fish is a self-made man, while the officer uses the military as a crutch to provide him with a livelihood.47

The only other depiction of rank comes on the next-to-last page of the *Cookbook* (Figure 1.10).48 Three GIs are together eating cold C-rations, something that the *Charlie Ration Cookbook* informs readers that can be “brightened” with “Tabasco right from the bottle” (Figure 1.3).49 The only rank displayed is that of the Sergeant sitting on a log who has three stripes on his arm. He comments that his subordinate, but fellow enlisted man, “uses 1/2 spoon of Tabasco sauce with his ‘C’-rations” and is “the toughest guy in the outfit!” Not only does the *Cookbook* give the final comment of the book to an enlisted service member—the Sergeant—it also compliments an enlisted soldier as being “the toughest.” These men, despite difference of rank, as the *Cookbook* leads us to believe, come together around commodities, but because both of these consumers are enlisted service members, they can bond around consumption in way that officers and enlisted troops could not.

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47 Often there were rifts between officers and enlisted troops. During the Vietnam Conflict, many Officers only had to spend 6 months in combat before being moved to a rear area. Enlisted men in combat zones stayed there for 12 months. While in combat areas, many officers removed their shiny metal insignias to prevent being targeted by enemy snipers and because “enlisted men had little respect or tolerance for officers who paraded their authority out in the bush.” Enlisted men also were skeptical of officers whose career it was to be in the military. “Lifers...were thought to put their own ambition for higher rank over the safety of their men.” Enlisted men also resented being ordered into situations that were too dangerous—where the enemy had a clear advantage—and being used as “bait” for the enemy. At times this could result in enlisted service members refusing orders or the killing of other troops, most often officers and NCOs. Historian Christian Appy argues that the possibility of this practice of killing commanding officers, “fragging,” “shaped the relationship of officers and enlisted men far beyond its actual practice.” Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 140, 142, 188. 246.

48 Blake and Rhoads, *Charlie Ration Cookbook*.

49 Ibid.
McIlhenny Co. reminded troops, "when alone, away from fox hole, company headquarters and with no time to follow even the simplest of these recipes, open your can of C-Rations, eat it cold and thank God you’re an American. This final articulation of patriotism constructed McIlhenny Co. as a supporter of the military as it supports America and those who defend an “American” way of life. Moreover, this type of support for the military drifted outside the military and affected how civilians perceived the company. If a company appeared patriotic it appears as if it took care of the troops, by default, the company seemed to take care of America. Consequently, McIlhenny Co. could build “good will” towards its products in both military and civilian markets by distributing Tabasco to the troops.  

The McIlhenny Co.’s marketing efforts did not go unrewarded. In the 1980s and 1990s, Vietnam veterans still fondly recalled the Charlie Ration Cookbook. One veteran showed his appreciation in a letter addressed to the “Customer Relations Department, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company.” Al Green of Okeechobee, Florida remembered, “there were very few commercial enterprises that made an effort to support us (GI’s). The only other one [besides R.J. Reynolds] I can think of is McIlhenny Company (Tabasco Sauce) with their Charlie Ration Cookbook.”

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50 Zippo also used this dual-edged marketing tactic—selling to troops and the selling to civilians by boasting about how it supports the troops. Zippo ran advertisements that directly referenced how much troops enjoyed their lighters. One ad depicted a dented lighter that stopped a bullet from striking a service member’s chest while he stored it in his breast pocket. The ad claims that “this Zippo stopped an enemy bullet in Vietnam. It still works today.” It continues to draw comparison between good soldiers and Zippos as the “most Zippo lighters never retire. They just give year after year of plain good service.” Jim Fiorella, The Viet Nam Zippo, 1933-1975, Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1998, 169.

In the late 1980s, McIlhenny Company reinforced the loyalties it forged during the Vietnam conflict. In 1988, the Special Forces Association, a veteran’s organization located in Houston, Texas, hosted the Vietnam Veterans’ Film Festival—“a program for Vietnam Veterans, their families and friends.” In addition to screenings of films like *Good Morning Vietnam* and *Hamburger Hill,* the Special Forces Association hosted the First Annual “C-Ration Cook-off...sponsored by McIlhenny Company makers of Tabasco.” In the Cook-off, both teams and individuals competed to make the best meal from cans of C-rations purchased from organizers, and in the spirit of the conditions under which troops fought in Vietnam, participants could “trade cans or use multiple ‘c-rats.” However, contest organizers did not leave competitors without any ideas on how to precede, “Some ideas for your recipes may be found in The Charlie Ration Cookbook [sic] which is being given free to entrants while the supply lasts, courtesy of McIlhenny Co.” Apparently, veterans attending the festival approved of the contest so much that the Second Annual Cook-off was held at the next year’s festival. The success of the C-Ration Cook-off, when looked at together with the sentiment of veterans like Al Green, speaks to the associations troops made with commodities in the war zone. Corporations appeared to take care of them and in return, service members often associated that corporation with the good times they experienced while in Vietnam. Two decades after the Vietnam conflict ended, McIlhenny Co. renewed these memories, and more than

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52 Special Forces Association, Vietnam Veterans’ Film Festival Brochure, Folder 01, Box 01, Steve Sherman Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University 1988, 1.
53 Ibid., 1, 4.
54 Ibid., 4.
55 Ibid., 4.
56 Special Forces Association, Vietnam Veterans’ Film Festival Brochure, Folder 01, Box 01, Steve Sherman Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, 1989.
likely won over the pocketbooks of the friends and families of veterans, by sponsoring the C-ration Cook-off.

Not all companies adopted such sophisticated ad campaigns as McIlhenny Co. For some, product placement achieved the results they wanted. Dealers of Gibson Refrigerators sent 150 refrigerators to Southeast Asia for use in “Red Cross centers, service clubs and other favorite off-duty gathering spots of the men in forward areas.”57 According to the president of Hupp Corp.’s Gibson Refrigerator Division, dealers hoped the refrigerators would “both make the troops a little more comfortable and show them we’re behind them and appreciate their efforts.”58 In a typical partnership between two corporations or organizations both hoping to breed good will in the military and civilian populations, Gibson teamed with Pan American World Airways to fly the refrigerators to Southeast Asia. Of the many who thanked these corporations for their services, One First Cavalry Ranger Captain remarked, “The life of the foot soldier hasn’t changed much over the centuries. It’s still a tough, dirty job. You can’t imagine how the men will value a gift like this.”59

For those companies who wished to pursue the money and loyalty of troops in the aisles of the post exchange, advertising still proved the most effective method to get their products on the shelves. Because exchanges tried to stock items that troops wanted, if a company could create desire for their products, they had a good chance of seeing their products in the exchange. While advertisements aimed at civilians

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58 “Gibson Refrigerators Given to SEA Troops,” E2.
59 Ibid.
could incite a certain amount of desire for a product among soldiers stationed in the 
United States, many advertisers targeted the overseas military consumer through 
advertisements aimed specifically at them. But, this strategy proved rather difficult as 
the military banned many typical forms of advertising, such as billboards and flyers, 
from military installations. Also, Armed Forces Radio and Television did not run 
advertisements, nor did *Stars and Stripes*, a popular military newspaper print them. 
The absence of conventional advertising routes left marketers with relatively few 
opportunities to reach consumers, so, they placed advertisements in “local base 
newspapers, billboards near base, entertainment guides [,]...local telephone 
directories and souvenir pamphlets.”60

With the influx of over five hundred thousand U.S. troops and twelve 
thousand civilians, the American build-up in Vietnam included an increased 
advertising presence. To attend to the demands of American advertisers, a segment 
of the Vietnamese population entered the advertising field. American advertising 
agencies enthusiastically hired Vietnamese marketing firms because their proximity 
to the consumer allowed them negotiate the market far easier than an American outfit. 
Speaking to *Advertising Age* in 1969, Ngúiên Van Tuoy, General Manager of Cornel & Associates, described the particulars of advertising off-post in Vietnam. Predating 
the American build-up in Vietnam, Van Tuoy, a former student at the London School 
of Economics and press secretary to President Diem, started his advertising agency in 

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1958 and secured accounts from Esso, Kodak and Pepsi-Cola. Before the Americans, French advertisers sought the attention of the Vietnamese people. Once Americans arrived in the country, they began to contract with Vietnamese advertising agencies to translate the copy of their ads and place them in the local media.  

Advertisers had various means of reaching troops off-post. Prior to 1968, Tuoy's company placed a large number of ads on city billboards, but as the fighting entered urban areas, outdoor advertisements took a lot of damage. Consequently, newspapers and magazines became the most popular media to employ in placing ads. Newspapers written for the troops, but not overseen by the military, such as *Army Times* and *Overseas Weekly*, had a higher circulation than any of the local dailies, making them appealing to advertisers. Vietnamese advertisers also placed ads in "Asia military editions" of major American magazines. These magazines, such as *Life*, *Time*, and *Playboy*, contained the same written content of the editions published in the United States, but ran different advertisements. As magazines realized the profitability of selling ad space in their military editions separately from the space in their domestic editions, they increased the number of advertisements. For instance, in 1966 *Life* sold 64 pages of advertisements per year in its military edition; the magazine expected this number to climb to 300 in 1969.  

Advertisements appearing in periodicals in Vietnam contained themes intended to appeal to male service members. *Overseas Weekly*, known for its

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62 *Playboy's* overseas military edition had a circulation of 200,000 and sold a one-page black and white advertisement for $3,000 per issue. Audrey Allen, "Military Consumer Market," *Media/Scope* 14 (March 1970), 45.  
sensational articles and sexy pictures of female models (Figure 2.1), ran ads that promoted consumption and hetero-normative behavior. These advertisements attempted to provide an amount of escape for troops into a world far away from the battlefield.

One advertising insert in *Overseas Weekly* attempted to convince service members of the ability of consumer goods (in this case, diamonds and jewelry) to stabilize long-distance relationships and perhaps instigate short-term affairs. The first side of Harris Diamond Company’s double-sided page insert features women’s jewelry (Figure 2.2) and the second side sells jewelry for men (Figure 2.3). The side for women’s jewelry begins “Wow! Girls and Diamonds... Are a Man’s Best Friends! Harris Diamond Co. Has Both For You!” (Figure 2.2). Not only did this advertisement tell troops that they could reaffirm their relationships with distant sweethearts by sending them rings with names like “Devotion” and “Joy,” but that “girls” also came free of charge by sending away for pin-ups of “Miss Harris Diamond.”

Like Robert Westbrook’s analysis of World War II pinups, the first page of the Harris Diamond Company advertisements reminds troops of that for which they fight—the private obligations of family. Additionally, this advertisement informs troops that simply fighting for the protection of these obligations is not enough.

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64 *Overseas Weekly*, June 20, 1970, 1.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
Instead one must fight in order to get \emph{paid} so that one could still provide for one’s family. Fighting for the triumph of capitalism may be noble, but advertisers wanted troops to feel that they must still participate in capitalistic exchange to remain a patriot.

Perhaps the most disturbing implication of the Harris Diamond Co. advertisement lies in the substitution of the exchange of commodities for communication between lovers. Troops send in an order form to the company in New York and the recipient of the gift gets a ring, and the GI gets the bill. No human interaction takes placing during the entire transaction, but because of the connotation of diamonds and the names of the rings ("Love Mates" or "Amour"),\textsuperscript{70} service members and their loved ones feel as if they have some semblance of relationship. This is not to say that long distance relationships during the Vietnam conflict were not real or valuable. But when advertising attempted to create commodity exchange or purchases as "stand-ins" for relationships, the potential for people to become alienated from one another became greater than the possibility that they would become closer.

Harris Diamond’s second page tells men that they should purchase jewelry for themselves in addition to rings for the women in their lives stateside or in Vietnam (Figure 2.3).\textsuperscript{71} The advertisement made sure that these rings differed greatly from those sold for women. In order to help men feel comfortable wearing jewelry, Harris Diamond bestowed their rings with names, like “Stallion,” and descriptions, “He-man all the way,” that exuded virility.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
The ring-selling insert takes on still another dimension when considering the class composition of the military during the Vietnam conflict. Once the United States presence in Vietnam required more troops than the current size of the military, the Selective Service System instituted a draft bringing an additional two million troops into the Armed Forces.\textsuperscript{72} However, by design the new regulations outlining eligibility for the draft forced more working-class people and poor rural into the military than from the middle and upper classes.\textsuperscript{73} The first mechanism that helped to create a working-class military was the lowering of qualifying exam scores for possible draftees. Project 100,000, a program instituted by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in 1966, aimed to let 100,000 people who failed the qualifying exam into the military per year. Originally part of Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society, the Defense Department justified the program by stating it would train lower class soldiers and they could leave the military with marketable job skills. From 1966 to 1968, the military admitted 240,000 individuals under Project 100,000; however, the military failed to provide most men with additional training—only six percent “received training and this amounted to little more than an effort to raise reading skills to a fifth grade level.” By lowering the lowest acceptable score on the exams that judged if a

\textsuperscript{72} Christian G. Appy, \textit{Working-Class War} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 28. Many Americans who would have qualified for the draft volunteered for military service before they could be drafted in order to have some control over what service they would join—these were “draft-motivated volunteers.” The Vietnam Era military broke down approximately into thirds, equal parts of draftees, draft-motivated and “true” volunteers (Appy, 28)

\textsuperscript{73} Many of the policies that directed how the draft operated were established in the early 1960s. After WWII, the director of the Selective Service from 1941-1968, Gen. Lewis B. Hershey, supported a draft that allowed student deferments. The advisory committees he established believed academics helped the war effort and as the arms race weighed increasingly on the minds of Americans, preserving future scientists (those that would receive a deferment from military service by going to college or graduate school) influenced the Selective Service to allow the white-collar workers of tomorrow to avoid military service. (Appy 30).
person had the mental capacity for service, the military only had to turn away 1.36 million people, instead of three million.\footnote{Ibid., 32-33.}

Not only did draft regulations help to get working-class individuals into the Armed Forces, they helped to keep upper-class people out. Affluent draftees found it easier to get a physical exemption from service than their working-class counterparts as they could afford to visit private doctors for medical exams who could find health problems, such as asthma or flat feet, which would exempt the examinee from service. Most of the poorer potential draftees relied on military doctors for their physical. Due to conflicts of interest and the hurried conditions of military medicine, these doctors were less likely to find minor or less obvious health problems.\footnote{Ibid., 34.}

Student deferments provided another way for middle-class men to stay out of the military. If a young man was a full-time student, he could avoid being drafted. This favored middle-class men disproportionately. According to contemporary census records, during the Vietnam conflict, youth from households with a yearly income between “$7,500 and $10,000 were almost two and a half times more likely to attend college than those from families earning under $5,000.” Not only were more middle-class men in school than those from rural areas or the lower classes, but also, of the working-class men in school, many of them worked and attended class part-time. Because the exemption only covered full-time students, a number of working-class students ended up in Vietnam.\footnote{Ibid., 35.}

By joining the National Guard or the Reserves, young men could also avoid going to Vietnam. The two together numbered more than one million troops during...
the late 1960s, but only fifteen thousand of these part-time soldiers served in Vietnam. While it seemed that joining one of these branches of the military seemed like an almost surefire way to avoid combat, working-class individuals found it difficult to join. Both organizations used biased admission standards and did not like to accept poor and working-class applicants. Black men also found it very hard to gain entrance into the National Guards or Reserves—only 1.45 percent of the Army National Guard was black in 1964, and that percentage dropped to 1.26 percent by 1968.77

In 1969, the Selective Service System attempted to remove the class bias of the draft by instituting the draft lottery—a random drawing that would determine who would be inducted into the military. While this should have resulted in a more egalitarian draft, student deferments remained until 1971 and by then, the troop commitment in Vietnam was smaller due to Richard Nixon’s withdrawal of soldiers. Consequently, the effort to make the military look more like America had less affect than officials had hoped. Also, exemptions on grounds of health continued to be readily accessible to men from affluent households. Despite the lottery, the forces in Vietnam already were, and continued to be, mostly poor and working-class.78

In 1964, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) confirmed the working-class composition of the military. Interviewing five percent of all enlisted soldiers and ten percent of officers, the survey asked soldiers what their father did for a living. Among the officers, the class composition was relatively egalitarian, with officers from families with a father in a white-collar occupation slightly edging out

77 Ibid., 37.
78 Ibid., 29.
those from a working-class background. However, the NORC found the results from enlisted men highly skewed. Depending on the service, anywhere from seventeen percent to almost twenty-one percent of enlisted troops came from a middle middle or upper class households, while over half of the respondents from all services came from poor or working class families. Furthermore, again contingent on the service, approximately in between nine and fifteen percent came from families who farmed.

