



# **Honorable Warrior: General Harold K. Johnson and the Ethics of Command (Modern War Studies (Paperback))**

*Lewis Sorley*

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A man of extraordinary inner strength and patriotic devotion, General Harold K. Johnson was a soldier's officer, loved by his men and admired by his peers for his leadership, courage, and moral convictions. Lewis Sorley's biography provides a fitting testament to this remarkable man and his dramatic rise from obscurity to become LBJ's Army Chief of Staff during the Vietnam War.

A native of North Dakota, Johnson survived more than three grueling years as a POW under the Japanese during World War II before serving brilliantly as a field commander in the Korean War, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for "extraordinary heroism." The latter experiences led to a series of high-level positions that culminated in his appointment as Army chief in 1964 and a cover story in Time magazine.

What followed should have been the most rewarding period of Johnson's military career. Instead, it proved to be a nightmare, as he quickly became mired in the politics and ordeal of a very misguided war.

Johnson fundamentally disagreed with the three men—LBJ, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, and General William Westmoreland—running our war in Vietnam. He was sharply critical of LBJ's piecemeal policy of gradual escalation and his failure to mobilize the national will or call up the reserves. He was equally despondent over Westmoreland's now infamous search-and-destroy tactics and reliance on body counts to measure success in Vietnam.

By contrast, he advocated greater emphasis on cutting the North's supply lines, helping the South Vietnamese provide for their own internal defenses, and sustaining a truly legitimate government in the South. Unheeded, he nevertheless continued to work behind the scenes to correct the nation's flawed approach to the war.

Sorley's study adds immeasurably to our understanding of the Vietnam War. It also provides an inspiring account of principled leadership at a time when the American military is seeking to recover the very kinds of moral values exemplified by Harold K. Johnson. As such, it presents a profound morality tale for our own era.

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