

# IN COUNTRY

a documentary by Mike Attie & Meghan O'Hara



## WAR IS HELL. WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT TO SPEND THEIR WEEKENDS THERE?

Deep in the Oregon woods, the heat of a reenacted Vietnam battle sheds light on America's complicated relationship with war and its veterans.

GENERAL INQUIRIES:  
Mike Attie & Meghan O'Hara  
Directors/Producers  
Oscar-Alpha MoPic, LLC  
incountryfilm@gmail.com  
+1 (215) 888-6533  
+1 (413) 335-3002

SALES / PRESS INQUIRIES:  
Daniel J. Chalfen  
Consulting Producer  
Naked Edge Films  
daniel@nakededgefilms.com  
+1 (310) 435-2322

INTERNATIONAL SALES:  
Heino Deckert  
Deckert Distribution GmbH  
Marienplatz 1  
04103 Leipzig Germany  
info@deckert-distribution.com  
+49 341 215 66 38



[www.incountryfilm.com](http://www.incountryfilm.com)

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## SYNOPSIS

IN COUNTRY is an immersive feature documentary about a platoon of soldiers who are recreating the Vietnam War in the woods of Oregon.

The question at the center of IN COUNTRY is why? Why would these men -- many of them combat veterans of Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan haunted by their own experiences on the frontline -- try to recreate a war that so many Americans have tried to forget?

Mixing archival Vietnam reels, soldiers' own footage from Iraq and Afghanistan, and scenes of highly authentic reenactment maneuvers, this disquieting trip into the men's minds and private lives blurs fantasy with trauma, therapy with nostalgia.

The story is told through the characters, and like any war film it is an ensemble cast: Doc, a charismatic African-American medic haunted by 2 tours in Iraq; Tuna, an adrenaline-loving soldier facing his second tour to Afghanistan; Vinh, a 60 year-old veteran of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam; Bummy, a Vietnam Vet who mentors the group from his own experience; and Cricket, a high-schooler who enlists in the Marines before graduation in order to serve his country.

Opening with surreal scenes of the group's preparations for battle, IN COUNTRY takes the audience on a dramatic journey as the elaborate reenactment pushes each man to face the ghosts of his past. With humor, tears, and dramatic moments - IN COUNTRY is a meditation on how the drums of war continue to draw men to battle despite devastating consequences.

## DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

When we first heard that people were reenacting the Vietnam War we immediately wanted to know why - why anyone would want to relive this moment in history? After some searching we came across the Delta 2/5(R), a group of dedicated war reenactors who were unique in the reenacting community in that many of them are veterans themselves, having served in

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Afghanistan, Iraq and Vietnam. After being invited to witness our first reenactment, we found ourselves both attracted and repulsed by what the reenactors were doing.

What we discovered, forced us to wrestle with the present as much as the past -- how do you honor the soldiers when you hate the war? Our goal is to tell a provocative story about memory and coping that looks deeply at the veteran experience and complicates traditional narratives that paint soldiers as heroes, villains or victims. We think these conversations are vital as America returns its attention to the legacy of Vietnam with the war's upcoming 50th anniversary.

## PROJECT HISTORY

Since winning "Best Pitch" at the 2012 Points North Documentary Film Forum at the Camden International Film Festival, IN COUNTRY has received significant attention and interest. The film Kickstarter campaign raised over \$26,000 in post-production funds from 290 Backers. The film received the 2013 Garrett Scott Fellowship awarded annually by Thom Powers at the Full Frame Documentary Festival. In May of 2013, IN COUNTRY pitched at the HotDocs Forum, with Indiewire naming it one of the eight most promising films. Additionally, IN COUNTRY was selected for the 2013 IFP Documentary Lab in New York and the DOK.Incubator program at DOK Leipzig, Germany. In January 2014, IN COUNTRY was awarded a grant by the Sundance Institute and was invited to participate in The Sundance Institute Documentary Film Fellowship Program at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival.

IN COUNTRY premiered at the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, Durham NC in April 2014 and had its international premiere at the 2014 Hot Docs International Film Festival in Toronto, Canada. It has also screened at IFFBoston and Sarasota Film Festival.

## CREATIVE TEAM

**Director Mike Attie's** award-winning short documentaries have shown at major documentary festivals including San Francisco International, SilverDocs, and Cinequest. Prior to receiving his MFA from Stanford University's Documentary Film program, Attie worked as a production assistant and assistant editor for Academy Award-winning filmmakers Alan and Susan Raymond on films for HBO and PBS. Attie's film, FAMOUS 4A was nominated for the International Documentary Association's David Wolper Award and won 1st Jury Prize for short films at the Kos International Film Festival and CILECT's Documentary Film Prize. Attie received a BA in American History from Vassar College. He currently lives in Seattle, where he works as a freelance film producer and teaches at Seattle University.

**Director Meghan O'Hara** is a San Francisco-based filmmaker whose films have received recognition from major film festivals in the United States and abroad, including the Edinburgh

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International Film Festival, the Mill Valley Film Festival, Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, and Slamdance. O'Hara is a recipient of an Eastman/Kodak award for Excellence in Cinematography, the Director's Choice Award at The Black Maria Film Festival, and was selected as a regional finalist for Student Academy Awards. O'Hara holds a MFA in Documentary Production from Stanford University and a BA in experimental film and video from Hampshire College. She currently teaches film production at California College of the Arts and The Art Institute of California - San Francisco.

**Editor Lindsay Utz** edited the award-winning documentary *BULLY*, which was released in 2012, and shortlisted for an Academy Award for Best Documentary. Utz's work also includes the ballet documentary, *FIRST POSITION*; a six-part series for Vogue Magazine called *THE FASHION FUND*; and the experimental feature *BUOY*, executive produced by Todd Haynes. In 2012, Lindsay was awarded the Karen Schmeer Film Editing Fellowship in honor of Errol Morris' late editor.

**Consulting Producer Jim Butterworth** is the founder and president of Naked Edge Films, where he has served as executive producer for films including *THE REVISIONARIES*, *GONE*, *DONOR UNKNOWN*, *WAR DON DON*, *THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MCKINLEY NOLAN* and *CAPE SPIN*. Jim's own film *SEOUL TRAIN*, which he produced, directed and shot, has been translated to more than twenty languages and broadcast on TV globally. In 2007, *SEOUL TRAIN* was bestowed the Alfred I. duPont – Columbia University Award for excellence in broadcast journalism and investigative reporting, and also was runner-up for the National Journalism Award. Jim also is a successful technology entrepreneur and investor, and an advisor to a number of nonprofits, startup companies and investment funds.

**Consulting Producer Daniel J. Chalfen** is a documentary producer and the founder of Naked Edge Films. His films have screened at festivals including Toronto, Tribeca, and Berlin, and have been released theatrically and broadcast worldwide. His producing credits include *STATE 194* (for Participant Media), *THE REVISIONARIES* and *DONOR UNKNOWN* (for PBS' Independent Lens series), *GONE* (for Discovery ID), Emmy-nominated *WAR DON DON* and Oscar short-listed *39 POUNDS OF LOVE* (for HBO), and *BUDRUS* and *MEETING RESISTANCE* (for Al Jazeera).