Realizing that the cost of expensive jewelry most likely exceeded the disposable income of most troops, Harris Diamond Co. extended credit to troops. The troops who read this advertisement “Deserve[d] Credit.” They fought for America and in return, American businesses wanted them to feel that that they deserved to partake in the possibilities of consumption that the United States had to offer. Specifically, in terms of this advertisement, anyone could spend like an affluent person and spending in this matter would secure a sexual relationship with the person of one’s choosing.

The advertisements aimed at troops working in Vietnam attempted to create a value for certain goods that surpassed the explicit use value of the product. For example, the ad for Rise shaving cream (Figure 2.4) urges troops not only buy a can for its ability to prevent cuts, but also for the potential of having a female companion pandering to one’s sexual desires. Similarly, an advertisement for TWA (Figure 2.5) described low-cost flights not just as an inexpensive way to travel to Hawaii,

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79 Moskos, 41, 195.
80 In 1970, when these ads appeared in Vietnam, the “Average pay (including supplemental benefits and payments) for officers amounts to $16,929 and for enlisted men $6,404, with a higher percentage of these salaries disposable income than is the case with civilian income” Audrey Allen, “Military Consumer Market,” *Media/Scope* (March 1970): 44.
but a way to bring families together that the military initially separated. As indicated by the advertisements placed by Harris Diamond Company, Rise, and TWA, companies wanted military consumers to believe that purchasing goods and services in Vietnam did much more that provide necessitates (like personal hygiene) and luxuries (like jewelry) to troops. These advertisements attempted to convince consumers that the consumption of American products linked troops to their families at home. Using Rise shaving cream might make a soldier feel good about his relationship with a girlfriend that the girl in the ad represents. These ads encouraged troops to associate commodities with their personal relationships strained by war.

Besides print media like Overseas Weekly, advertisers had several other avenues to reach troops and English-speaking inhabitants of South Vietnam. Before a feature film played at a Vietnamese theater, the theater ran about fifteen minutes of slides and short film advertisements. Advertising prior to movie screenings also became problematic when the battlefield found its way into urban areas. During these times, citywide curfews prevented people from going to the movies, thus wasting the advertisements. Commercial, non-military, radio also provided a place for advertisers to reach consumers. Radio stations ran four hours a day and allowed agencies to place ads if they contacted the station six months in advance.83 While it is difficult to gauge the response to these efforts by Vietnamese nationals, desire for Western styles emerged over the course of the Vietnam Conflict. After the Americans left Vietnam, Vietnamese government officials in Hanoi had to mount their own propaganda

campaign to dissuade residents from dressing in Western styles.\(^8^4\) After the Conflict, the American impact became clear in Saigon as well. According to Nayan Chanda, a journalist for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, the urban residents of South Vietnam were changed drastically by the abundance imported by American military personnel. As quoted by Christian Science Monitor Reporter Daniel Southerland, Chanda related that "it is not only the outward signs of prosperity — big mansions, air-conditioned theaters, cars, television, Honda motor-cycles, and, of course, Coca-Cola - which has made the 'liberators' [the North Vietnamese] feel like strangers, but also the life-style of the Saigonese which is a far cry from the austerity of North Vietnam."\(^8^5\)

While billboards, print media, theaters, and radio advertising allowed marketers to reach consumers off-post (both those working for the military and residents of Vietnam), companies still wished to reach the military shopper on-base and through military-operated media. One company, Gift-Pax Inc., gained access to the military consumer by running a "free sampling program" in the military. This marketing strategy gave "every new man in uniform...a sack of [their] client’s products." Approximately one million troops in 1966 received a bag of toiletries ranging from shampoo to boot polish.\(^8^6\)

Marketers also disguised advertising as entertainment to sidestep advertising bans. In 1961, American Motors introduced the "Ramblerama." Looking to increase the market for the Rambler, a family car, American Motors targeted U.S. military installations in Europe. According to American Motors’s director of automotive

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\(^8^5\) Ibid.

export William S. Picket, AMC hoped to sell the Rambler to families who could drive the car while still in the service and continue to do so long after retirement. American Motors billed the Ramblerama as “entertainment,” but its true motive was advertising. According to a 1965 article in *Advertising Age*, the show consisted of “corny gags,” skits and songs that mentioned the Rambler in some way.\(^87\)

While the show itself served as a forum for American Motors advertising, the company’s one hundred thousand-dollar investment yielded other marketing opportunities too. Because the Pentagon considered the show entertainment, it granted special privileges to American Motors. First, the company could place advertisements for the show in *Stars and Stripes*, a daily newspaper authored by the military that did not allow advertising. *Stars and Stripes* also reviewed the show, published interviews with its stars and published a picture from the performance to accompany the article. By advertising in this paper, which had a “daily press run of 300,000” copies, American Motors exposed nearly every overseas serviceman to the Rambler. Second, the Armed Forces Network, a media network that included “250 radio stations and 35 television outlets” by 1970 and commanded the eyes and ears of nearly all members of the Armed Forces, ran “musical promo spots” for the show. By providing entertainment to troops stationed overseas, and through subsequent promotions for the Ramblerama, American Motors gained access to an advertising vehicle unavailable to other companies.\(^88\)

\(^87\) “Rambler Says it Taps 40% of Overseas Military Market with Traveling Show,” *Advertising Age* (15 November 1965): 12.

In addition to the access American Motors had to *Stars and Stripes* and the Armed Forces Network, they also had other opportunities to advertise to troops. The show program contained post cards with "four-color illustrations of the Rambler, and price lists and names of local sales representatives." Also, local club managers at military installations hosting the show allowed American Motors to place promotional displays for the Ramblerama in their bars—point-of-purchase advertising was another banned marketing practice on-post.90

Because of American Motors' uncommon access to U.S. troops, the Ramblerama proved to be a great success. The fourth-annual Ramblerama, touring in October and November 1965, played to approximately sixty thousand service men in "110 performances at 70 military installations in Europe" and sparked American Motor's plans to visit Tripoli and Vietnam. The first three years of the Ramblerama tour resulted in 24,000 cars sold to troops overseas. The show helped the Rambler command around forty percent of all car sales to overseas troops.91

While American Motors actively inserted its products into the lives of service members stationed abroad, other corporations, like tobacco companies, found another way to get their products to troops in Vietnam. Building on the commitment of service organizations to troops established during World War II, corporations created loyal consumers by distributing their goods through such organizations and other private groups.

89 "Rambler Says it Taps 40%," 12.
90 Ibid.
In 1966, Phillip Morris distributed a memo to “all men” it employed declaring its intention to make cigarettes available to “individuals, organizations or companies who wish[ed] to provide cigarettes for free distribution to our Armed Forces in Vietnam.”92 In addition to a first round of 50,000 mailed advertisements to “veteran’s, civic and fraternal clubs throughout the country,” Phillip Morris asked all its employees to speak to clubs and organizations to which they belonged about this service.93 Phillip Morris also set up “counter easels” with blank order forms in stores that sold cigarettes94 and placed an order blank in each carton of its cigarettes so civilian consumers who wanted to send cigarettes to troops could do so.95 Phillip Morris’s tax-free cigarette program distributed cigarettes in two ways. Participants in the program could purchase the cigarettes and have groups like the United Service Organization (USO) distribute them or Phillip Morris would send them to an individual service member in Vietnam.96 In each case, the donor’s name would appear on a label on each pack of cigarettes.97 This label informed troops that a particular individual or organization supported the military, thereby serving as an advertisement for that group.98

93 Karnal to All Men, 2.
94 Ibid.
95 Phillip Morris cigarette brands in 1966 included Marlboro, Parliament, Phillip Morris Commander and Phillip Morris Filter. Karnal to All Men, 1.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
Cigarettes became a rallying point for businesses that wished to market to the troops and also cast their company or organization as civic minded. Convenient Food Marts, for instance, ran an advertisement in 1968 promoting its program to send cigarettes to troops in Vietnam (Figure 3.1). For every carton of cigarettes purchased in their stores, "Convenient Food Marts in cooperation with the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co." donated "1 pack of cigarettes to our servicemen in Vietnam." The ad also reminded consumers "In effect—You are making it possible for these servicemen to enjoy these cigarettes free. The More Cigarettes You Buy the More We Give Away." Convenient Food Marts allowed civilians to feel good about their consumption habits by veiling them behind civic duty. A smoker no longer lit up as an indulgence or to satisfy addiction-induced cravings, but as a duty to provide this commodity to troops who defended the American way of life. Furthermore, this type of advertisement promoted R.J. Reynolds cigarettes to both a domestic audience and consumers in the military. Their name got circulated first to the American public, who allowed them to send cigarettes to Vietnam where their brand was showcased a second time.

Many organizations opted to support Big Tobacco, consumption and the war effort by sending cigarettes overseas. The North Carolina chapter of the Jaycees approved the "Smokes For Our Boys in Vietnam" program in February 1968. In a letter addressed to "state presidents," the National Director of the Jaycees Charles

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100 Ibid.

Harrell urged local chapters “to show our appreciation and gratitude for the daily sacrifices being made by our fighting forces in South Vietnam,” by supplying troops with cigarettes. While genuinely concerned with helping troops, Harrell also made it clear that this campaign would help the public image of the Jaycees. “The public solicitation campaigns across our State demonstrate what the Jaycees are doing on a community and national level.” He continued, “Citizens see for themselves that Jaycees are with our fighting men and through this effort, we hope to some degree to ‘Close the Ranks on the Home Front.’”

Not all groups sending commodities to Vietnam were as pro-business as the Jaycees. A number of New Jersey unions, such as the Teamsters Local 999, sent cigarettes to troops. Also, groups wishing to support the troops through the distribution of commodities did not have to endorse the use of cigarettes. The Maryland chapter of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) started a campaign in 1967 to raise money to buy Pepsi for troops in Vietnam. The Pepsi Cola Company leapt at the chance to be associated with the charitable mission of the WCTU campaign. An executive from the Pepsi Cola Company escorted the first

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102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
check from the WCTU to Saigon where he presented it “to the Chief of Chaplains for the purchase of non-alcoholic beverages” (presumably these were Pepsi products.)

The WCTU program, named “Pepsi Cola for Our Servicemen in Vietnam,” became very successful—eventually cooperating with Pepsi, who allowed the WCTU to purchase Pepsi at wholesale prices. From 1967 to 1970, the WCTU raised $63,000 to purchase soft drinks from Pepsi. Because the WCTU relied on the USO to distribute “more than two hundred thousand containers of Pepsi Cola,” the Executive director of the USO wrote a letter of appreciation to the WCTU in 1970. The WCTU program made sure that “Thousands upon thousands of these men will know that the ladies in your organization do care!” The executive director adds, “A cold Pepsi Cola is a welcome, refreshing morale builder for our troops.” Not only does this letter suggest that these campaigns very effectively spread the name and mission of specific organizations among troop populations in Vietnam, it also illustrates how brand names got attached to these programs. In addition to providing troops with soft drinks, the “Pepsi Cola for Our Service Men in Vietnam” campaign also provided the women of the WCTU with a return to pre-war gendered duties.

While some companies explicitly advertised to service members in order to boost profits when troops returned home, other companies used the potential for

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106 Hays, 98.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., 98-100.
110 Ibid.
111 Other women’s groups mobilized the idea of motherhood to advance their goals. As Historian Amy Swerdlow argues, Women Strike for Peace in the early 1960s “used the feminine mystique of the 1950s to legitimize women’s right to radical dissent from foreign and military policies.” These women pointed to failing cold war policies and the men responsible for these failures as reasons why “the men in power could no longer be counted on for protection in the nuclear age.” Because men could no longer protect Americans, “WSP implied that the traditional sex-gender contract no longer worked.” Amy Swerdlow, “Ladies’ Day at the Capitol: Women Strike for Peace versus HUAC,” Feminist Studies (Autumn, 1982), 515.
corruption in the exchange system in order to realize immediate profits. To help get certain items on the shelves of overseas exchanges, some marketers employed middlemen in the country where the exchange was located. Middlemen provided a sales presence in a distant location and face-to-face contact with exchange managers and some offered illegal services to companies, such as bribing exchange officials. Middlemen received a flat fee per month in addition to a commission for each unit sold to the exchange.112

In Vietnam, a number of companies turned to William J. Crum to act as their middleman. Starting out as the owner of an electronics firm that provided jukeboxes, pinball and slot machines113 to the exchange and club system in Vietnam, as American involvement in Vietnam escalated, “Crum expanded his product line to include just about everything the U.S. military required for the morale and welfare of its troops. William Crum quickly became the single biggest vendor broker for U.S. vendor broker for U.S. military clubs, messes, PX’s and commissaries in all of Vietnam.”114 While he brokered deals between many companies and military officials, the heart of Crum’s monopoly was liquor and beer.115 Crum received fifteen hundred dollars a month from Carlings Brewing Company and ten cents for each case of beer the Exchange system bought. On top of this, Carlings provided

113 Slot Machines were eventually banned in overseas clubs in the summer of 1972 because they presented an easy way for people to defraud the government. The Army and Air Force made 23 million dollars and 28-30 million dollars per year from slot machines respectively. “Benade: No Slots O’Seas,” Air Force Times (24 April 1974), 6.
115 Ibid.
Crum with “promotional expenses” to use for such events as free beer nights at military clubs. The per-case commission was very lucrative, as Crum sold two million cases per year from 1965 to 1970. This compensation package paid for Crum, and others like him, to bribe officials to win contracts.\textsuperscript{116} Bribes offered by middlemen came in many forms. One of the “official liquor buyers” for the VRE secured a scholarship for his son’s college education provided by “a foundation headed by [Jim] Beam executives after [he] agreed to store 3,000 cases of the distillery’s whisky in a warehouse in Tokyo, conveniently close to the Vietnam market.” As a result of business practices like these, Jim Beam sold a great deal of its bourbon in Vietnam. Domestically, it only sold a slightly higher volume than Old Crow, a competing bourbon, but in 1970 in Vietnam, it almost sold twice as much as Old Crow.\textsuperscript{117} Unethical business practices when dealing with the exchange system took advantage of the captive military consumer who could only purchase what the exchange made available to him or her.

The captive audience of American consumers in Vietnam that made bribing exchange officials appealing to companies also made the military negligence and discrimination toward minority consumers more poignant. Because troops could only purchase American goods that the military imported, military consumers were at the mercy of their employer to address their needs.

