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Back to the street without joy: Counterinsurgency lessons from Vietnam and other small wars.

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Abstract: In 1961, Bernard Fall, a scholar and practitioner of war, published a book entitled

The Street Without Joy. The book provided a lucid account of why the French Expeditionary Corps failed to defeat the Viet Minh during the Indochina War, and the book's title derived from the French soldiers' sardonic moniker for Highway 1 on the coast of Indochina --Ambush Alley, or the Street without Joy. In 2003, after the fall of Baghdad and following the conventional phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom, U.S. and Coalition forces operating in the Sunni Triangle began fighting a counterguerrilla type war in which much of the enemy insurgent activity occurred along Highway 1, another street exhibiting little joy. The U.S. military has had a host of successful experiences in counterguerrilla war, including some distinct successes with certain aspects of the Vietnam War. However, the paradox stemming from America's unsuccessful crusade in the jungles of Vietnam is this -- because the experience was perceived as anathema to the mainstream American military, hard lessons learned there about fighting guerrillas were neither embedded nor preserved in the U.S. Army's institutional memory. Since the U.S. Army and its coalition partners are currently prosecuting counterguerrilla wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is useful to revisit the lessons from Vietnam and other counterinsurgencies because they are germane to the wars of today and tomorrow. This article aims to distill some of the more relevant counterinsurgency lessons from the American military's experiences during Vietnam and before. A bigger goal of the article, however, is to highlight some salient studies for professional reading as the U.S. Army starts to inculcate a mindset that embraces the challenges of counterinsurgency and to develop a culture that learns from past lessons in counterinsurgency.

Descriptors: *MILITARY FORCES (UNITED STATES), *VIETNAM WAR, *MILITARY DOCTRINE, *CULTURE, *GUERRILLA WARFARE, *COUNTERINSURGENCY, *LESSONS LEARNED, COMMUNITY RELATIONS, INDIGENOUS POPULATION, PARAMILITARY FORCES, AMERICAN INDIANS, INSURGENCY, RURAL AREAS, PHILIPPINES, PLATOON LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS, CIVIL AFFAIRS, SPECIAL FORCES, ETHNIC GROUPS, MILITARY HISTORY, REPRINTS

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