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About six months after Bobbie Lou Pendergrass lost her brother in Vietnam, more American “advisors” were transported to places in South Vietnam—also, like Bobbie’s brother James McAndrew, without the ability to protect themselves. [Horst Fass](#) took this picture on the 6th of August, 1963. It depicts Vietnamese airborne rangers with two American advisors (plus a 12-member, U.S. Special Forces team). The men were dropped-off by H-21 helicopters which had to hover (instead of land) six feet above the landing area so the choppers could avoid becoming entangled with ground wires and spikes. Image copyright Horst Fass/AP; provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

Bobbie Lou Pendergrass was upset. On February 18, 1963 she wrote a [letter](#) to President Kennedy. Her brother's helicopter had been shot down in Vietnam. Her family was bitter.

[Asking JFK](#) why her brother had been sent to Southeast Asia in the first place, Ms. Pendergrass made an observation that would be repeated countless times by other upset Americans during the next decade:

I can't help but feel that giving one's life for one's country is one thing, but being sent to a country where half our country never even heard of and being shot at without even a chance to shoot back is another thing altogether!

Later in her letter, [she asks](#) the question people still ask today:

If a war is worth fighting - isn't it worth fighting to win.

In one of the most interesting documents listing reasons for American involvement in Vietnam, [President Kennedy](#) took the time to [answer Ms. Pendergrass](#). As he concluded his remarks, [the President wrote](#):

...full scale war in Viet Nam is at the moment unthinkable.

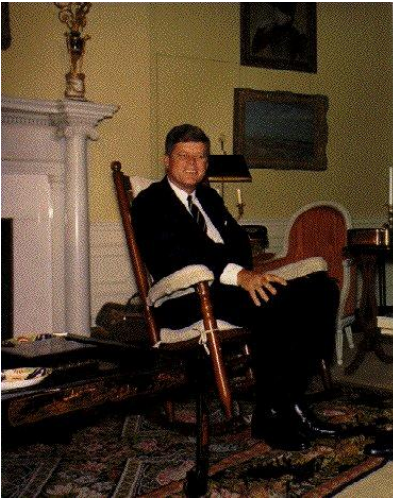
In less than two years, the "unthinkable" happened. By 1968, more than 500,000 U.S. military forces were in Vietnam. More than 30,000 Americans were already dead.

[See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WHY-ARE-WE-IN-VIETNAM-Remember-The-Titans>

[See Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WHY-ARE-WE-IN-VIETNAM-Remember-The-Titans>



President Kennedy in His Rocking Chair

Image online, courtesy the jfklibrary.org website.

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President Kennedy Photo

Image online, courtesy the John F. Kennedy Library and [Museum](http://www.jfklibrary.org).

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