African-American troops stationed in the United States had difficulty obtaining the goods they desired in domestic post exchanges and this problem got

\textsuperscript{116} “Push Money,” 24.
worse when African-American troops went to Vietnam. Until black service members protested to commanding officers, exchanges did not stock items like "black hair-hair products, magazines, and clothes." Equal opportunity officers or the inspector general heard these protestations with various degrees of seriousness. The officers trusted to resolve complaints concerning racial discrimination often ignored the reports as they did not want to jeopardize their own relationship with their commanding officers by becoming a nuisance. While visiting Vietnam, entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. commented on this situation after visiting the exchange at Long Binh after the situation had been rectified, "It's a groove to walk into Long Binh [exchange] and see products for 'do's,' the black magazines and the record shops, because these were all things the black soldiers had to fight for in order to get them over here." Although this negligence on the part of the military highlighted indifference to racist practices and exposed larger discriminations towards African-American troops by certain military officials, troops in the United States could at least go off-post to purchase these products. For African-American service members in Vietnam, no such off-post shopping facilities existed.

118 A number of studies have contributed to a rich history of other groups such as Leroy Tecube’s narrative of his Vietnam Experience Year in Nam: A Native American Soldier’s Story and Lea Ybarra’s collection of oral histories Vietnam Veteranos: Chicanos Recall the War. Leroy TeCube, Year in Nam: A Native American Soldier’s Story (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1999). Lea Ybarra, Vietnam Veteranos: Chicanos Recall the War (Austin, University of Austin Press, 2004).
121 Sammy Davis, Jr., “Why I went to the Troops,” Ebony, June 1972, 142.
122 Westheider, 76. For a discussion of how American corporations started to court African-American consumers in the 1960s by using slang and the concept of “Soul” see Robert E. Weems Jr., Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century, New York: New York University Press, 1998, 70-79. Weems does not address to what extent African Americans bought goods and services in the 1960s or if their needs were met by business.
The inability to gain access to basic pastimes like shopping prompted male African-American troops to object strongly to this discrimination, and some framed their objection in terms of their masculinity. This attitude was expressed by Specialist W.H. Cooper in Sepia magazine in 1970:

A number of us have written to superior officers and congressmen but they have turned a deaf ear to our pleas. I am a man, a citizen, a soldier prepared to give my life for a way of life that I believe in, but I am not allowed to live the way I believe...The black man should receive his just promotions. He should be given the same opportunities in recreation and entertainment. In other words, he should be treated like a man. I am disgusted and sick of being a second class soldier because of my black face. I am a man!¹²³

According to Historian Herman Graham III, “many African American like Cooper looked to black nationalism as a means of discovering the gender validation that the military had denied them.”¹²⁴ Letting Cooper’s words resonate, Graham concludes that the ability for a man to relax as he sees fit part of how gender gets constructed and then acknowledged. Furthermore, in this acknowledgement, troops gained rights as citizens through their participation in recreational activities.

In 1970, AAFES attempted to rectify the lack of products and services for African-American stationed around the globe by addressing their needs for hair care products and hair cutting. First, the Personal Services Division of AAFES sent African-American Willie Lee Morrow, author of The Principles of Cutting and

¹²³ Quoted in Sepia, May 1970, 54. This article is quoted in Graham, 93.
¹²⁴ Graham, 93.
Styling Negro Hair, overseas to train 6,000 thousand barbers and 1,100 beauticians.\textsuperscript{125} Next, AAFES made sure that overseas exchanges stocked the desired grooming supplies for African Americans.\textsuperscript{126} According to Air Force Lt. Col. Henry Wurthman, deputy commander of the Korea Regional Exchange, the demand for Afro combs was so great that an exchange in Korea sold out of their stock of 500 within minutes of putting them on the shelves.\textsuperscript{127}

Black troops at home and abroad not only had to fight for a political agenda with which they may or may not have agreed, but they also had to fight for their right to consume the products they wanted. In Connecticut, one group of African-American troops petitioned for and received products that catered to their needs and a wider selection of music, “black music,” to be played in military clubs.\textsuperscript{128}

African American service members in Vietnam, when not addressed by the exchange system, found meanings in commodities entrenched in the Black Power movement. Black soldiers could express solidarity with the movement by wearing “slave bracelets”—bracelets woven out of bootlaces—or “black-power canes”—canes with a fist on the top.\textsuperscript{129} White Commanding Officers at times cited African Americans for such practices as they violated the uniform code. Whites who added conspicuous items to their uniforms, like rings or peace symbols, did not get “written up.”\textsuperscript{130} The slave bracelet, as it came items (bootlaces) distributed to everyone and recoded and recreated as a bracelet, circulated outside of capitalist exchange and

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 86.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 90.
\textsuperscript{128} Westheider, 81. The lack of black music in military clubs was another large concern of African-American troops. Westheider, 76.
\textsuperscript{129} Westheider, 88.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 49.
allowed African Americans to claim a commodity for their own that could not be influenced by goods in the PX.  

Starting in 1967, the military began to actively stock products that appealed to black consumers, bringing in periodicals such as Jet, Ebony, and Tan as well as stocking books by black authors.  

Part of the reason for buying these magazines, at least for many male African-American troops, was the black pin-up models present in the periodicals. The military imported a great deal of magazines with white women displayed, but not all troops found these women attractive as sexual objects. One African-American Marine, whose living quarters featured more than 500 pin-ups hung on the wall, stated, “I don’t want no stringy haired beast broad with ‘hidden beauty’ on my wall…Black is Beauty.”

This Marine’s expression of desire for African-American women exposes a limitation of Robert Westbrook’s analysis of Pin-ups during World War II. Can troops identify with women who are of a different race and then fight for private obligations as represented by this image that does not resemble a girlfriend or mother? Of course, race does not determine sexual desire, but as the Marine who adorned his living quarters with 500 pin-ups pointed out, race can play a part in the personal definition of beauty. Additionally, if African American troops displayed

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131 I am not sure if the canes were hand carved or were purchased, and if they were purchased, if they were made locally or imported. Consequently, this sentence only refers to slave bracelets.
133 Wallace Terry, III, “Bringing the War Home.” The Black Scholar (November 1970), 13. In his study of African Americans in the Vietnam-Era military, Historian Herman Graham III asserts that many black men “discouraged one another from becoming involved in interracial sexual relationships. Renouncing white women as symbols of beauty, black men insisted that culturally informed GIs direct their sexual desire exclusively toward black women.” These men were often involved in the Black Power movement as well. Graham, 110.
pin-ups of white women, surely racial tensions present among service members stationed in Vietnam would have escalated to overt confrontations more often.134

Even though the military attempted to rectify its disregard for African-American service members in 1967, military officials did not satisfactorily provide for black troops until the 1970s. The Vietnam Era Army did not address the needs of its African-American workers until 1972 when officials set out to act upon changes meant to redress the neglect shown towards African Americans in the military through affirmative action policies.135 Because part of this effort included the stocking of post exchanges with “black-oriented products,”136 the previous measures taken by the military clearly did not fully meet the needs of African American Service members, despite the evaluation of outside observers like Sammy Davis Jr.

As male African American troops struggled for representation on the shelves of exchanges across Vietnam, white and black women had a more complicated relationship to shopping in Vietnam. American female civilians and female service members experienced very different conditions under which they consumed American goods in Vietnam.137 In the winter of 1965, because of the increasing

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134 Vietnamese prostitutes could become the victims of American racism between troops. Besides segregated brothels, such as those found in Long Binh, a Vietnamese prostitute who “service[ed] white soldiers was likely to be murdered by soldiers if she was discovered providing services to black soldiers.” Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?: The Militarization of Women’s Lives* (London: Pandora, 1988), 33. For a discussion of African-American women in pornography, please see Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 135-143.

135 Westheider, 133.

136 Ibid.

137 The Department of Defense did not keep accurate records of the number of women in Vietnam. The DoD “says 7,5000 women were on active military service in Vietnam during the war; the Veterans Administration lists 11,000 women as having served there. Together with civilians working for the Red Cross or other voluntary services, the general estimate is that a total of between 33,000 and 55,000 women working in Vietnam during the War. Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars: 1945-1990* (New
instability and hazards of the region, the military banned all dependents from living in Vietnam. However, a number of civilian women remained. Some were journalists while others held government jobs. Some women did not travel to Vietnam to work but accompanied their husbands, who worked in Vietnam as reporters, employees for companies with government contracts, defense contractors or as diplomatic staff. Many wives of white-collar workers, joined the American Women’s Association of Saigon (AWAS). Started by the wife of the first American Ambassador to South Vietnam in 1950, the Association sought to advance the interests of both Vietnam and America through charity work. One of the services the group took upon itself was to assemble a shopping guide for newly arrived American civilians in Vietnam. Published in 1962, this particular guide provided “newcomers” with a directory of goods and services offered in Saigon as well as an overview of Vietnamese culture. A similar pamphlet, The Saigon Shopping Guide, emerged in 1969. Compiled by the wives of the men working in the Administrative Section of the U.S. embassy, the Saigon Shopping Guide served the same purpose as the AWAS guide—its authors hoped “this booklet will help you discover what goods and services are available in Saigon, even though there is a war

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140 Taylor, 86.
141 Langguth, 60.
142 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
145 American Women’s Association of Saigon, A Booklet of Helpful Information for Americans in Vietnam, October 1962, Folder 34, Box 07, William Colby Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, IV.
Among the many tips the *Saigon Shopping Guide* offered new arrivals, it highlighted the local vendors who sold Coca-Cola.\(^\text{147}\)

These two shopping guides illustrate the construction of shopping as a female endeavor. Women authored both books—the AWAS claimed the first book while three relatively anonymous women sign the foreword of the *Saigon Shopping Guide* with their husband’s names preceded by a “Mrs.”\(^\text{148}\) Even yielding their well-deserved by-lines to their husbands, these women were relegated to the position of consumers and charity workers—as opposed to the masculine role of fighter/protector/provider played by their husbands. For civilian women in Vietnam, shopping was very much gendered as feminine.

Even though civilian women in Saigon helped to maintain an environment in which consumption existed as a relatively feminine pursuit, female service members in Vietnam encountered a shopping experience in which they were largely invisible. The military-operated stores where American women’s shopping in Vietnam reinforced and helped create the masculinity of male American troops.

The Vietnam-Era military policed the masculinity of its workers by promoting a dominant form of masculinity through its exchange stores. By shopping at a post exchange, troops, male or female, encountered only the version of masculinity that the military wished to endorse. Scholar R.W. Connell’s term “hegemonic masculinity” encompasses how various agents (in this case, the military through its exchanges) “vigorously construct aggressive, dominant, and violent models of

\(^{146}\) *Saigon Shopping Guide*, 01 March 1969, Folder 05, Box 01, Jackson Bosley Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, 1.

\(^{147}\) Ibid., 6.

masculinity" that are then supported by men regardless of if they actually reflect those men's feelings.¹⁴⁹ The models of masculinity forwarded by the military (or for that matter, politicians, artists, businessmen, or religious leaders)¹⁵⁰ created a mythic "public face" of masculinity that contained the ideals of masculinity that men are expected to support, because by doing so, they can maintain their position of power over women and subordinate masculinities.¹⁵¹

R.W. Connell, in his definition of hegemonic masculinity acknowledges that men continually exert dominance over women. Through a combination of "social forces," such as religious practices and media representation, men can achieve "social ascendancy" simply because they are men. Hegemonic masculinity refers to how culture reflects and maintains the dominance of men over women through a constantly changing system of affirmation and condemnation. By objectifying women and condemning "subordinate masculinities," this system constructs masculinity as the antithesis of femininity. Then, using the opposite of supposed feminine traits, the system of hegemonic masculinity produces, most often with the help of the media, a fantasy image of manliness—an image that includes emotional detachment, a competitive nature and sexual prowess. Even though this image may

¹⁴⁹ Mike Donaldson, "What is Hegemonic Masculinity?," *Theory and Society* (October 1993), 646.
¹⁵⁰ Ibid.
¹⁵¹ Ibid. The "public" face of hegemonic masculinity need not be negative. R.W. Connell, one of the scholars who coined the term, explains that "in some usages I refer in a shorthand way to hegemonic masculinity when the topic is men behaving badly (with respect to gender equality). And this gives an opening to the notion of a fixed character type. But I do think it possible for hegemony to be a positive force. That was part of Gramsci's original conception of hegemony in class relations, and it is quite conceivable that a certain hegemony could be constructed for masculinities that are less toxic, more cooperative and peaceable, than the current editions." R.W. Connell, "R.W. Connell's 'Masculinities': Reply," *Gender and Society* (August 1988), 476. A contemporary example of the mythic model of masculinity would be that of Rambo or the Terminator.

The fantasy image of men constructed through the system of hegemonic masculinity manifests itself often in the military. The military sees the successful, and properly socialized, male soldier as the fantasy male. Male troops who emerge from basic training often become "strong, silent, self-reliant" team players. If a man conforms to this archetype in the military, then he will have a better chance of success as recognized through decoration or promotion. Basic training socializes troops to the military's idea of an ideal man. Drill Sergeants traumatize young troops in order to suppress other forms of masculinity and markers of identity, such as long hair, are disposed of in order to mold the soldiers in the image of the fantasy male.\footnote{William Arkin and Lynne R. Dobrofsky, "Military Socialization and Masculinity," \textit{Journal of Social Issues} 34 no. 1 (1978): 159, 166.}

The military has historically safeguarded the heterosexual sanctity of all-male groups. Throughout a soldier's military career, especially if he participates in combat, the military encourages "camaraderie [and] brotherhood" among troops. To military strategists, an emotionally close unit is an effective unit. But, "buddy bonding" suggests an amount of emotional accessibility—a trait that the mythic male does not possess. As a result, the military uses a number of strategies to recode "buddy bonding" not as feminizing, but instead, as the very affirmation of
manhood. Similarly, consumption, an activity historically constructed and coded as feminine, had to be actively transformed into a masculine activity.

The military and its exchange system embody Connell’s ideas. In order to have troops that matched the mythic male stereotype—also the image of the ideal soldier—the military reinforced stereotypes of femininity and provided alternate interpretations for feminine consumables that would minimize the impact these products could have in threatening the masculine space of the post exchange. The most obvious way the military treated female service members as subordinates came in the form of neglect—women had a hard time finding products that fulfilled their needs. Throughout the 1960s, the exchange stores in Vietnam often failed to stock personal hygiene products, such as tampons. Even when tampons did make it to the PX shelves, demand for these items by male troops often made it hard to keep them in stock. Tampons provided a convenient method for cleaning the barrels of M-16s and this practice continued the coding of weapons as sexualized as started by the field manuals issued by the military that used metaphors of sex and personal hygiene to instruct service members how to maintain a gun (see Figure 4.1-4.17).

By associating tampons with weaponry instead of women, the military minimized the possibility for having an item in the PX threaten its construction as a masculine space.

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Tampons are for guns, and by extension, killing, not for women’s bodies. Men walking through a PX could see tampons and think of a clean weapon instead of women’s menstrual cycle. Furthermore, because troops did not have to engage with the realities of how the female body operates, troops could engage in a fantasy of female sexuality. In that fantasy, a woman’s sexual organs are divorced from their reproductive capacity and are exist only to pleasure their (male) sexual partners.

AAFES officials also limited the number of items (in kind and quantity) that catered to female customers of the Vietnam Regional Exchanges. The rationale behind cutting such items as hairspray, watches and cosmetics, had nothing to do with the female customers of the exchange. Instead, these items were limited because AAFES officials, at the urging of Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, associated these products with the sexual behavior of male troops. The Vietnam-era military first linked female-oriented items at the PX and the sexual relations of male service members in 1966 when the Vietnam Regional Exchange overstocked 72,000 cans of hairspray to cater to the 750 American women in Vietnam. This overstock implied either a large error in ordering of female-oriented items or that these items were ordered for the consumption of men as gifts to local women. Reporters for Air Force Times at the time interpreted this “overstock” as a result of the latter, an “immoral” option. In

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160 “Battle Flares in Vietnam-Should BXs Offer Caviar?” Air Force Times (15 June 1966), 2.; “DoD Official Visits SEA, Studies Blackmarket, R&R.” Air Force Times (25 May 1966), 2. The way Air Force Times phrases this implies that the overstock does not matter because troops giving hairspray to Vietnamese women, even if in exchange for sexual favors, is irrelevant—as if to say it is just boys being boys. The phrasing that explains McNamara’s recommendation to the Senate Foreign Relation Committee goes as follows: “The implication was that the servicemen in Vietnam were not using it
order to quell the potential public relations problem that the image of GIs trading hairspray for sexual favors might instigate, the VRE reduced the number of items it offered to women in Vietnam from 160 in 1965 to 26 in 1966. Similar to the recoding of tampons to associate them with weapons and the mythic masculinity of a prepared and ingenious soldier, the limiting of women’s items in exchanges not only made them less visible, but also publicly declared them as payment for sexual acts. A male service member could walk down the aisle of the exchange and when he encountered the few products ordered for women, he could think not of an actual woman, but a sexualized woman who would trade sex for the product on the shelf. Furthermore, extra cans of hairspray could mark the sexual prowess of American men circulating among the local Vietnamese population.

In the instances when products could avoid the association with male sexual dominance over both the women they had sex with and the women they worked with, sex still exuded from many of the products. Such items in the PX, like nylon stockings, were not very desirable for women in uniform. As one Army nurse recalled, because they wore fatigues “we didn’t have a great need for nylons.” The ordering of stockings suggests that women should maintain a certain type of “feminine,” or sexualized, appearance—nylons give the impression of smooth, slim and sexually alluring legs. Even though the military limited the sale of items like cosmetics, military officials clearly felt that women should still look feminine in themselves and this was somehow immoral” [emphasis mine].

163 Nylons also were a popular item to sell to male GIs as gifts for their Vietnamese girlfriends. Elizabeth M. Norman, Women at War: The Story of fifty Military Nurses Who Served in Vietnam. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990, 65.
their uniforms. Consequently, women at Bien Hoa Air Base and those who had access to a Navy hospital anchored in Saigon harbor could go to military-operated beauty shops in order to conform to the military standard for ‘feminine’ appearance.\textsuperscript{165}

Not only did the goods and services sold by the VRE actively sexualize women, but also some military officials felt that sexualized women themselves also should be sold.\textsuperscript{166} The “top army medical officer in Vietnam,” Brig. Gen. David T. Thomas, suggested that post exchanges offer prostitutes to troops in order to help control venereal disease.\textsuperscript{167} While this suggestion contradicted the Department of Defense policy of suppression of prostitution, the American military officials in Vietnam had already established at least one formal area within which troops could acquire and pay for sex from prostitutes registered with the military.\textsuperscript{168} An Khe Plaza, a 25-acre brothel quarter set up at An Khe in the central highlands of Vietnam, catered to American troops. According to Air Calvary General Harry W.O. Kinnard, the brothels helped minimize battle fatigue. Consequently, military police guarded the plaza and troops nicknamed it “Disneyland East.” But the nickname refers to the wholesome nature of the compound—-young men engaged in sexual acts with

\textsuperscript{165} The salon at Bien Hoa Air Base was “intended for the use of nurses in the 93\textsuperscript{rd} Evacuation Hospital.” “Pacific BXs Revise Special Orders Setup.” \textit{Air Force Times} (8 June 1966), 11. According to Judith Hicks Stiehm, “During the 1960s...’ladylike’ appearance and behavior were prescribed for military women.” Basic training included instruction on grooming and manners. Uniforms had skirts. Women had no fatigue uniforms and no boots. They did not learn how to use weapons.” Stiehm, 39.


prostitutes to blow off some steam seemed to be an “all-American” activity like a trip to Disneyland. Neither of these articles, nor the men interviewed in them, mentioned the sexual needs of American women.\footnote{169}

The prostitution district outside of An Khe, however, had another nickname. As Specialist 5 Harold Bryant remembers, service members called the area “Sin City”.\footnote{170} Opening for business at nine in the morning, troops could find bars and brothels in the district. Bryant adds a few crucial details to the story of “Sin City” or “Disneyland East” that the reporters for Time and the Washington Post failed to report. “Sin City had soul bars.”\footnote{171} Bryant recalls:

A group of us would walk around to find a joint that would be playin’ some soul music, some Temptations, Supremes, Sam and Dave. I would want to do my drinking somewhere where I’d hear music that I liked rather than hillbilly. But a lot of gray guys who wasn’t racially hung up would also be there.\footnote{172}

While “Sin City” was controlled by the United States military and the Military Police kept order, the Vietnamese operated the 40-some bars inside the area.\footnote{173} As such, African-American troops could find music perhaps unavailable to them in the PX, but only by turning to non-military sources—like in this case, local Vietnamese business


\footnote{171} Bryant in Terry, 31.

\footnote{172} Ibid.

\footnote{173} “Disneyland East,” 29.
men and women operating off-post hangouts—could they find a consumer experience that met their taste.\textsuperscript{174}

By subordinating women through their sexualization, the military used consumption as a way to maintain the masculinity of its male troops. Exchange stores in Vietnam became spaces in which men could consume products without placing their masculinity in harm’s way. Historically, shopping centers have catered to women because they did the majority of shopping.\textsuperscript{175} Shopping centers provided a public space, albeit controlled privately, that specifically addressed the needs of women.\textsuperscript{176} As Lizabeth Cohen has noted, “From the color schemes, stroller ramps, baby-sitting services, and special lockers for ‘ladies’ wraps to the reassuring security guards and special events such as fashion shows, shopping centers were created as female worlds.”\textsuperscript{177}

In addition to creating a binary between what was coded as masculine or feminine coded by sexualizing female service members and limiting their options, post exchange officials used similar techniques as the one’s Cohen cites to make the PX a male-dominated space. The atmosphere inside the exchanges in Vietnam attempted to replicate the American buying experience. The exchange system prided

\textsuperscript{174} Some white and African American service members sought entertainment in segregated areas off-post too. “In Saigon, whites sought their relaxation on Tu Do Street, while blacks frequented bars in the Khanh area, which was known as Soul Alley because of its clientele. Soul Alley offered black GIs reminders of their black culture in the United States. Black servicemen enjoyed soul food—turnips, barbecued ribs, and chitterlings—at popular restaurants such as the L&M and the C.M. G. Guest House.” Graham, 110.

\textsuperscript{175} After World War II, marketers estimated that women did “80 percent to 92 percent of the shopping” in the US. Lizabeth Cohen, “From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America,” In \textit{His and Hers: Gender, Consumption and Technology}, ed. Roger Horowitz and Arwen Mohun, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998, 212.

\textsuperscript{176} Cohen, 212.

\textsuperscript{177} Cohen also argues that 19\textsuperscript{th}-century department stores feminized space, but this was less significant because the entire area around the stores—the streets and many of the shops that lined them—“catered to male consumption.” The shopping center created for women a similar experience. Cohen, 212-213.
itself in providing troops thousands of miles from home with glass display cases and a “supermarket style checkout system.” The exchanges mimicked American stores for several reasons. First, overseas exchanges followed the lead of domestic exchanges, which patterned their merchandising displays on American department stores. While the interior of an exchange was far duller than Macy’s lavish displays, exchanges still put effort (albeit very little) into showing off their wares. They hoped this would translate into greater sales. Second, by reproducing the exchanges of the U.S., the troops could find comfort in uniformity. Once inside the doors of the PX, the shopper could be anywhere—transported far away from the war zone—and always find items of similar quality, much like the repeatability of chain stores.

These utilitarian stores made the shopping experience one driven by purpose, not leisure. The utility of shopping could mask any insecurity a male GI might have about purchasing items and enjoying the process. Beige and white walls removed the spectacular nature of display from the shopping experience and replaced it with the consistent reinforcement of masculinity. One addition to this atmosphere appeared in a snack bar in Danang where weapons, which had to be checked before entering the room, lined a wall.

The exchanges in Vietnam also ran promotions that confirmed the masculinity of troops. The Cholon PX outside of Saigon, to provide a service to troops and

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179 The largest exchange in Vietnam, the store located in a suburb of Saigon called the Cholon District, featured a color scheme of “beige-and white.” However, they did play music over a small speaker system—something consumers could come to expect in civilian stores. (“The Worldwide PX: $2 Billion in Bargains,” Newsweek, 17 January 1966, 72.) The PX in Cholon “was only slightly smaller than the New York Bloomingdale’s,” Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: A History (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 438.
180 Ryan, 51.
increase business, ran a sale on beer. For ten dollars, customers could load up a truck, Jeep or trailer with as much beer as would fit in the vehicle. Three sailors interviewed by *Newsweek* claimed they crammed enough beer into their jeep trailer to lower the cost of a can of beer to four cents—over ten cases of beer.\(^{182}\) This sale exemplifies the exchange's role in reinforcing a version of the masculinity embodied by the mythic male stereotype. The beer promotion reported by *Newsweek* combined beer drinking and consumption with machinery in an attempt to make shopping acceptable to male troops.

In addition to items, such as stockings and hairspray, that sexualized female troops and created a version of femininity that helped reinforce a mythic masculinity, other items for women also played into the construction of masculinity in Vietnam. Expensive items limited to only the most affluent troops like fur coats and diamond rings\(^{183}\) as well as products found in AAFES-distributed mail order catalogs\(^ {184}\) permitted male troops to feel like providers even when in the war zone. These goods, brought specifically to be sold as gifts, allowed troops to feel as if they were providing for women in the absence of the women they knew who remained in the United States. The desire of male troops to provide for women also affected female customers who often had to tolerate a trail of male troops following them,

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\(^{184}\) Peter Weaver, "Car Frames: Things That Go Bump on the Road." *Los Angeles Times* (2 January 1972), G2. Weaver's column assumes a question and answer format where consumers can write in and ask for advice. One service member (Sgt. B.O.) from Vietnam wrote in asking if he should purchase a diamond-ring from such a catalog.
chivalrously offering to carry their purchases—assuming that they want or need help.  

Instead of defining masculinity and femininity by firm characteristics men and women were expected to embody, hegemonic masculinity holds these two concepts are nebulous, defined by a constant exchange between divergent characteristics of men and women. The image of the mythic male represents an older version of masculinity upon which men have maintained socially ascendant positions for centuries. Should this image break down, male dominance might crumble. The unacceptable consequence for the military should this happen would be the undercutting of the power of the male soldier. As a result, institutions like the military, attempted to preserve the mythic male image by suppressing other forms of what it means to "be a man" and quelling threatening women, such as female service members, through objectification.

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185 Shirley Hines, and African American Red Cross Supplemental Recreation Overseas (SRAO) worker described such a situation. The men that followed her became such a nuisance that she eventually asked a co-worker of hers to purchase items for her at the PX. Carol A. Hunter, ""A Touch of Home": Red Cross Recreation Workers in the Vietnam War." M.A., University of New Mexico, 1994, 118.

186 The flexibility of hegemonic masculinity becomes very important when looking at the relationship of Playboy magazine. Playboy's mixture of consumption (a force, because of its feminine connotation, that might threaten masculine stereotypes) and objectified women dethroned the image of the mythic male, but still maintained the masculinity of its readers through its sexual content. Playboy sold more than any other magazine in Vietnam with a monthly draw of 50,000 copies. By including nude centerfolds, Playboy, showed troops how one could simultaneously be a consumer and masculine by its inclusion; "Whaddaya Read, GI," Media Decisions (January 1968): 52.
CHAPTER 3. DEPLOYED ABUNDANCE

“One of my most lasting memories of Vietnam is not one of death, or slaughter, or trails of refugees, but of bar-rooms on American bases decorated with padded mock leather, and chocolate and strawberry-flavoured milk in cartons.” Writing over two decades after he first arrived in Vietnam in 1972, reporter Michael Fathers recalls his impression of the American presence late in the Vietnam Conflict. While this image probably has distorted in the years since he forged this memory in an increasingly “Vietnamized” war zone, we still must consider the impact commodities had on those people who experienced the Vietnam Conflict. Did the “vast selection of liquor behind the padded bar, Budweiser beer, popcorn at the cinema and a different movie every night, barbecues on Sunday, steaks from Chicago, [and] lettuce from California” that Fathers recalled function as more than a reminder of home? Fathers ends his recollection of the bar with his overall impression that “visiting an army mess was like entering a Playboy club without the bunnies.”¹ Such an environment mostly likely boosted the morale of many male troops—making them feel well-cared for even if only for the time they spent bellied up to a bar that may have resembled a local watering hole back home. While this is in fact a nice gesture to service members, it functions in several ways that go beyond the advantages of a fringe benefit. By importing markers of abundance to Vietnam, military officials and the civilian business people who accompanied the reinforced the idea of American

exceptionalism. Outside of the American population for whom the goods were intended, commodities served as a “second front” in Vietnam. With the power of commodities on their side, the United States could fight “Communists” with guns in one hand and consumer goods in the other.

Troops of all nationalities serving in Vietnam wanted goods from their home countries. American exchanges recognized this demand and sold foreign beer to cater to allies in Vietnam (Free World Forces) in hopes of quenching their thirst with a taste from their homes. In 1968, demand for goods by Australian troops got high enough to push Australian forces to open up their own exchange. Consumer goods provided an important link to home not just for Americans, but also for U.S. allies. Also, the exchange system made it clear that troops, including those of South Vietnam, had the right to consume regardless of their home country. United States military officials, for instance, in a 42-million dollar deal, agreed to create a post exchange system for the South Vietnamese Army. In their own country, the US and South Vietnamese militaries agreed that troops needed to shop and local problems such as low salaries and high inflation would not stand in their way.

While the opening of multiple exchanges may suggest a diverse shopping environment, United States military leaders attempted to restrict how troops spent their money. To do this, the VRE reinstituted policies from its sutler roots as well as the corrupt business practices of company stores found in milling and mining towns of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For mining outfits, along with lumber and railroad camps, as well as textile mills, company-operated stores served a valid, but

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2 A History, 63.
still controlling, purpose. These industries, often located in remote areas, established stores to supply miners with the items they needed. In this way, the overseas post exchange resembled the company store. While the local economy of places like Saigon may have had the resources to satisfy the every want and desire of military personnel, American military officials treated these areas as isolated. As the military build-up started in Vietnam, the exchange system provided its customers with goods that would help them, albeit indirectly, to establish a U.S. presence in the region.4

The success of VRE stores partly rested on the same concepts that made the company store so profitable. First, geographic isolation prevented miners, and other workers, from traveling to other areas to buy goods. Likewise, sailors, soldiers and officers in smaller installations could not rely on the local market to provide the products they wanted. As a result, the stores, both company and military, realized large profits because of the monopoly created through isolation.5 However, in the case of company stores, geographically based monopolies did not always last. If a company town became successful, competing stores often came to the area to set up shop. Also, as transportation became more readily accessible to workers in the 20th century, they simply could go elsewhere. To combat this, companies with stores instituted several policies to preserve their market dominance. Some companies openly threatened to fire workers who did not shop at the company store and made good on the threat if the worker refused to comply. For workers who attempted to

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5 Johnson, 90.
take their business elsewhere and were caught, the company would send duplicates of
the "illegal" items and deduct the cost of the goods from the worker's next paycheck.6

In Vietnam, especially in the larger areas like Saigon, the AAFES encountered
a similar problem. Military employees had many more ways to spend their income in
the local economy than in AAFES-run stores. Armed Services Exchange Regulations
dictated that exchanges in the United States had to reduce competition with local
civilian businesses as much as possible. Ideally, by minimizing the overlap of
services and goods offered in the local economy, domestic exchanges would serve the
military population without putting the local "mom-and-pop" stores out of business.
However, overseas exchanges functioned as replacements for the civilian
marketplace, and therefore could compete with local merchants by selling the same
merchandise.7

Even though many troops supported military-run stores, enough ventured into
the local market to create what the military termed a "Gold Flow" problem—money
earned by Americans "flowed" into the Vietnamese economy and did not come back
thereby hurting the American economy and causing inflation in the local Vietnamese
currency, the Piaster.8 Recognizing the problem in 1960, exchange officials hoped
that by providing more goods in the exchanges, they could encourage troops to spend
their disposable income in U.S. sanctioned stores. In other words, troops would get
paid and then invest that money back into the American economy, thus helping to

6 Johnson, 90.; Price V. Fishback, Soft Coal, Hard Choices (New York: Oxford University Press,
University Press, 1996), 196.
7 House, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Roger T. Kelley, speaking to
U.S. House Committee on Armed Services, Review Of The Military Exchanges And Commissaries
And Related Activities: Hearings By The Special Subcommittee On Exchanges and Commissaries.
keep both sides of the ledger in balance. While on a larger scale (national economy vs. corporate payroll), the US military’s response to controlling the flow of American money resembles one of the reasons mining companies established company stores. Companies hoped that by setting up a store they could “recapture a portion of wages they had paid workers.”

The VRE also attempted to “recapture” its service members’ wages through the items it made available. Exchange stores in Vietnam offered a staggering number of items to military personnel. This vast selection provided troops with the creature comforts and reminders of home through the normalcy suggested by the act of shopping and familiarity of items purchased. In a sense, the quantity of goods equated to the quality of care the military provided its troops. One can imagine a soldier seeing stocked exchange shelves and thinking, “Look at all of this! The military really looks out for me.” However, exchange stores had another reason for stocking a large number of items, especially the expensive ones. The large exchanges in Vietnam, such as the one located in Saigon, sold expensive items in the hope of absorbing more of the soldiers’ incomes. TVs, introduced to the Vietnam exchange shopper in 1966, sold at an incredible rate. In their fifteen months of being on the shelves, exchange customers purchased 58,000 sets. Other electronics, like radios,

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11 During the 1970 fiscal year, the top five retail outlets in Vietnam, according to annual sales, were: Saigon Main Exchange ($25,848,853), Tan Son Nhut ($22,317,125), China Beach ($18,928,494), Headquarters American Division ($12,385,329), and Long Binh Main Exchange ($12,084,000) (House, Sackton, 13003.)
tape recorders, cameras, and record players, all of which were relatively portable, also sold well. The budget minded consumer also could invest in mutual funds sold through vendors in the PX. Not all expensive items in the exchange, however, were intended for immediate use by the troops. Some of these goods were more mundane—watches were popular gifts to send home to friends and family. For the soldier with an eye for even larger items, the Exchange also sold dishwashers, cars ("short-timers," ready to head home, could have their cars and motorcycles shipped ahead of them), diamond rings and fur coats.\(^\text{12}\)

To reinforce their programs to help stem the flow of American money into foreign pockets, the military used its radio service to encourage troops to use their money in ways that would help the American economy and alleviate the "gold flow" problem. The Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS) operations in Vietnam, which in 1967 became known as the Armed Forces Vietnam Network (AFVN), provided news and entertainment to Americans in Vietnam. Additionally, AFRTS provided information to troops that either the Secretary of Defense or a local commander deemed necessary.\(^\text{13}\) The military distributed this information to troops through short public service announcements (PSAs). These messages did help to


\(^{13}\) AFRTS was "an activity of the Department of Defense [and was] administered through the Office of Information for the Armed Forces (IAF) under the overall direction of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.; Lee Hauser, *A History of the American Forces Vietnam*, M.A., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1972: 8, 14.
protect the troops by reminding them to keep a look out for booby traps and take pills to ward off malaria.\textsuperscript{14}

A number of PSAs, however, also addressed how troops should use their money. Each of these suggestions corresponded with tactics the military and US government hoped would decrease the gold flow problem.\textsuperscript{15} A series of PSAs, for instance, advertised Rest & Recuperation trips to sanctioned locations such as Hawaii and Sydney, Australia. R&R trips to Hawaii, according to the DoD would help channel money back to the US and decrease the amount of money going into the Vietnamese economy; consequently, they would also help slow inflation.\textsuperscript{16} PSAs also encouraged service members to utilize various saving plans that removed money from circulation in Vietnam. Starting in 1966, troops could earn up to ten percent on their savings accounts established by a regular withholding of funds from the service member’s paycheck.\textsuperscript{17}

To pay for the items sold in VRE stores, from the extravagant to the routine, soldiers used military-issued scrip. Often in times of war, the Department of the Army took up the practices of its sutler roots, as well as the company store model, and issued scrip to pay troops instead of using American dollars or the local currency. First distributed on September 1, 1965\textsuperscript{18} in the same denominations as standard American dollars, military-issued scrip, called Military Payment Certificates (MPCs),

\textsuperscript{16}In 1966, the average GI on a 5-7 day R&R trip spent $250-$350 dollars. DoD officials in 1966 expected 1967 to yield around $300,000 in money injected into the Hawaiian economy by troops on leave. “Hawaii R&R to Begin August 1 for Viet Men.” \textit{Air Force Times} (20 July 1966), 43, 52; “Steps Taken to Reduce Spending By American Forces In Vietnam.” \textit{Air Force Times} (31 August 1966), 10.
\textsuperscript{17}“Steps Taken to Reduce Spending,” 10.
in Vietnam served several purposes in Vietnam. The PX provided the easiest way to spend one's MPCs because they could be spent directly. Even though the Army allowed soldiers to change their MPCs into the local currency at face value, the convenience of the PX helped to keep American money in house.¹⁹ The US military also hoped that scrip would quell the thriving black market for American goods and currency operating in Vietnam by making it harder for the local population to obtain American goods and money.²⁰ If military personnel were paid in American dollars, officials feared that many of them would go to the thriving black market and sell the greenbacks for more than their face value, thereby destabilizing the Vietnamese economy by devaluing the piaster.²¹ However, the issuance of scrip did very little to put an end to the black market as black market currency changers simply created a market based on the changing of MPC to dollars instead of dollars to piasters.²²

Constantly concerned by the relationship between the American and South Vietnamese economy, AAFES was determined to provide an environment in which soldiers could buy everything they needed without venturing off-post. In order to

²² In 1966, a reporter for Air Force Times claimed that troops could exchange $1.35 in MPC for $1 in greenbacks. As for reducing inflation, nine months after the military issued scrip, the piaster was still inflated, fetching an exchange rate of 165-170 piasters to a dollar on the street while the official rate of exchange was 118 piasters to every dollar. Curtis W. Jordan, “Times Correspondent Views the Vietnam Black Market.” Air Force Times (8 June 1966), 4.; “DoD Official Visits SEA, Studies Blackmarket, R&R,” Air Force Times (25 May 1966), 2.
make this plan a success, AAFES had to convince soldiers that the outside market could not satisfy their needs. They accomplished this in part by condemning the local economy on the basis of quality. When a House subcommittee asked General Leo Benade, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Military Personnel Policy, about high priced durable goods, he stated that exchanges sold them because they were “readily available in the civilian market.” By moving these items into the PX, they could be regulated to insure quality as well as help to keep American money in American pockets. The guise of quality control also proved to be a popular tactic in company stores. When the store lost its monopoly to another local merchant, the company store of course wanted to regain its hold on the market. Consequently, company store managers gave the impression that they provided a service to the consumer by running a store in which one could buy quality goods at non-exploitative prices. By representing themselves as consumer watchdogs and bad-mouthing their competition, company stores continued to corner the workers’ dollars. The VRE did not need to go as far as suggesting that foreign goods might be of sub par quality. Simply by offering similar goods inside the exchange, VRE officials could send the same message.

By interpreting the consumption of American goods by troops solely in terms of the American economy, military and government officials construed this consumption as for the good of the nation. Spending in the proper place (the PX) in

24 Fishback, 136.
the proper way (extravagantly and often) troops could not only find amelioration from battlefield conditions, but also serve their country as consumers. In addition to serving the American economy and providing American troops with a few of the comforts of home, the VRE served a fundamental ideological function. Exchanges, business people involved in Vietnam, and media outlets, such as public service announcements produced by the military, created an atmosphere of American abundance. By maintaining the appearance of an affluent America, the military constantly reminded troops of the things they were charged with defending. Troops listening to PSAs or shopping in an exchange filled with thousands of items constantly engaged with a mythic version of American abundance. This mythic “American way of life” masked that class (or the ability to indulge in consumption) often separated one person from his or her fellow Americans. The model of the American way of life shown by the military through exchanges and PSAs conflated freedom with capitalism. Ultimately, all that these models could deliver was a distorted version of democracy where “freedom” equated to the freedom to choose one’s purchases.

During the war, sociologist Charles Moskos conducted studies of troops serving in Vietnam. Through a series of interviews and subsequent publications Moskos examined what drove the “American enlisted man” to fight. Moskos interviewed 34 male service members. 20 of them were drafted and 14 of them volunteered for duty. All the interviewees were enlisted with the exception of two Sergeants, all were either in their late teens or early 20s with an average age of 20 years old and were new to the military. 7 of the men were married. The racial makeup of the sample included: 8 African Americans, 1 Navajo, 1 “from Guam,” 16 white, 2 Mexican American, 1 Puerto Rican. According to Moskos “in terms of conventional categories, about two-thirds of the interviewees were from working-class backgrounds with the remainder being from the lower middle class.” 18 of the interviewees had full-time jobs before going to Vietnam, 12 worked blue-collar jobs, and 6 white collar. 10 of the troops dropped out of high school and 21 graduated. The remaining three were failed to complete college (no one had a
asserts that all troops deployed abroad encountered locations “that compare unfavorably with the material affluence of the United States;” however, in Vietnam, the difference was “more pronounced.” This difference enhanced “the soldier’s belief in the superiority of America” which was bolstered by the gap between the living conditions of the Vietnamese people and Americans stateside.

While Moskos acknowledged the disparate living conditions of Americans and the Vietnamese men and women troops encountered, he did not extend this difference to the troops themselves—he limited his comparison to the home front and the front lines instead of comparing conditions at the front lines. The exchange system provided token markers of American abundance not only to remind troops of the lifestyle they had at home, and presumably would have if they returned, but also to import this difference to Vietnam. Keeping troops supplied with commodities made sure service members did not forget the “greatness” of America.

When Moskos asked his sample group why they felt the United States entered, and stayed, in Vietnam, he received answers that confirm that a number of troops thought of America in terms of abundance. 19 of the 34 interviewees thought that the

college degree). Moskos “conducted standardized interviews” in Vietnam in 1967 and on a earlier trip to Vietnam he collected information “through informal observations and personal interviewing of combat soldiers.” During Moskos’s first trip, made in 1965, the sociologist “spent two weeks with a weapons squad in a rifle platoon of an airborne (paratrooper) unit.” The second trip included a “six-day stay with an infantry rifle squad, and shorter periods with several other squads.” To people who might question his sample, Moskos offers this statement “I know that it is hazardous, if not presumptuous, to generalize about the contemporary American combat soldier from observations of such limited scope. But I think it worthwhile. In the first place, I regard the men interviews and observed as typical and representative of American combat soldiers. The attitudes expresses by the formally interviewed soldiers constantly reappeared in shorter conversations I had with numerous other combat soldiers in both 1965 and 1967...By being in the combat situation, I could go beyond ritualistic answers to pat questions.” Charles C Moskos, The American Enlisted Man. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970, 136-137, 139-140.

US fought to combat communism.\footnote{The 15 troops that did not cite Communism in the Unites States’ motivation for fighting in Vietnam gave a number of other possibilities. “Three gave frankly cynical explanations of the war by stating that domestic prosperity in the United States depended on a war economy. Two soldiers held that American intervention was a serious mistake initially, but that it was now too late to withdraw because of the national commitment. One man even gave a Malthusian interpretation, arguing that war was need to limit population growth.” Nine said they did not know why the US was there. “Within this group, one heard responses such as: “I only wish I knew; “Maybe Johnson knows, but I don’t”; and “I’ve been wondering about that ever since I got here.”} “But when they expressed this view,” said Moskos “it was almost in terms of defending the Unites States, not the ‘free world’ in general or South Vietnam.”\footnote{Moskos, The American Enlisted Man, 149.} Furthermore, when Moskos posed the question, “Tell me in your own words, what makes America different from other countries?” the answers overwhelmingly described America’s abundance. Moskos commented on the answers:

The overriding feature in the soldier’s perception of the American way of life is the creature comforts that life can offer. Twenty-two of the soldiers described the United States by its high-paying jobs, automobiles, consumer goods, and leisure activities. No other description of America came close to being mentioned as often as the high—an apparently uniquely American—material standard of living.... Put another way, it is the materialistic—and the word is not used pejoratively—aspects of life in America that are most salient to combat soldiers.\footnote{Ibid.,152.}

Many service members felt their actions in Vietnam helped to prevent the spread of Communism, and this helped protect the United States, a nation that was exceptional because of the goods it produced and quality of life it provided. The linking of the
United States to abundance was so predominant that troops often called the United States “the land of the Big PX.”

The veterans in Wallace Terry’s *Bloods* tell a different story of how service members viewed the military presence in South Vietnam and the capitalist system they defended. *Bloods* features the stories of African-American Vietnam Veterans. According to Terry, who traveled to Vietnam as a reporter for *Time*, “most black soldiers in Vietnam supported the war effort, because they believed America was guaranteeing the sovereignty of a democratically constituted government in South Vietnam and halting the spread of communism.” However, Terry saw a change in African American troops by 1969—after Moskos conducted his interviews. These troops were unwilling to stand idly by while African Americans were assaulted by aggressive racial discrimination.

Many African American service members saw the Vietnam Conflict in terms of capitalism. But, instead of defending the economic system, they felt they were enforcing it and used by it. Specialist 4 Charles Strong from Pompano Beach Florida put the war explicitly in terms of profit:

The war in Vietnam didn’t do nothing but get a whole lot of guys fucked up for some money. There may have been a chance of having a base close to

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33 The men whose stories are told in *Bloods* are “enlisted men, noncommissioned officers, and commissioned officers. Soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines. Those with urban backgrounds, and those from rural areas. Those for whom the war had a devastating impact, and those for whom the war basically was an opportunity to advance in a career dedicated to protecting American interests.” Terry, *Bloods*, xvii.
34 Terry, *Bloods*, xvi.
36 Terry, *Bloods*, xvi-xvii.
Red China. But actually it was fought for money. And the people in the
world didn’t want it to stop. That marching to stop the war was a whole lot of
bullshit. Because, dig this, I seen this with my own eyes, because my MOS
was humping the boonies. We found caches that the North Vietnamese got,
full of sardines from Maine and even medical supplies from the U.S.38

Charles strong continued to say:

I made a promise in ’Nam that I would never risk my life or limb to protect
anybody else’s property. I will protect my own.39

Specialist 4 Robert E. Holcomb felt similarly:

The war in Vietnam was basically about economics. As I saw it, we were
after a foothold in a small country in the Orient with rubber plantations, rice,
timber, and possibly oils. And the people. A cheap source of labor, like you
have in Hong Kong and Taiwan, making designer jeans and the insides of TV
sets. That’s what I understood the war to be about—a war that was not really
for the many but for the few. I didn’t have any problems fighting for
capitalism, but I was not interest in fighting for a war in which I would not
enjoy the rewards.40

These two service members did not necessarily object to capitalism. They objected to
the characteristic of capitalism that concentrated wealth into the hands of the
privileged—which most often were the hands of white people. While Strong does not
state if he was ever formally associated with the Black Power movement, his words

38 Terry, Bloods, 65-66.
39 Ibid.,75.
40 Ibid.,14.
express some of the key tenants of the movement. Edwards was a member of the Black Panthers. Most likely inspired by the ideology of the Black Power movement, Strong and Edwards saw the American presence in Vietnam as part of a capitalist agenda.

PXs did not work alone in reminding troops of the American way of life. A number of AFVN PSAs also highlighted America’s abundance. For instance, one PSA stated:

Each of you give it different names: the world, home, stateside. They’re all describing one place—good old U.S. of A. Yes, America is a big land with huge responsibilities. Not only at home, but around the world as well. America, with 7% of the world’s land area and 6% of its population, accounts for one-third of the world’s production of goods and services. Its farmlands produce 13% of the world’s wheat, nearly half of its corn and 21% of its meat. Enough to feed 200 million Americans and much of the world besides. And despite criticisms of policies and people, our country is looked up to for leadership throughout the free world. Why bring all this up? No

41 The Black Power movement, coming to national attention in 1966, consisted of a collective of African American activists who strove for “racial pride, strength and self-determination.” In the words of historian William L. Van DeBurg, “Black Power was a revolutionary cultural concept that demanded important changes in extant patterns of American cultural hegemony.” Activists wanted to fundamentally the practices of white Americans, and to do this, African Americans had to unify. One of the fundamental establishments activists cried out against was capitalism. The Black Panther Party, a Black Power organization, stated that it was made up of poorest people in society. By mobilizing the people with the least, the Black Panthers hoped to win rights for African Americans. William L. Van DeBurg, New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 2, 12, 27, 94; Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 2, 66. 42 Terry, Bloods, 15.
reason. We thought you’d just like to hear something about your
world once in a while.43

This PSA starts with the proclamation of America’s greatness using folksy
language—“good old U.S. of A.” It informs American listeners in Vietnam that
despite its small percentage of the world’s landmass, the United States produces for
itself and for other countries. The implication is that if the United States has so
much, how can Americans not help other countries? If other countries look to the
United States for leadership, how can the US shirk this responsibility? The final line
of the PSA makes clear the intention of the message. The emphasis placed on the
words “your world” by the narrator create a clear boundary between the US (not just
the West) and Vietnam. By marking the troops’ world as abundant, this PSA
implicitly transports South Vietnam, an ally that the United States is supposed to be
helping to seek freedom and democracy, to the position of other—the difference
between the “haves” and the “have nots.” The presence of consumer goods in the war
zone served the same purpose. With every purchase, troops and military officials
differentiated themselves from the people of Vietnam further. Like the PSA suggests,
how can the United States and its military not lead the world when it has so much and
the rest of the world has so little? Interestingly, the othering of the Vietnamese
through the importation and distribution of consumable goods supported the
rationalization for defending South Vietnam, but also provided a reason for attacking
North Vietnam. Communists do not have these commodities and communism
threatens the American way of life as represented through material goods, so the
United States must fight North Vietnam.

What makes the act of othering South Vietnam through the marketplace so significant is that the military used consumer goods both as propaganda to get troops to fight and also to bring South Vietnam out of the inferior status in which the military had placed them. Military and American business leaders wanted to create allies and markets, respectively, by bringing American goods and corporations to Vietnam. Private First Class Reginald ‘Malik’ Edwards from Phoenix, Louisiana\textsuperscript{44} suggested that capitalism was so powerful that it might have won the Conflict by itself:

Sometimes I think we would have done a lot better by getting them [the Vietnamese] hooked on our life-style than by trying to do it with guns. Give them credit cards. Make them dependent on television and sugar. Blue jeans work better than bombs. You can take blue jeans and rock ’n’ roll records and win over more countries than you can with soldiers.\textsuperscript{45}

Historian Amy Kaplan has argued that domesticity was “intimately intertwined with the discourse of Manifest Destiny in antebellum U.S. Culture.”\textsuperscript{46} Using Lora Romero’s conception of home front, Kaplan posits that the domestic space, a space typically marked as feminine, not only “implies a line that seals off domestic space from a foreign battlefield, but as a front also provides a formidable line of attack and engagement.”\textsuperscript{47} She holds that the domestic space functioned as a tool of imperial conquest, both masking the idea of violent conflict and

\textsuperscript{44} Edwards was Rifleman with the 9th Regiment stationed in Danang as a Marine from June 1965-March 1966. Terry, \textit{Bloods}, 3.
\textsuperscript{45} Terry, \textit{Bloods}, 14.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.,16, 24.
"transform[ing] conquered lands." Ultimately, the domestic space and its components become a process of "civilizing" an "untamed" land and people and "the conditions of domesticity often become markers that distinguish civilization from savagery."49

Even though Kaplan focuses on a time and place far different from those found in war-torn Vietnam, many points of her analysis can be effectively employed here. Consumption, representing the domestic realm, both served to minimize the appearance of violence and do imperial work. Troops could consume in order to escape violence, at least for a short time—they escaped into the domestic space of the PX, which resembled a store at home, in order to shield themselves from the violent work the military waged outside of the exchange walls. At the same time, consumer goods worked their way outside of the PX into the local population to serve a civilizing function. If South Vietnam could become a viable market for American corporations, then they would be civilized.

While the United States military used consumption, in both PXs and the black market it supplied, as a domestic space, other non-military organizations brought the domestic space to Vietnam and performed the very type of work Kaplan describes. An American reporter working in Vietnam, for instance, had two servants working for her to cook and take care of her home. One day, when the woman cleaning the floor ran out of floor cleaner the reporter suggested that she use bleach. Upon hearing this, the Vietnamese woman started "describing [the floor cleaner's] virtues in a flow of words." To the reporter, "the meaning [of this conversation] was clear. Even

48 Ibid., 25.
49 Ibid.
without the benefit of a Vietnam advertising campaign, the concept of the superiority of particular brands was here firmly implanted."\(^{50}\)

The black market provided the primary way American goods made their way into local Vietnamese economies. American and Vietnamese officials often contested the amount of goods lost from the VRE stores to the black market and as a result the actual scale of the black market in Vietnam remains unclear. Customs officials in South Vietnam estimated that 120-million dollars worth of goods from VRE stores found their way to the black market in 1967.\(^{51}\) US “economic officials” claimed their Vietnamese counterparts exaggerated their estimates.\(^{52}\) This type of exchange between officials of both countries and reporters started early in the war. In 1964, reporters estimated that 20-30% of all post exchange goods ended up on the black market.\(^{53}\) A spokesman for the pentagon refuted these figures as well, claiming that approximately 4-4.5% of PX goods were ultimately sold on the black market.\(^{54}\)

Regardless of the official figures, the presence of the black market in Vietnam had an impact on the people of South Vietnam. While it provided a means of income for some people, it also forced some vendors into selling the illegal wares. As voiced by a 28-year-old vendor “You suggest, maybe, that I find something else to do to make a living? But what? No place for us to sell fruits or vegetables in the

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54 Spokesman was Defense Assistant General Counsel Frank Bartimo, “speaking for a high-level investigative team just back from Vietnam.” “Viet Black-Marketing Found ’Exaggerated.’” *Air Force Times* (1 June 1964), 8.
markets—they are already full of vendors and you must pay a huge price to legally have a place in the market." 

Additionally the black market, helped South Vietnamese shoppers, who also shopped at the market, forge a specific relationship with American goods. One Vietnamese vendor noted, "if it's American, it is better quality and so will bring more." American products were privileged over Vietnamese goods (a sign that the West was establishing a market in Southeast Asia).

A number of American and Vietnamese officials went on the record in favor of the black market remarking that it helped the Vietnamese economy by soaking up extra money injected into the economy by troops. While this official might have been misinformed about the harm of the black market, he or she certainly did not take into consideration that the black market made it difficult for vendors to sell anything but illegal American goods and that it paved the way for the people of Vietnam to accept American goods.

After Saigon fell to the Communist North Vietnam and became Ho Chi Minh City, the legacy of the black market and its supplier, the PX, continued. A 5,000 square meter retail store opened in Downtown Ho Chi Minh City to sell "western-style goods." The store, named the PX Club, was funded by the Vietnamese military. While the United States lost the war and American businesses did not make the impact they hoped in Vietnam, this store shows the effects of bringing American abundance and consumerism to Vietnam. Not only did it win over a

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57 Ibid.
59 Other accounts see the black market as bad for the local economy. A History, 66.
number of Vietnamese people through their consumption of American goods, but it also created such a strong desire for these goods that a communist government started to supply them to its people. In addition to fighting the North Vietnamese with guns, the United States unleashed one of its most powerful and oft used weapons, consumer goods.
EPILOGUE

“Flush with hazardous-duty pay and tax-free earnings, troops in combat zones often have more money to spend than things to buy. That’s where the PX, or post exchange comes in.”¹ These are the first few lines of an article that appeared in USA Today on December 17, 2004—a time when, after a close election, millions of Americans attempted to envision the future of their country under second-term president who took the country to war and when many more (and these groups overlapped) thought about the joy of shopping in stores lined with potential Christmas gifts and decorations. In almost identical language to popular press articles describing PXs in Vietnam, the author reminds readers that the PX is “a taste of home for troops, who can feel normal if only for the time it takes to eat a bag of Doritos.”² At the time USA Today ran this article, AAFES operated 31 exchanges in Iraq and these stores sold more than $300 million worth of goods from February to October.³

According to this author’s perception of Iraq, one of the major differences between the United States’ involvement in the conflict in Vietnam and the war in Iraq is the amount of interaction between troops and the local population. Because “most troops have no access to stores outside their fortified bases[,] the military has allowed a few local vendors to set up shop inside the bases. Most of the local vendors offer

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¹ C. Mark Brinkley, “Troops can’t beat deals at PX,” USA Today (17 December 2004), 11A.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
rugs, trinkets and bootleg movies and video games."4 In Vietnam, troops could venture into towns, but in Iraq, many troops can only interact with Iraqi culture through the commodities vendors bring into their compounds. This practice presents a dilemma. What happens when Americans only engage with a foreign culture through its commodities that are designed to be souvenirs? While Vietnam had disastrous consequences for thousands of Americans, it was a war that allowed, albeit against the will of the military, a border culture to form. In rear areas, service members and Vietnamese people interacted outside of military compounds. While these relationships were complicated to say the least, at least the forging of personal relationships and engaging in Vietnamese culture held out the hope for tolerance of other cultures. When a military force invades a country and only interacts with that culture through trinkets that commodify that culture, tolerance seems like it might be the hardest commodity to find.

This article points to one more important function of the exchange system that recalls Amy Kaplan’s argument. If we focus on articles that have pictures of attractive young Marines shopping (the picture accompanying this article shows two 20-year-old female Marines browsing through CDs), then we do not have to focus on the violence of war. This article functions in a similar way to the vendors in the US compounds in Iraq. The vendors’ presence implies that if one only engages in the trinkets of a culture then you do not have to engage in the actual violence inflicted upon bodies—domesticity operates as a shield from violence. Similarly, if we engage with the American invasion of Iraq through a picture of young troops holding a stack of CDs, the war is more palatable for us. However, the smokescreen of consumption

4 Ibid.
only works as long as people are oblivious to its problems and its ideological functions. Ultimately, the PX allows troops to feel “normal” if only for the lifespan of a given commodity. Reading about that commodity, be it a CD or a M-16-cleaning tampon, allows us, Americans not deployed in a war zone, to feel “normal” about war and capitalism.
Figure 1.1

*Charlie Ration Cookbook*

Great battles have not only produced famous generals, but gourmet dishes as well. Chicken Marengo was named after the battle of Marengo, in which Napoleon Bonaparte defeated the Austrians on the 14th of June, 1800. This dish was first cooked on the battlefield itself by Dunand, chef to Napoleon. Bonaparte, who ate nothing until after a day’s battle was over, had gone forward with his general staff and was a long way from his supply wagons. Seeing his enemies put to flight, he asked Dunand to prepare dinner for him. All the chef could find were three eggs, four tomatoes, six crayfish, a small hen, a little garlic, some oil and a saucepan. He then and there created the Chicken Marengo. The dish was served on a tin plate, the chicken surrounded by the fried eggs and crayfish, with the sauce poured over it, the water being laced with brandy borrowed from the General’s flask. Bonaparte, having feasted upon it, said to Dunand, “You must feed me like this after every battle.”

The American fighting man today does not have a personal chef, but he does have his C-
Figure 1.3

*Charlie Ration Cookbook*

Rations. The contents of these remarkable packages contain far more nutrients than normally required for any man in the field and offer solid, good-tasting meals that are the envy of fighting men all over the world. Occasionally, though, a trooper will find it necessary to depend on C-Rations for a prolonged period of time... and it is with this in mind that TABASCO brand pepper sauce thought of a recipe book to help add dash and variety. There is no telling what gastronomic creations can be concocted with the C-Rations as a basic, combined with what the American trooper can find in the field or village near the combat zone. All he needs is imagination and a buddy who will act as assistant chef.

Whether eaten alone, with a buddy or two or in a group, the recipes found in this book are predominantly based on the single units and various combinations of the basic C-Rations. Outside ingredients may help, but they are not essential to the menus. (Another thought: when combat situations make it impossible to do anything with your C-Rations except open them up and eat them cold, adding Tabasco right from the bottle will always add a distinctive bright flavor.)

G.I. Joe has gone gourmet. These recipes were created for the fighting man in the field. Bon appetit.

Figure 1.4

Charlie Ration Cookbook

There is a soup du jour on every menu in every American restaurant from Maine to Frisco. There is no reason why the Armed Forces should be an exception. The front line fighting man has one advantage. He knows what goes into his soup du jour.

Mash the ham and lima bean mixture to a pulp. Combine with a can of hot water and bring to a boil, stirring briskly all the time. Add Tabasco and salt and pepper to taste. Serve piping hot, garnished with fried white bread croutons (pieces of white bread cut up into cubes) or crumbled crackers sautéed in butter or oil or fat.

"This is from your Basic C-Ration"

SOUP DU JOUR

*One can ham and lima beans, mashed
*One equal can hot water
*Salt and pepper to taste
*One spoon U.S. pepper sauce
*Three spoons green onions, chopped and sautéed in butter or oil or fat
*Two spoons butter or oil or fat for the onions
*Four spoons butter or oil or fat for the bread croutons or crumbled crackers
*Fried bread croutons or crumbled crackers

Breast of chicken under glass was never intended for areas where glass and shrapnel fly. This dish can be prepared in quick time, using only the Basic C-Ration. Heat the can of boned chicken in a meat can. Melt the cheese spread. If butter or oil or fat is available, add two spoons. Season with salt and pepper and Tabasco. Cut loaf of white bread in half, trimmed if so desired. Place a mound of chicken over each half of white bread and cover each with the hot melted cheese sauce. This should stick to your ribs.

"This is from your Basic C-Ration"

FOX HOLE DINNER FOR TWO
(Turkey and Chicken Poulette)

Two spoons butter or oil or fat
Two spoons flour
*One can chicken and noodles
One can turkey loaf, cut up into pieces
Three dashes TABASCO pepper sauce
*Salt and pepper to taste
*One can cheese spread
*12 spoons milk
*Crackers from one C-Ration can, crumbled

No one likes to dine alone, and this recipe is ideal to combine a variety of C-Ration Units.

Melt butter or oil or fat, add flour and stir until smooth. Add milk and continue to cook until sauce begins to thicken. Add cheese spread and cook until cheese melts and sauce is even. Empty cans of turkey loaf and chicken noodles into the cheese sauce. Season with Tabasco, salt and pepper to taste and continue cooking. Cover poulette with crumbled crackers and serve piping hot.

"This is from your Basic C-Ration"

BATTLEFIELD FUDEU
(Chicken with Peanut Butter Sauce)

*One can boned chicken
*One can peanut butter
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
One spoon soy sauce
Two dashes TABASCO pepper sauce
One to three spoons milk

Ham slices or pork steaks may be substituted for the boned chicken. No matter what you do to it, though, it is still Battlefield Fufu.

Melt the butter or oil or fat and add the peanut butter. Stir until well blended. Add the milk and continue cooking until sauce is smooth. Now add the can of boned chicken, pulled apart, and the soy sauce and Tabasco. Continue cooking until hot and smooth. This may be served over boiled rice or crumbled crackers or with white bread.

"This is from your Basic C-Ration"

SPICED APRICOTS

*One can dried ham, sliced with juice
*One can apricots with juice
One spoon jam
Three spoons flour
Three spoons butter or oil or fat
One spoon lemon juice
One spoon soy sauce
Generous dash TABASCO pepper sauce
*Salt and pepper to taste

Melt butter or oil or fat, add flour and stir until well blended. Add the jam and cook until melted. Now add the juices from the ham and the apricots as well as the lemon juice, soy sauce and Tabasco. Salt and pepper to taste.

TIN CAN CASSEROLE
*One can franks and beans
*One can beefsteak with potatoes
Generous dash TABASCO pepper sauce
One can crumbled crackers
One can cheese spread, melted
Four spoons green onions, chopped coarsely
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
One small can of water, if necessary

The casserole can be elegant, but as most men know, women often use it as a camouflage for a hasty meal after a long bridge game. Here’s a recipe to put the Old Lady’s Bridge Casserole to shame. Melt butter or oil or fat and sauté the onions in it. Then add the cheese until it is melted and well blended. Now add the crackers for a few minutes and then return to tin can or other cooking utensil. Combine a can of franks and beans with the beefsteak and potatoes to this mixture and correct the seasoning. Cook for as long as necessary, seeing that the

PORK MANDARIN
*One can pork steaks
Green onions, chopped
Two spoons water chestnuts, chopped
Three spoons butter or oil or fat
Three spoons flour
Five spoons pineapple chunks, fresh or canned
Small can pineapple juice, fresh or canned
Half a can orange juice
Two spoons lemon juice
Generous dash TABASCO pepper sauce

One spoon soy sauce . . . . two, if desired
If any candied ginger or fresh ginger root is available, a few slices may be added.
The original for this recipe took a lot of time; if you followed it, the VC would be sitting in your lap. Here’s a quick way to cheat Charlie and have something different.
Melt the butter or oil or fat and sauté the onions and chestnuts for about five minutes. Add the flour and stir until smooth. Add the pineapple juice, the lemon juice, the orange juice and continue cooking until the sauce is smooth. Add the pineapple chunks and other ingredients and, if available, the candied ginger or ginger root. Continue cooking until sauce is very smooth. Now separate the pork steaks and add to this mixture, along with the juices from the can. Continue cooking until well heated and bubbling. This may be served over boiled rice or crumbled crackers.
*This is from your Basic C-Ration

Pork Mandarins

**CREAMED TURKEY ON TOAST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four spoons bamboo shoots or bean sprouts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two spoons green onions (green part only)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two spoons butter or oil or fat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One can milk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three drops TABASCO pepper sauce</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Salt and pepper to taste</em></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>One can turkey loaf, sliced</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>One can white bread</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two spoons flour</td>
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This is a more elegant version of War II's S-1-on-a-shingle.

Melt butter or oil or fat and saute' onions or bamboo shoots. Add flour and cook until smooth. Now add the spoons of milk, a few at a time, and continue cooking till sauce is thick and smooth. Add other ingredients and then the sliced turkey, and continue cooking till turkey is well heated through. Serve immediately over rounds of white bread, which have been fried in butter or oil or fat or toasted, if possible.

*This is from your Basic O-Ration*

**FISH WITH FRONT LINE STUFFING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green onions, chopped (green and white parts)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two spoons butter or oil or fat</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generous dash TABASCO pepper sauce</td>
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**COMBAT ZONE BURGOO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One spoon lemon juice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight spoons bean sprouts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>One can crumbled crackers</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two spoons water chestnuts, chopped</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One spoon says sauce</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Salt and pepper to taste</em></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>One can ham and egg, minced</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Enough spoonfuls of milk to moisten mixture</em></td>
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CATCH A FISH. The above stuffing is enough for about a two pounder. Scale and clean the fish and stuff with the above, prepared as below. The stuffing may be doubled pending on how many and what size fish you caught.

Rub the fish inside and out with a little lemon juice and a few drops of Tabasco, as well as a little melted butter or oil or fat.

Melt butter or oil or fat and saute' onions in it. Then add bean sprouts and water chestnuts and cook for about five minutes. Add the minced ham and egg mixture and then add all other ingredients, adding the milk last and just enough to moisten the stuffing.

Stuff the fish with this mixture and secure with a string if necessary.

If a make-shift oven is possible, bake the fish till done. Fish does not have to cook for very long, no matter how it is cooked. If an oven is not available, the fish can be cooked in a skillet with some butter or oil or fat and turned frequently until done, basted with a little water. In the latter case, the stuffing should be heated separately.

*This is from your Basic O-Ration*

**PATROL CHICKEN SOUP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four spoons minced onion or green onions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Four spoons flour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One large can of chicken stock from the above recipe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Crackers</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>One small to one large can milk</em></td>
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Melt butter or oil or fat. Sauted onions in butter or oil or fat and add flour. Stir until smooth and thick and gradually add the hot chicken stock until soup is well blended and thickened. Add Tabasco and salt and pepper, and serve immediately with broken pieces of crackers.

*This is from your Basic O-Ration*

**Charlie Ration Cookbook**

If a potato or two is available in the field, cut up in small pieces and cook in the chicken stock mixture until the pieces completely disintegrate. Add milk to the thickened mixture and you have COMBAT ZONE VICHYSSOISE. If rice is available, try the same with the overcooked rice, but don't mention it to a real gourmet.

This is from your Basic O-Ration

GUARD RELIEF EGGS BENEDICT

*White bread
*One can ham and eggs, chopped
*One can cheese spread
One dash TABASCO pepper sauce
One spoon butter or oil or fat
One spoon flour
Four to six spoons milk
Four spoons butter or oil or fat for frying the bread

*Salt and pepper to taste

Most recipes for Eggs Benedict called for split and toasted English Muffins. However, there is no reason why G.I. white bread can't be used now. Just be sure to split your loaf in half; never cut it with a knife. Don't ask why...it just tastes better.

In a meat can, fry the two halves of white bread. Cut the can of ham and egg mixture and heat. Place a piece of the ham and egg mixture on each half of bread and cover with a sauce made as follows:

Melt the butter or oil or fat and add the flour, blending well with a spoon. Add the milk and blend until smooth. Add the can of cheese spread and stir until melted. Add TABASCO and salt and pepper. Pour immediately over each half of the egg and bread combination.

This is a very simple breakfast dish for two or more, especially if one guy prepares the sauce while the other heats the eggs and bread mixture.

*This is from your Basic O-Ration

BEEFSTEAK EN CREUSE

*White bread
Two spoons green onions ('white part') or plain onions...minced
*One can beets (beef) and with juice, cut up into small pieces
Generous dash TABASCO pepper sauce
Salt and pepper to taste
One spoon butter or oil or fat
Bread crumbs from center of loaf of bread
One to two spoons water

En croute simply means in a pastry shell, and the regulation white bread lends itself to such a shell with no trouble whatsoever.

Scoop out the center of the white bread till you have a shell. Reserve the bread as crumbs. Sauté the onions in the melted butter or oil or fat for a few minutes. Sprinkle the bread crumbs over this and moisten with the juices from the meat, plus a spoon or two of water. Cut the meat up into fine pieces and season with salt, pepper and TABASCO. Spread melted butter or oil or fat inside the shell and fill with the meat mixture. This mixture is enough for two shells.

LEFTOVER BEAN SOUP

*Beans from a can of meat balls and beans
Two spoons flour
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
Two spoons minced onions
One spoon salt
One spoon pepper
One spoon TABASCO pepper sauce

One can water

Mash the beans slightly so that they are still whole. Add to this mixture a can of water.

Melt the butter or oil or fat and sauté the onions. Add the flour and stir until smooth. Gradually add the water-bean mixture and continue stirring until thick and smooth. Correct seasoning and serve piping hot. Just before serving, top with some crumbled crackers and an added dash of Tabasco.

*This is from your Basic O-Ration

CURED MEAT BALLS

*One can meat balls and beans. Separate them and reserve the beans for a soup
One can of water
Two spoons flour
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
Three spoons curry powder
Three dashes TABASCO pepper sauce
Salt and pepper to taste

Use only the meat balls and some of the juices. Add a can of water.

In a meat can, melt the butter or oil or fat and add the flour and curry until smooth. Gradually add the water from the can of meat balls until the sauce is good and hot and smooth. Add the meat balls and heat thoroughly. Season and serve over boiled rice, if available.

*This is from your Basic O-Ration

CEASE FIRE CASSEROLE

Three spoons chopped green onions
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
Two spoons flour
Four spoons bean sprouts
One can concentrated meat broth
One can spiced beef with sauce
Three drops TABASCO pepper sauce
Salt and pepper to taste

Two cans water (using can from spiced beef as a measuring cup)

One spoon says sauce

Melt butter or oil or fat in skillet. Sauté green onions and bean sprouts for a few minutes. Sprinkle flour and mix until well blended. Add one can of water, a little at a time, until sauce is thickened. Transfer this to a steel helmet or other cooking utensil and add the beef broth with juice, the spiced beef with sauce and the second can of water. Cook slowly till all ingredients are well blended and the sauce is good and thick. Serve the casserole over boiled rice or sprinkle the casserole with crumbled crackers just before serving.

If enough men get together to contribute Basic O-Rations, there will be enough food to feed a squad.

*This is from your Basic O-Ration

RICE PADDY SHRIMP

Enough shrimp, cleaned and peeled, to fill a large empty C-Ration can
Two spoons green onions
Three dashes TABASCO pepper sauce
One can cheese spread
Three spoons butter or oil or fat
Three spoons flour
Salt and pepper to taste

If shrimp milk

Fresh-water shrimp is available in the village market. However, you may have to wait in line with the natives. There are fresh fish available in lakes, waiting for you to come and catch them. All you need is a net.

Melt butter or oil or fat and sauté the green onions. Add the flour and stir until smooth. Now add the milk gradually and continue cooking till well blended. Add cheese and stir till melted. Add the seasonings and then the shrimp and cook till well blended and the shrimp hot. Serve over boiled rice.

*This is from your Basic O-Ration

POUND CAKE WITH CHOCOLATE SAUCE OR BATTLEFIELD BIRTHDAY CAKE

One can pound cake
Two rounds chocolate candy
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
Three spoons milk

Everyone has a birthday. With all due respect to Mom, this is much better than the baked-in smashed up crumbs that were baked at home months ago.

POTATO SOUP

One can meat balls
Two spoons flour
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
Two spoons milk

Add the meat balls and seasonings and serve piping hot. Top with some crumbled crackers and an added dash of Tabasco.

*This is from your Basic O-Ration

Figure 1.8

Charlie Ration Cookbook

Open pound cake and set aside. Melt butter or oil or fat and add flour and cook until smooth. Add milk to make a smooth and creamy consistency. Pour the chocolate mixture over the pound cake and allow to set till icing is firm. Candles are optional. If butter or oil or fat is not available, it is best to make the icing with just the milk.

*This is from your Basic O-Ration

**DATE PUDDING WITH FRUIT SAUCE**

*One can date pudding
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
*One can jam
*One can fruit salad

Melt butter or oil or fat and add flour and cook until smooth. Add juices from fruit cocktail and jam. Continue cooking until sauce is thick and smooth. Add the pieces of fruit and a few drops of lemon juice if available. Pour the hot sauce over the date pudding and serve.

*This is from your Basic O-Ration

**PECAN CAKE ROLL WITH PEANUT BUTTER SAUCE**

*One can pecan cake roll
Four spoons butter or oil or fat
*One can peanut butter
Two spoons butter or oil or fat

Slice cake roll, fry slices in the four spoons of butter or oil or fat and, when crisp, put to one side. Cover each slice with the following sauce:

*This is from your Basic O-Ration

**BISCUITS AND TEA**

Some C-Ration Units contain sweet biscuits or cookies, and these appear to be the real thing. No self respecting teetotaler will turn them down. Save them—you never know when an Englishman may drop in for high tea.

When alone, away from fox hole, company headquarters and with no time to follow even the simplest of these recipes, open your can of C-Ration, eat it cold and thank God you’re an American.

*This is from your Basic O-Ration

---

Figure 1.10

*Charlie Ration Cookbook*

Figure 1.11

Charlie Ration Cookbook

Want another "Charlie Ration Cookbook" for a friend? Write McIlhenny Company, Dept. CRB, Avery Island, La. 70513 for an additional free copy.

Figure 2.1

*Overseas Weekly* Front Page

*Overseas Weekly,* June 20, 1970, 1.
Robin Hood Captain Kicked Out by Army

THE BIG CRIME:
scrounging equipment from Uncle and giving it to ARVN...

Pvt Kills Spec Four Over Minor Argument

Why Do Our Troops Shoot Each Other?
Figure 2.2

*Overseas Weekly* Advertising Insert

WOW! GIRLS and DIAMONDS... ARE A MAN'S BEST FRIENDS!
Harris Diamond Co. Has Both For You!

NO MONEY DOWN!
30 DAY FREE TRIAL! IMMEDIATE JET DELIVERY!
SATISFACTION GUARANTEED!
YOU DESERVE CREDIT... HARRIS GIVES IT TO YOU!

Harris Diamond Co., Inc. 78-21 Queens Blvd., Elmhurst, New York 11373

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SEND NO MONEY! WRITE FOR FREE PIN-UP POSTERS OR MISS HARRIS DIAMONDS! 30 Day Free Trial! Immediate Jet Delivery! Satisfaction Guaranteed! You Deserve Credit... Harris Gives It To You!

HARRIS DIAMOND CO. INC.
Figure 2.3

*Overseas Weekly* Advertising Insert

Figure 2.4

Rise Advertisement in *Overseas Weekly*

"Two good reasons for Rise"

She's one.
Your face is the other.
Rise lather gets rid of the scratch but not the skin.
It's extra-moist for the extra-close shave that won't irritate either of you.
Rise.
For every pass.

*RISE® Regular, Menthol or Lime.*

Write for your free photo of the new Rise girl to: RISE, Carter Products International, 767 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10022.

Figure 2.5

TWA Advertisement in *Overseas Weekly*

TO END THE LONELY R & R, WE CUT OUR FARE FOR WIVES.

Hawaii and all it stands for. How often can this happen to you in your lifetime? When it does, you want to see and hear and smell and feel.

Hawaii: To be experienced. Together.

We'd like to help, and we can. All the way from major U.S. cities. Besides offering our cut-rate fare for wives (and parents), we'll send you a booklet that spells out how to handle all the details: the forms and procedures, baggage allowances, which clothes to take, even laundering ideas. And much, much more.

We'll also send our credit card application (in case you're short of ready cash) and the address of our handiest ticket office.

Ask us for this packet. It could make R & R complete.

I don't believe in lonely leaves. Please rush your R & R packet to my wife or my parents.

Name ________________________
Address_____________________
City__________State_________Zip_____

Somehow you feel more important on TWA.
Figure 3.1

Convenient Food Mart Advertisement

FREE CIGARETTES
FOR OUR FIGHTING MEN
IN VIETNAM

Convenient Food Marts
in cooperation with the
R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.

WILL DONATE
1 PACK OF CIGARETTES
TO OUR SERVICEMEN
IN VIETNAM

FOR EVERY CARTON
OF CIGARETTES PURCHASED,
IN OUR STORE,
AUG. 27 THRU SEPT. 3, 1968
Distribution will be made to the Marines,
Army, Navy and Air Force
In effect – You are making
it possible for these servicemen
to enjoy these cigarettes free

The More Cigarettes You Buy
The More We Give Away

Convenient Food Mart Advertisement, appeared in the Saturday Herald-Leader,
Lexington Kentucky (circulation 64,360), August 1968, Philip Morris USA Inc.
Document Site,
Figure 4.1

M16A1 Rifle Manual, Front Cover

The M16A1 Operation and Preventive Maintenance

DO ME A FAVOR, TIGER...
DO A QUICK BEFORE-OPERATIONS CHECK ON YOUR RIFLE BEFORE WE COUNTER ATTACK.

HEY, SARGE! GET THIS COPY TO THE MAN WITH THE RIFLE.

You want to know her inside out, every contour and curve, every need and whim, what makes her tick. No better time to get all over acquainted than when you disassemble, assemble but for servicing.

Take it easy, no force, you could damage your chances in a showdown.

Every woman has her own办法 to get over acquaintance. Can’t we make it simple? I’m the only one on a clean turn or something so I use a simple one to know any secrets you can keep, and step right there?

OK by the numbers, now start stripping — first magazine. The empty magazines are the making or means, then back it up, as you see it. And see it.

Figure 4.3

M16A1 Rifle Manual

If you really know it, respect it and treat it right, it’ll be ready when you need it.

Here are some reminders from combat veterans — ideas they’d like to pass along to you to keep your M16A1 battle-ready.

1. Keep your ammo and magazine clean and dry as possible. The only part of the magazine that gets any lubrication is the spring — and it gets only a very light touch of USO oil. If it’s dirty, you’re headed for trouble.

2. Inspect your ammo when you load the magazine. Never load dirty or damaged ammo. Remember, magazine load is over 75 rounds.

3. Clean your rifle every chance you get — 3 to 5 times a day is not too often in some cases. Overcleaning is a must — and it may keep your rifle alive.

4. Be sure to clean carbon and dirt from those bane of cleaning life — rear chamber. Help here and inside the control knob.

5. Never be bashful about asking for cleaning materials when you need them. They’re available. Get them and use them.

6. Check your extractor and spring often. If they’re worn or rusted, get new ones.

7. Like your rifle using USO only. It’s the best. A light coat of 249 with a rag after cleaning is good. Wood parts need general applications often. The chamber and bore need only a light coat after cleaning.

Worry a little more about your rifle. Love it, baby it a bit. For instance, when you’re out in the bush, be careful where you put it down and how you put it down. Never keep it in mud or water or sand. Just keep in mind that you may have to use it before you get a chance to clean it.

---

Figure 4.5

M16A1 Rifle Manual

Here's why. If you close the upper and lower receivers while the selector lever's in the AUTO position, you'll force the automatic sear down and damage the automatic sear, and the sear pin and will likely rough up the bottom of the bolt carrier.

There are a few cleaning and operating tips that'll help you get best results from your weapon. Some of these tips sort of put the accent on stuff you'll find in the rifle's bible—TM 3-17.5 (1963) with ch. 1. Others are hexes and fixes direct from guys who've been living with this light-weight terror.

Speaking of magazines—every guy has his own idea of how firm or loose he wants the holding action of the magazine catch to be. Which is A-OK as far as it goes. But remember this: the tighter the magazine's held in the receiver, the more pressure it takes to release it. And this: The farther the shaft of the catch sticks through the catch button, the tighter the magazine's held in the receiver.

---

Now that you’ve got a plastic coverall bag (FSN 1005-809-2190) to protect your M16A1 rifle against dust, sand, mud, water and such, here’s how to use it in good health — yours and your weapon’s.

First, make sure your rifle’s cleaned and lubed before you bag it. This isn’t an aid to PM, but it’ll help prevent the cleaning and lubing you’ll always have to do regularly. In fact, with a rubber band closing — not to mention rips and tears — the bag’s not guaranteed watertight, so oo-oo.

Second, if you’re gonna keep it bagged more than 24 hours, be sure you eyeball the weapon every day for signs of corrosion from any moisture or condensation that might form in the bag.

Taking it off — Slip the rubber band off and unfold the cover end. Then slide the rifle on and off gently and you can:

1. Quick rip the bag off with one steady yank. The bag will come apart at the firing line.
2. If absolutely necessary, you can fire right through the bag. You can operate the selector lever and trigger even with the bag on. But remember: this limited cases will be trapped in the bag and could result in a malfunction after the first round. So get it off as quick as you can.

Natch, after "emergency" use, you’ll need a new bag.

The new cleaning rod is a 3-piece affair (counting the end holder as one piece), as compared to 6 pieces for the MIIE2 and MIIE1, in one. Each section is shorter, though. Each section is shorter, though.

The threads on the E-3 are the same as on the E-1 and E-2, which means it takes the new bore and chamber brushes.

Don't sweat it, though. The new E-3 probably won't make the rounds till supplies of the E-1's and E-2's are gone.

Beware different threads. Could be that some time you might have to use other cleaning tools in a pinch. If you do, here's what to look for: different threads. Your M16AI's own tools—cleaning rods and brushes alike—all have real fine threads...36 to the inch. But, if you're ever in a spot where you have to use any other rod, like the MIIE (FSN 1005-070-7812) or any other bore brush like the one that carries FSN 1005-288-1356, or any other chamber brushes, like the M1 (FSN 1005-493-1541) or the M14 (FSN 1005-490-8441), watch this:

Their threads are coarser (32 to the inch). They won't match up with your authorized equipment. Don't try to screw 'em together. That won't work!

No sweat, though, on swabs. If you have the 30-cal type (FSN 1005-140-3545), just cut these big ones into 4 equal parts, and go ahead with your cleaning.

For Touch-Up Painting

[See Change 1 to year - 12 TM]

Solid Fine Lubricant...

12-oz spray can FSN 9150-142-9301

Dichloromethane...

5-gal can FSN 8810-244-0210

Here's a round-up of the cleaning tubing equipment you had better use to keep your M16AI battle ready. About the only things different are the MI1E3 cleaning rod and a PLASTIC bottle for holding your LSA.

The big deal is to use this equipment every chance you get.

M16A1 Rifle Manual

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Figure 4.8

Figure 4.9

M16A1 Rifle Manual

MORE POINTERS TO PONDER

FOR YOU HIGHEST RANKING OFFICER!!
HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS TO KEEP YOU GO-GO!

C o m b a t types can't emphasize this enough: Clean the gas port in the bolt carrier group every day — and take it real easy with the lube. Dirt and powder fouling — plus an overdose of lube oil — will give you a sluggish rifle. Nineball. Think in a combat situation!

So, when you get your baby stripped for cleaning, like it says in para 3-9 in TM 9-1005-249-12 (1968) with Ch I, take an extra 5 seconds to get all the port hole down there in the front end of the gas tube. Like we:

Make sure you get the metal end of the brush in all the way — right into the bottom of the hole where the gas tube is sealed in the carrier key — and then turn it to loosen the crud. That last part is the most neglected part on most M16A1 rifles.

TO PONDER

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS TO KEEP YOU GO-GO.

1. Work a worn bore brush full of bore cleaner around inside the key.
2. Then use a pipe cleaner or the like to poke the gunk out of the port. Don’t use wire, though, or you might scratch the tube and set up worse trouble later on.
3. Use another pipe cleaner — or a thin dry one — by waving it around to dry the tube as well as you can.

HOW TO FIGHT CARBON FREEZING

Now double check your job. Remove the bolt. Then stick the carrier body into the receiver slide way and push the corner back and forth slowly to check that the carrier key and gas tube line up OK. The carrier should move freely and should go all the way without friction. If it moves all the way without a struggle, you’ve got some more cleaning to do. But if it binds, turn the weapon in for repair.

Another thing: When you’re crawling or walking through the brush, make a mental note to make sure you don’t get the flash suppressor caught in a brush. It catches easy, y’know. All the way. Educate your sixth sense to flip the selector lever all the way across to get from Safe to Automatic. In an ambush situation, you just might flip it only halfway — to Semi-automatic — when you’ll need all the fire you can get. You might practice flipping it all the way till this becomes second nature.

All up all, the M16A1 is a real sweet number. It’ll stay that way as long as you treat it like one.

Another couple places you won't want to forget when you're cleaning your weapon are the claw under the extractor in the bolt group and the locking lug recesses on the barrel extension in the upper receiver. If dirt and crud collect under the extractor, the claw won't be able to strip over the rim of a cartridge case. And if gunk and brass chips from cases gather in the recesses, your bolt action will be stymied. Be bent down on your bore brush in both these places.

While you have the bolt group apart—and after you clean it—make a practice of eye-checking these parts:

- **Bolt** — Cracks or fractures, especially in the cam pin hole area. This bolt has a great service record so far, but it pays to be on the lookout for that first sign of weakness. Don't worry about any discoloration you find there, though; it's harmless.
- **Cam Pin** — Cracked, chipped, missing. Be sure it's in place when you put the parts back together. A rifle could explode if you load it with the cam pin missing.
- **Spring Pin** — Bent, broken, badly worn. If one or both tangs are broken, there's no sweat as long as it holds the firing pin in place. But be mighty careful you don't use it when you're doing FPs: A rifle fired with this pin missing may fire once—but that's all. The firing pin will then fall out and—no fire!

**TIP...**

**USE NEW CHAMBER BRUSH ON GUSS**

**NOTE:** Watch your tubing. Too much tube speeds carbon buildup in the chamber and bolt locking areas. Something with the carrier key. A rag or sawdust or even a pipe cleaner dampened with LSA will do the trick here. Best bet: Follow the guide on pages 22-24.

Figure 4.1

**M16A1 Rifle Manual**

- **DOUBLE-PERF COMBINATION**
  
  **START AT THE**

  **RECEIVER**

  **GO RIGHT THRU THE**

  **SUPPRESSOR**

  **EVERY HIT COUNTS**

  Here are some coaching tips for a better season with your M16A1 rifle in the Vietnam League.

  **LEAD A BENT LATELY?**

  Probably not, but you could use the same idea when you're bore brushing your weapon. Right: Choke up on the cleaning rod — hold it about 2 inches from the receiver and push it straight through the flash suppressor. Then pull it all the way out — again in short jerks. Never pull the brush back till after it's gone through the flash suppressor. Do it the right way and you won't hurt the rod.

  Same idea goes when you're running patches through. Run it all the way through the flash suppressor before you start to pull back. No matter what size patches you're using — the one for the M16A1 (FSPN 1005-912-2248) or any large type that you have to cut into 4 equal squares.

  **WATCH YOUR BUTT TO!**

  While we're gabbing about water, let's hammer home the importance of keeping it out of the lower receiver. This may not have anything directly to do with blowing up your shooter, but it could keep it from freezing — which is the next worst thing.

  Right — every time you clean your M16 — and every time you drain water from the bore — take an extra second to make sure the drain hole in the butt stock capscrew is open . . . and drain the butt, too.

  If you've got a little bit of crud or carbon buildup when you're cleaning your rifle — especially in the bolt and locking recess area — get your armorer to help you tackle it with P-111 carbon removing compound. FSPN 69-653-2232-5 gal. pail.

  A pipe cleaner's about the handiest thing for keeping this hole clear. If water stays in the lower receiver, it'll foul up the working parts . . . cause corrosion and damage your weapon. So remember, bud?

  All of this boils down to one thing: Your Prevention is the cure.

---

Figure 4.12

M16A1 Rifle Manual

Figure 4.13

M16A1 Rifle Manual

Say... having trouble with how much LSA it takes for a "GENEROUS" application?

Do what constitutes "LIGHTLY" lubricated?

Well, don't get excited. The terms are only general and are not intended to designate a precise amount of lubrication.

Consider it generously lubed if the part is covered with enough LSA that you can see an obvious film heavy enough you can wipe around with your finger (you don't have to strip it off). If you have wiped off a case of lubricant with a rag or swab or... covered with LSA. but it's still not so much you can really see a film on the part, call it "LIGHTLY" lubed.

ZAPPER'S OWN M16 PUB

Hey, you M16A1 sharpshooters. So save your lunch on to FM 9-1005-240-1219840 with Ch 1. That's right... 12-12. It replaces all the operating junctional dope in the 14 FM with all of its changes.

INSTEAD

SHOEBOT

3. Just wiggle the spring into the mag as far as it'll go.
4. Work the other end of the follower into the body.
5. Push the spring back and forth gently as you tug it outward.
6. Stop tugging when the follower reaches the tabs and ears and don't separate the spring from the follower.

Here's the easy way... gently:

1. Stick cartridge point in here to press the floor plate release.
2. Slide out the floor plate.
3. Work the spring back and forth gently as you tug it outward.
4. Stop tugging when the follower reaches the tabs and ears and don't separate the spring from the follower.

Careful... you don't stretch or bend the spring and don't bend the tabs. Easy does it all the way.

For cleaning the disassembled mag:
— Insert Shank in rifle bore cleaner and make it good while submerged.
— OK—Use a rag soaked in bore cleaner.
— Then dip it out good with a swab or rag (or even your shirttail in a pitch).
— After you clean the inside of the magazine, wipe the spring off and see that it's not busted or deformed. If it's OK, apply a light oil coat of tabs—using a rag dampened with LSA.
— This mag is coated with dry lubricant. It doesn't need any lubrication except for the spring.

Putting MAGGIE TOGETHER

When you're loading your magazine to its maximum capacity, you may find it difficult to load without stretching or bending the spring and tabs. Easy does it all the way.

For cleaning the disassembled mag:
— Insert Shank in rifle bore cleaner and make it good while submerged.
— OK—Use a rag soaked in bore cleaner.
— Then dip it out good with a swab or rag (or even your shirttail in a pitch).
— After you clean the inside of the magazine, wipe the spring off and see that it's not busted or deformed. If it's OK, apply a light oil coat of tabs—using a rag dampened with LSA.
— This mag is coated with dry lubricant. It doesn't need any lubrication except for the spring.

Figure 4.16

M16A1 Rifle Manual

Figure 4.17

M16A1 Rifle Manual, Back Cover

Why Do You Keep Your M16 Rifle Clean Inside and Out and Lubed with LSA?

BECAUSE—YOU BET YOUR LIFE ON IT!!
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VITA

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Evan Cordulack was born in Decatur, Illinois on February 8, 1981. After attending Decatur Public Schools, Evan pursued a music performance degree first at Millikin University (Decatur, Illinois) and then University of North Florida (Jacksonville, Florida). He changed his major to American Studies upon transferring to the College of William and Mary (Williamsburg, Virginia) where he received a BA in that major in 2003. Evan continued in the American Studies program at William and Mary as a graduate student and plans to continue the study of the Vietnam War, consumerism and popular culture.